# DO THE CANDIDATES MATTER?
# A THEORY OF AGENCY IN AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS

ZIM NWOKORA

ST ANNE'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

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# II ABSTRACT

This thesis develops a candidate-centred conception of American presidential nominations. Candidates' choices in nomination politics remain under-theorised. The literature on nominations has tended either to downplay the role of candidates' independent influence or to suggest that the impact of their choices is too idiosyncratic to theorize about. I reject both of these positions; and instead develop the basic elements of a theory in which candidates are the principal agents of change in nomination contests. I argue that candidates make distinct *identity*, *tactical*, and *management* choices, and I show that this simple frame can be used to connect aspirants' varying goals to their choices and actions.

In my theory, candidates' prospects remain relatively stable unless a shift occurs in their competitive setting in response to an unexpected event – for instance, a surprising election result. These shifts, or *critical junctures*, define a candidate's path to his party's presidential nomination. I argue that the rival candidates' choices dominate the development of these critical junctures and, therefore, that candidates' choices are crucial to nomination outcomes. Structural factors, the actions of non-candidates and the effects of exogenous events, account for a minority of critical junctures.

In the empirical chapters of this study, I examine the Democratic and Republican nomination contests in selected years before the McGovern-Fraser reforms (1912, 1924, 1932) and in post-reform cases (1972, 1976, 1980) to demonstrate the pervasive influence of candidates' choices in contrasting institutional settings. These cases confirm my basic claim about the centrality of candidates' choices and also suggest significant ways in which candidates' choices have changed between 1912 and 1980.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss the connections between presidential nominations and presidential politics. In section 1, I illustrate the potential importance of nominations to public policy outcomes. In section 2, I summarize the historical literature tracing changes in nominating institutions, and in section 3 I analyse modern interpretations of the process. In sections 4, 5, and 6 I introduce a candidate-centred perspective on nomination politics. I argue that this way of viewing nominations offers additional insights to orthodox theoretical frameworks because a candidate's interpretations of his problems and their solutions cannot be derived simply from the legal and procedural context in which he operates, nor are his actions an automatic response to exogenous events. These *structural* accounts of nominations can be usefully complemented by a *theory of agency* in which candidates' choices are the cause of shifts in aspirants' prospects. In chapter 2, I develop this theory and distil five claims that I investigate in the empirical chapters (3 through 11) that follow.

## (I) CHOOSING THE OPTIONS

Every four years, citizens of the United States make one of the most important decisions in modern democratic politics: the choice of the next American President. If, following Harold Lasswell, politics is the study of 'who gets what, when and how', then selecting the President of the United States is an extreme political activity, for the prize is like none other in American politics.[1] He (and perhaps one day *she*) is the only politician in the United States with a national constituency, and the Office's incumbent is endowed with shared authority over the executive bureaucracy, command of the American armed forces, and a partnership role in the production of legislation.[2] And although a President's authority and status do not guarantee effective influence over political outcomes, numerous examples from American political history suggest in a persuasive way that the choice of President can have profound consequences for the United States and the rest of the world. If, in 1932, the American electorate had returned Herbert Hoover to the White House instead of Franklin Roosevelt, what would America and the world have looked like by 1945, the year of Roosevelt's death in Warm Springs, Georgia? Without Roosevelt, could the American economy and democratic polity have weathered the Great Depression? How drastically might the shape of post-WWII international relations have been altered without President Roosevelt's commitment to the War in 1941?

As with all 'what if' – counterfactual – hypotheses in political history, there remains a largely unbridgeable gap between the kinds of information needed to test these propositions and the data available to scholars. As a result, claims about the effects of engaging one particular historical path instead of another are generally contestable at two levels.[3] First, we can question whether certain alternative paths really existed. Given the

[1] Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*.
[2] Three theoretical positions can be taken regarding the relative legitimacy of the President's law-making authority vis-à-vis Congress: the Jacksonian co-equal view, presidential dominance, or congressional pre-eminence. See for instance Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development*.
[3] See for instance Lebow 'What's So Different About a Counterfactual?', *World Politics*, 52 (2000), 550-85.

failure of the Hoover Administration's response to the economic crisis triggered by the Wall Street Crash of 1929, could any non-interventionist strategies really be considered as viable options for Roosevelt in 1932? Secondly, the consequences that might have resulted had one of the alternative courses materialised are usually debatable. So, if Roosevelt had not established the Executive Office of the President (EOP) to co-ordinate more effectively an expanded federal bureaucracy in 1939, would the Constitution have become an unworkable document, as Clinton Rossiter claims, perhaps requiring at least radical amendment; or would the political system have compensated for the institutional weakness of the President in a different way?[4] Might, for instance, a scaling down of governmental operations have occurred? Furthermore, even when it is possible to isolate the effects of a President on public policy, measuring such effects in a precise way is usually difficult because the president's influence on the outcomes that do in fact obtain is exerted in a political universe crowded by a multitude of actors, and not in a vacuum.

These kinds of uncertainties make it unsurprising that the scholarship on the presidency provides competing accounts of the impact of Presidents vis-à-vis other institutional actors, and varying assessments of presidents' capacities to initiate, accelerate, and institutionalise radical political change.[5] However, whether we choose to view the president as a potentially transformative leader with the capacity to generate fundamental change in political outcomes or merely a facilitator who must try to encourage small movements in a limited number of directions, the choice of president can be critical for politics in the United States and beyond.

As with any choice, the alternatives presented to the American electorate at a presidential election structure in a basic way the eventual choice that is made. Invariably that choice in the November election is between two candidates, each representing a myriad of personal and political variables, and each nominated by his party ahead of a number of other aspirants to compete in the presidential election. These options – the nominees of the Democratic and Republican parties – are determined during the pre-election nomination contest during which leading politicians in both parties vie with internal rivals for their party's presidential nomination.

## (II) CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN NOMINATION POLITICS

Eschewing the 'dangerous vice of faction', the Founders established the Electoral College as the sole mechanism for selecting the president.[6] The states formed the basis of the selection system. As outlined in Article II, Section I of the Constitution, each state was allocated a number of electors equal to the total of its senators and representatives, with each elector given two ballots, and the individual who secured the greatest number of votes was declared the winner in the presidential contest, so long as he obtained a vote total equal to the number of electors. The emergence of political factions in Congress led to the breakdown of this

[4] Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship: Crisis Government in the Modern Democracies*.
[5] For studies promoting the 'strong' president thesis see Burns, *Presidential Government: The Crucible of Leadership*, Koenig, *The Chief Executive* and Rossiter, *The American Presidency*. A number of authors challenge this view, including Edwards, *At the Margins: Presidential Leadership of Congress*.
[6] James Madison, 1788, quoted in Ranney, *Curing the Mischiefs of Faction: Party Reform in America,* 23.

constitutional system of presidential selection, and from 1796 congressional factions – Hamiltonian Federalists and Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans – began to nominate different presidential candidates. Informal methods sufficed to recommend the obvious candidates, with nominations settled by exchanges of letters, private meeting, and informal caucusing by the party's congressmen.[7]

After a period of instability in the 1820s, during which candidates were selected by a variety of state-based devices, including official acts of state legislatures, endorsements by state conventions, and unofficial declarations by legislative caucuses, the Jacksonians (Democrats) and anti-Jackson faction (now hardening into a separate party which called themselves first 'National Republicans' and then 'Whigs') adopted the national delegate convention.[8] State delegations were chosen in a manner determined locally in each state, and each was apportioned as many votes as the state's representation in the Electoral College. The unit rule, under which a state's entire vote must be cast for the candidate that a majority of the state's delegates preferred, was used by both parties in 1832 (although it was subsequently abandoned by the Whigs). And instead of the simple majority rule used by the Whigs, the Democrats approved a rule requiring a two-thirds majority for nomination.[9] By 1854, the Republican Party had replaced the Whigs as rivals to the Democrats, but they maintained the delegation and nomination rules of the Whigs. These rules remained largely unchanged until the beginning of the twentieth century.

State party leaders, especially governors and prominent mayors, assumed control of the conventions with aspiring nominees (and their representatives) bargaining with them prior to and during the convention to secure nomination – nineteenth-century aspirants were expected to stand, rather than run, for office.[10] The party bosses arrived at the national convention with their own preferences and interests, but agreement on the choice of presidential nominee was essential because prolonged division could cripple the party's efforts to prepare for the forthcoming election. As Nelson Polsby explains:

> The interdependence of party leaders may be established by reference to the rule of American politics which provides that the voters may replace the elected officials of one party with those of another at general elections. In order to mobilize enough nationwide support to elect a President, party leaders from a large number of constituencies must be satisfied with the nominee. Without agreement on a nominee, none is likely to enjoy access to the eventual President; hence party leaders are interdependent and expect to gain from the outcome of the bargain.[11]

The advent of presidential primaries from the beginning of the twentieth century constituted the beginning of the 'mixed' system of nominations, during which limited primary voting was overlaid on the nineteenth century caucus-convention system.[12] However, the 'mix' was an unbalanced one, with party leaders continuing to dominate convention outcomes. Although the new presidential primaries 'provided information

[7] Marshall, *Presidential Nominations in a Reform Age*, 19.
[8] Although already familiar features at the state and local level, the *national* party convention was first used by the minor Anti-Masonic party in 1831.
[9] Crotty, *Paths to Political Reform*, 210.
[10] Troy, *See How They Ran: the Changing Role of the Presidential Candidate*.
[11] Polsby, 'Decision-Making at the National Conventions', *Political Research Quarterly* 13 (1960), 614.
[12] Ceaser, *Reforming the Reforms: a Critical Analysis of the Presidential Selection Process*, 22.

to the political leaders … about the popularity of various candidates in assorted states of the Union … [and] candidates' abilities to conduct the sort of arduous face-to-face campaigning that primary contests traditionally demand', the rejections of Dewey by the Republicans and Kefauver by the Democrats in 1952 illustrated that success in primaries remained insufficient for nomination.[13]

By the 1970s, the nomination had *de facto* disappeared from the convention, determined instead during pre-convention primary elections. Success in primaries became determinative, with the convention relegated to an arena of ratification. Although there remains a complex series of negotiations over the vice-president and the party platform at conventions, for the presidential nomination 'the convention', Polsby states, 'is now a body dominated by candidate enthusiasts … who meet to ratify a choice made prior to the convention mostly through primary elections'.[14] However, the primary contests are not of equal importance, and the early ones exert a disproportionate influence because they trigger psychological momentum effects. Voters, campaign workers, and funders are attracted to perceived winners, and therefore strong performances in early contests can enhance a candidate's prospects in future contests.[15]

### (III) INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MODERN NOMINATION PROCESS

Scholars of the nomination process generally account for the 1970s watershed by reference to the institutional changes associated with the McGovern-Fraser Commission Report *Mandate for Reform*, which was submitted to the Democratic National Committee in April 1970. Writing in 1981, Gerald M. Pomper presented an overview:

> Within the last decade, great changes have transformed the presidential nominations contest … To many U.S. residents, the nominations race is at once colorful, exciting, and a bit bewildering. Yet beneath all the drama and confusion lies a new, albeit not readily apparent, order. Since 1970, a new nominations system has emerged. This system is amenable to description, measurement, and empirical analysis.[16]

The reforms, assesses Byron Shafer, 'brought the greatest break in the formal mechanics of delegate selection since the institutionalization of the national party convention'.[17] The committee report encouraged the spread of primaries by requiring greater participation by women, young people, and minorities in selection procedures. State delegations were mandated to include these groups 'in reasonable relationship to their

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[13] Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform*, 13. Barry Goldwater's nomination in 1964 is mentioned less frequently in connection with the characteristics of the mixed system. Busch claims that this capture of the party by a predominantly grassroots conservative movement 'invites the question of whether the 'mixed' system was more flexible and permeable than has been generally acknowledged'. (Busch, 'In Defense of the 'Mixed' System: The Goldwater Campaign and the Role of Popular Movements in the Pre-Reform Presidential Nomination Process', *Polity*, 24(4) (1992), 529).

[14] Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform*, 76. Following the publication of Polsby's Consequences of Party Reform, Abramowitz et al questioned Polsby's claim that there has been a dramatic shift in the types of incentives that motivate participants in the nomination process. Surveying 17,628 delegates attending state party conventions in 1980, Abramowitz, et al find that while candidate concerns were important, party loyalty and issues remained as important. Furthermore, there was little to separate 'professional' party and elected officials and 'amateur' activists in respect of these motivations. (See Abramowitz, McGlennon and Rapoport, 'The Party Isn't Over: Incentives for Activism in the 1980 Presidential Nominating Campaign', *Journal of Politics*, 45 (1983), 1006-15).

[15] Bartels, *Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice*.

[16] Pomper, *The Election of 1980: Reports and Interpretations*, 1.

[17] Shafer, *Bifurcated Politics: Evolution and Reform in the National Party Convention*, 41.

presence in the population of the State'.[18] The Republican Party's Delegate and Organization Committee, established in response to the McGovern-Fraser Commission, made similar recommendations to broaden participation in the nomination process and improve demographic representation at national conventions. Rather than reform the rules of existing caucuses, state parties throughout the nation supported enactment of presidential primary legislation.[19] Additionally the *character* of politics in the remaining caucus states was altered substantially. Everett Ladd, for instance, declared that 'party causes in the modern sense are nothing more than restrictive primaries'.[20] Leon Epstein explains further, adding that caucuses

> have been found to produce the same types of delegates [as primaries] … [C]aucuses are 'restrictive' only in that their participants devote a few hours to attend a meeting rather than merely a few minutes to cast a primary ballot.[21]

The institutional transformation of the 1970s stripped parties of their capacity to choose their flag bearers, a central political function. For Jeanne Kirkpatrick this fact is the most salient feature of American party politics.[22] Andrew E. Busch lamented that the new system 'led to a party so ephemeral, so lacking in solid form and in solid contact with the nominating process.'[23] However, the delegate selection reforms merely accelerated trends toward party marginalisation in American politics that began in the 1950s.[24] The parties' co-ordinating role in policy formation was undermined by repeated episodes of divided government since the Eisenhower Administration; a scenario compelling Presidents to construct coalitions according to issues and in ways that transcended partisan labels.[25] Beyond Washington politics, the advent of mass media communication, public opinion surveying, civil service reforms and judicial decisions undercutting the patronage system, and governmental social welfare, deprived parties of many other functions that they used to perform.

Ultimately, observers claimed, party decline and the reforms to the nomination process produced a new candidate-centred politics – 'a radically different politics of presidential selection emerged to accompany sharply changed institutional arrangements', affirms Shafer.[26] Capturing this transition in the scholarship,

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[18] Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform*, 35.

[19] This important result was largely unanticipated by the reformers. According to Ranney, a political scientist and a member of the McGovern-Fraser Commission, 'most of the commission strongly preferred a reformed national convention to a national presidential primary or a major increase in the number of state presidential primaries. And [they] believed that if the party's non-primary delegate selection processes were made more open and fair, participation in them would increase greatly, and consequently the demand for more primaries would fade away'. (Ranney, *Curing the Mischiefs of Faction: Party Reform in America*, 205).

[20] Epstein, *Political Parties in the American Mold*, 96.

[21] Ibid, 96.

[22] Kirkpatrick, *Dismantling the Parties: Reflections on Party Reform and Party Decomposition*.

[23] Busch, 'In Defense of the 'Mixed' System', 549.

[24] In important respects these trends began before the 1950s, and with the introduction of the first direct primary elections for candidates for elective office. These became widespread by the end of the nineteenth century. However, until technological innovations provided candidates with the means to conduct their own political research and channel messages directly to voters, individual competitors had little choice but to work through existing organisational channels. Thus, the main impacts of the direct primary were not experienced until the 1960s, with Milton Shapp's successful 'outsider' bid for the Democratic Party's gubernatorial nomination in Pennsylvania commonly flagged as a symbolic turning point. (Ware, *The American Direct Primary: Party Institutionalization and Transformation in the North*).

[25] Broder, *The Party's Over: The Failure of Politics in America*.

[26] Shafer, *Bifurcated Politics*, 41. For analysis of this transition see also Reiter, *Selecting the President: the Nominating Process in Transition*.

Martin P. Wattenberg wrote of *The Decline of American Political Parties, 1952-1988* and a post-reform sequel entitled *The Rise of Candidate-Centred Politics*. In the latter, he observed that

> … as the relevance of the political parties declined … [t]he parties' ability to polarize opinion into rival camps weakened, creating a vacuum in the structure of electoral attitudes. Voters were thus set politically adrift and subject to volatile electoral swings. Like nature, politics abhors a vacuum, and candidates are the most logical force to take the place of parties in this respect. Thus, what Ronald Reagan provided was the strong stimulus necessary to transform the potential for candidate-centred politics into reality.[27]

In recent years, this orthodox party decline thesis has been revised substantially. Since the 1980 election, scholars have observed resurgence by the parties in some of the functions that the older literature had rendered their beyond influence. In response to electoral defeats, the parties selected national party chairmen committed to investing in their parties' organizational capacities.[28] Especially at the national level, the parties have become repositories of technical expertise and fundraising capabilities with substantial staffs and bureaucratic-professional decision-making procedures.[29] Larry Sabato argues that these changes represent the institutionalization of the national party organisations.[30] And with their origins in Washington headquarters, organisational renewal efforts have been extended to the states in order to enhance success in congressional and state elections.

In an important study, Cohen et al. extend the case for party renewal by arguing that party elites have recovered their relevance in the presidential nomination process.[31] They concede that party weakness offered an accurate portrayal of the 1970s. However, since then both parties have regained important, and usually decisive, influence in their presidential nomination processes. 'Insiders', Cohen et al. claim 'have won *every* contest since 1976 and are likely – though not, of course, certain in every case – to continue to do so. The reason is … that party elites have regained control of the nomination process and are making it work in a manner surprisingly similar to the way the pre-reform system worked.'[32] Thus, accordingly, the 1970s was a unique decade, differing in fundamental ways from the decades preceding and succeeding it.

By 1980, knowledge and understanding of the new system was widespread. The diffusion of these practices eliminated the advantages held by early learners such as George McGovern in 1972; and the combined effects of the front-loading of the primary election schedule, increased campaign costs, and more concentrated media attention reconfigured the system in ways that favoured inside candidates. Explaining the arduous challenges facing party outsiders, Wayne P. Steger states that

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[27] Wattenberg, *The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics: Presidential Elections of the 1980s*, 2.
[28] William Brock, selected as Chair of the Republican National Committee in 1977 was the first in a generation of party-building chairmen.
[29] For a recent study of organisational revival in the Democratic Party see Galvin 'Changing Course: Reversing the Organizational Trajectory of the Democratic Party from Bill Clinton to Barack Obama', *The Forum*, 6:2 (2008), Article 3.
[30] Sabato, *The Party's Just Begun: Shaping Political Parties for America's Future*.
[31] Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller, 'Beating Reform: the Resurgence of Parties in Presidential Nominations, 1980-2000'. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, Aug, 2008.
[32] Cohen et al, 'Beating Reform' (n 31), 14.

> [i]nitially, the requirements of candidate-centred campaigns were sufficiently low to enable more presidential aspirants to compete, outside of party networks, for the support of potential primary voters. Over the past twenty years, however, the rising costs of candidate-centred campaigns, front loading, and more scrutinizing media coverage have combined to diminish the opportunities of dark-horse candidates seeking the presidential nomination of one of the major political parties… Lesser known and outsider candidates can run, but their odds of winning the nomination have declined since the 1970s.[33]

In an environment where campaign resources are scarce and difficult to obtain, party elites have regained their prominent role in presidential nomination because of their control over these assets. Through their offices, reputations, and social and political networks, these leaders provide aspirants with the greatest opportunities to obtain finance, workers, credibility, publicity, political research, and client group connections.

Cohen et al. observe a return to dominance in the nomination process of small and stable groups of elites who manage important aspects of the process and thereby encourage co-ordination by primary voters on particular candidates. Considering data from nomination contests between 1980 and 2000, Cohen et al. find a strong – indeed decisive – influence for endorsements on delegate shares in primary elections. They explain their statistical results as follows:

> the r-squares in these regressions mean that party elites can control 80% of the variance in vote share at the convention. It is unlikely that even in the old system, the party leaders did this well…The strong role of endorsements remains even after these scholars control for polls, money, and media coverage. Indeed, 'inside' money is worth more in terms of delegate share than 'outside' money.[34]

Examining indicators of party and candidate loyalty for the campaign staff of the leading contenders for the Democratic and Republican nominations in 2000, Jonathan Bernstein and Casey Dominguez find a greater role for party loyalists than candidate loyalty. In a more qualified conclusion than Cohen et al's, Bernstein and Dominguez describe the campaigns that they consider as '*primarily* party oriented but with strong candidate-centered elements'.[35] Though the Bernstein and Dominguez claim is weaker than Cohen et al's conclusion, both studies attest party renaissance in presidential nominations. This resurgence has occurred despite the fact that the post-reform parties differ significantly from their pre-reform ancestors. Organizationally they are flatter and looser, and the party leadership operates as an amorphous network of officeholders and prominent activists. Bernstein and Dominguez describe this *expanded party* as a combination of 'informal networks of party activists, campaign professionals, consultants, and the staffs of elected officials as well as formal party organizations'.[36] Their influence is exerted in more subtle ways than in the backroom bargaining of the old

[33] Steger, 'Do Primary Voters Draw from a Stacked Deck? Presidential Nominations in an Era of Candidate-Centered Campaigns', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 30 (2000), 728.
[34] Cohen et al, 'Beating Reform' (n 31), 60.
[35] Bernstein and Dominguez, 'Candidates and Candidacies in the Expanded Party', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 36:2 (April 2003), 167.
[36] Ibid, 165.

system: through endorsements and other credible cues, political expertise, coalition leadership, and campaign resources.

These results suggest that the first generation of scholarship on post-reform nominations was too hasty to declare the demise of parties – transmutation in organisational form differs from death. Crucially, the parties retain their capacity to rally in support of a candidate, and the united movement of elites almost always leads to victory for their preferred candidate. The Cohen et al. thesis therefore implies a radical re-evaluation of the role of candidates and parties in the presidential nomination process. Rather than a rise of candidate-centred politics and the concomitant demise of party in the nomination process, the process exhibits important continuities between the primary-dominated era and the periods preceding it: party leaders unite in support of presidential nominees, the resources that they can marshal are unmatched by any other sources of support that a candidate can muster, and therefore nomination outcomes can be influenced decisively by the choices of these elites. Change, insofar as it has occurred, has taken place within the party organisations, and this has obfuscated more fundamental enduring stabilities.

### (IV) A CANDIDATE-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE

To illuminate their party-centred interpretation of nominations, Cohen et al. invoke a fishing metaphor:

> [A] campaign team under the competitive pressure of presidential nominations is like a group of fisher-persons in a contest to catch the most fish…if the number of fish they catch depends on their skill in luring fish, the contest would properly be called fisher-centred. But suppose all of the competitors are fishing in the same small pond. And suppose the fish are organized into schools. And suppose the school leaders scrutinize the hooks of all the candidates before deciding which fisher they'd like to be caught by. And, finally, suppose they talk it over and make a joint decision. One would probably call this a fish-centred rather than a fisher-centred game, since the fish would be running the show and purposively determining the outcome.[37]

Applying this reasoning to the political world, they argue that, like the fish in their example, the 'party functionaries are the ones driving the process'.[38] However, how do the fisher-people see their problems? How do they interpret the varying situations in which they find themselves? How do they improve their appeal and reduce that of their rivals? Analogously, candidates are not passive participants in a world dominated by elite calculation. Rather they constantly strive to pursue their goals, and they do so with the understanding that their choices matter. I argue that candidates' choices have been critical to nomination outcomes *even* when party has been important. This claim differs fundamentally from standard accounts of pre-reform politics. While negotiations between party bosses were important, the candidates under consideration at this relatively late stage became members of this subset of politicians by manoeuvring to position themselves ahead of their rivals. I show that viewed from this candidate-centred vantage point, there

[37] Cohen et al, 'Beating Reform' (n 31), 27.
[38] Ibid, 27.

are important continuities in nomination politics before and after McGovern-Fraser. Thus, I agree with Cohen et al.'s claim that there are parallels between pre- and post-reform nomination, but I concentrate my focus on the constancy of candidates' importance in nomination contests.

These continuities are neglected in the scholarship because studies of the history of the nomination process have focused on the characteristics of change following McGovern-Fraser. Adopting a different prism, rooted in candidates' choices, can more accurately illuminate the contours of change and continuity between pre- and post-reform nomination politics. The cases in this thesis illustrate that modern candidates jockey over ideology, aligning themselves with interest groups, making statements on issues, and building policy reputations in executive or legislative office. However, pre-reform politicians were also assessed by party bosses and primary voters based on their perceived positions on salient issue questions; and because of this they too chose to position and re-position themselves in their relevant issue space. Both pre-reform and modern candidates built campaign organisations and used an array of campaign tactics to move ahead of their competition. My case analysis shows that, compared with structural factors (rules, exogenous events, and the actions of non-candidates), candidates' choices (agency factors) were the predominant influence in pre-reform nomination contests. However, agency factors were *even more* important in post-reform nominations. In these cases structural factors only rarely caused critical junctures.

These tactical choices included their consideration of the best ways to defeat their rivals in critical primaries. The major difference between pre- and post-reform politics concerns the importance of candidates' management choices. While considerations about staffing and organisational structure were incidental to pre-reform politics, since the 1970s they have become more focal.

### (v) Candidate-Centred Studies: Political Science versus Journalism

Professional observers of nominations present two conceptions of candidates. However, both perspectives are inadequate for a comparative study of candidates' choices in nomination politics because they do not provide a framework to capture and categorise the variation in candidates' decisions.

A number of important studies of the nomination contests in particular years have been written by journalists, including Theodore White's famous *The Road to the White House* series. These journalistic contributions recount the compelling events of particular contests.[39] However, these commentaries lack theoretical frameworks for analysing the kinds of choices that candidates face. There is, implicitly, a philosophical basis underpinning this approach: that there is no possibility of theorizing about candidates' choices because they are too idiosyncratic. Noam Chomsky, for instance, claimed that '[a]s soon as questions

[39] Some notable examples include Murray, *The 103rd Ballot: Democrats and the Disaster in Madison Square Garden*, Oulahan, *The Man Who…: The Story of the 1932 Democratic National Convention*, and Chester, Hodgson, and Page, *An American Melodrama: the Presidential Campaign of 1968*.

of will or decision or reason or choice of action arise, human science is at a loss'.[40] Furthermore, nomination studies often inherit the individual-focus that characterises research on the presidency more generally.[41] However, while it is clear that the conclusions from a theory analysing candidates' choices are likely to be patchy and limited in their scope, does this make the endeavour fruitless? I contend that even an incomplete theory can help us to understand nomination politics more fully. Indeed, prominent social scientists argue the general proposition that complex social theories, even while advancing understandings of social interaction, will always be questionable at some levels.[42]

If we dismiss this first position as too pessimistic, the opposite school – and one that has often been accepted in mainstream political science – is that all of a candidate's actions can be inferred from his desire to gain election. This treatment of agency follows Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* and Joseph Schlesinger in *Ambition and Politics* by assuming that 'a politician's behaviour [in nomination politics] is a response to his office goals'.[43] The office-seeking assumption is central to standard institutional arguments according to which the actions of candidates reflect the incentives of their environment, and especially its formal rules.[44] In these structural accounts, candidates' activities can be inferred from legal and procedural constraints and prescriptions because they are motivated by a desire to achieve nomination and election.

Rather than precluding the possibility of theorizing, the office-seeking conceptualisation implies that there is simply no need – an assumption with the added advantage of simplicity. However, institutional settings frequently present actors with conflicting or ambiguous incentives – and, thus, lying between what *must* be done and what *must not* is a large and significant range of choices over which actors can exercise discretion. Furthermore, real-world politicians frequently act in ways that cannot be explained by simple office-seeking hypotheses.[45] John S. Jackson and William J. Crotty use several real-world examples to illustrate this point. Walter Mondale, for instance, admitted candidly during his campaign that he would raise taxes if elected.[46]

However, Jackson and Crotty take examples of non-office-seeking behaviour to be suggestive of 'bounded rationality' on the part of candidates, rather than causing a reconsideration of office-seeking as a basic premise. Bounded rationality is a property of agents who strive to be completely rational maximisers, but are unable to achieve this exacting standard because they are human – and hence make choices with limited

[40] Television interview in 1978, quoted in Kast, 'Decisions, Decisions', *Nature*, 411 (2001), 126.
[41] Spitzer writes that 'the institution of the presidency is tied to the man occupying the Oval Office. On that basis, obvious difficulties attend any attempt to generalise from thirty-nine cases over a two-hundred-year period. While there is clearly a great deal of continuity in terms of both internal and external forces and structures, the standard way of 'cutting up' the presidency analytically is by successive administration of each president. The path to the formation of a presidential administration enters history in a similarly personal way'. (*The Presidency and Public Policy: The Four Arenas of Presidential Power*, 2-3).
[42] Schelling states that '[w]hat makes … evaluation interesting and difficult is that the entire aggregate outcome is what has to be evaluated, not merely how each person does within the constraints of his own environment'. (*Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, 19).
[43] Schlesinger, *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States* , 6.
[44] For an important contribution, see the APSA-commissioned study by David, Goldman, and Bain, *The Politics of National Party Conventions.*
[45] Nor is it clear that a Friedmanite justification for the office-seeking assumption applies. By Friedman's 'Methodology of Positive Economics' in *Essays in Positive Economics*, the predictive power – and not the plausibility of its assumptions – is the appropriate measure of a theory's validity.
[46] Jackson and Crotty, *The Politics of Presidential Selection*, 10.

computational capacity; and the world is uncertain – and therefore the consequences of their choices cannot be predicted reliably. Is it reasonable though to claim that a politician who runs a campaign littered with errors and miscalculations is boundedly rational? Jackson and Crotty write that 'the exceptions can be seen as proving the rule', but this leaves unaddressed the question of whether there is a point at which the exceptions are sufficient to disprove the rule?[47] The more general problem with this *post hoc* adjustment is that they offer no explanation for why non-rational behaviour is observed in some situations but not in others.

Office-seeking is a partial explanation of aspirants' behaviour in nomination politics. However, a richer account of candidates' activities needs to include more than this basic postulate. A theory for this purpose is possible. I argue that such a frame can remain simple while making basic and important distinctions that facilitate analysis and comparison.

## (VI) A CANDIDATE-CENTRED FRAMEWORK

In *Presidential Power*, Richard Neustadt (1990: xxi) famously argued for the importance of seeing the President's problems in office from the perspective of the incumbent: 'The search for personal influence is at the center of the job of being President. To analyze the problem of obtaining personal power one must try to view the Presidency from over the President's shoulder, looking out and down with the perspective of his place'.[48] Such a perspective, Neustadt shows, can be enlightening, and I believe that a similar task can be undertaken in nomination politics. We can analyse nomination politics from the perspective of the individual seeking his party's presidential nomination: his mix of electoral and non-electoral goals, and his interpretations of the problems and the opportunities afforded by his competitive setting.

Like most scholarship on nomination politics, this perspective offers insights into the fundamental question of *why* some candidates win while others lose. However, a candidate-centred analysis also searches for answers to a different, though no less fundamental, question: *how* do candidates win? While the *why* question can be grappled by (statistically) testing for the causal contributions of a variety of independent variables – including endorsements, money, and media coverage – the *how* question concerns matters of process. Consider for instance the study of candidates' finance-raising abilities by Clifford W. Brown, *et al*. They argue that 'those candidates who can build large cash reserves, and who therefore have money available at those peak times when the demands for cash are greatest, have an enormous advantage over those whose financial base is less secure and less predictable'.[49] However, in their conclusion, they also urge a refocusing of campaign finance questions on how candidates' characteristics affect their revenue-raising capabilities. For instance, they claim that '… the policy positions of candidates are resources in attracting money from the contributing pool … [because] … the issue positions that candidates take affect who contributes to their

[47] Ibid, 10.
[48] Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*, xxi.
[49] Brown, Powell and Wilcox, *Serious Money: Fundraising and Contributing in Presidential Nomination Campaigns*, 4.

campaign'.[50] Probing real world cases with an analytical framework can help us to understand how candidates build their resource endowments, combine important factors helpful to their candidacy, and try to actualise the potential of these resource endowments at important moments. I argue that understanding both *why* (outcomes) and *how* (process) nomination contests are won and lost are essentially questions of agency – of how candidates make choices as they pursue their party's presidential nomination.

As to the *why* question I propose a method to distinguish and categorise structural and agency causes.[51] Applying this method to my case studies I show that agency factors are, in most circumstances, more fundamental to nomination outcomes than structural factors. Where agency factors are the predominant cause I then address the *how* do candidates win question. I argue that politicians seeking their party nomination have three significant motivations: office, policy, and capacity. These motivations reflect their desires for success in three distinct arenas: identity, strategic / tactical, and management. Their success depends on their abilities in these arenas compared with that of their rivals' and the relative importance of each arena, for some politicians are better placed in identity terms than they are tacticians or managers.

This study is primarily an application of a method for analysing candidates' choices as they seek their nomination; but its starting point is a call for a reorientation of our understanding of the nomination process, from a perspective in which candidates' choices are marginal to a causal account to one where they are central. This interpretation of the nomination process as a political contest shaped by choices differs from much of the analytical work on nominations. However, it follows important precedents in the broader American politics literature. Most notably, Stephen Skowronek's interpretation of presidential history stresses the independent effects of politicians' choices: 'What [Skowronek] called the politics presidents make encompasses … the president's impulse to secure a certain understanding of his place in the course of events, as well as the actual political impact of his efforts to do so.'[52]

In the chapters that follow, I flesh out this candidate-centred approach. In Chapter 2 I develop a *Theory of Agency* that provides a framework through which to analyse candidates' real world choices as they pursue their parties' presidential nomination. It provides a heuristic device – one that has aided my search for sources, organisation of narratives, and scrutiny of the nature and consequences of candidates' choices. I emphasise that candidates' choices are complex phenomena but remain amenable to systematic analysis. To this end I posit that candidates face three distinct choice types: identity, tactical, and management choices. Furthermore, the impact of candidates' choices on outcomes in nomination politics, though subtle, can be examined by viewing the nomination process as a series of critical junctures and focusing on the impacts of candidates' choices (agency factors) and structural factors (such as exogenous events and the actions of non-candidates) at these dynamic moments. I examine the theory in an empirical context by probing the contested nominations of the Democratic and Republican parties in six years: 1912, 1924, 1932, 1972, 1976, and 1980.

[50] Ibid, 141-2.
[51] See text at pages ???.
[52] Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*, 18.

In three of these years the parties' presidential nominations took place before the McGovern-Fraser initiatives and three followed these reforms.

Each case comprises a narrative constructed by synthesizing primary and secondary sources, the reflections of campaign insiders, and the evaluations of seasoned observers in the media, government, and academy. For each candidate, his nomination is an education in policy – in areas with which he is unfamiliar, in the development of new proposals, and in effectively communicating his opinions and ideas. However, a candidate's speeches on policy reveal only one aspect of the nomination process. Nominations are also concerned with politics: anticipating rivals' activities and responding effectively; interacting with client groups, members of the public, the media, and political elites; leading and managing a campaign staff organisation. 'Politics', cautions Nigel Bowles, 'occur not exclusively or even primary in public rhetoric, but in private conversations, private discussions, and private ruminations about prospective acts both private and public'.[53] Thus, the many dimensions to a candidate's campaign encourage a research method that is equally diverse: engaging polling data, documentation of elite perceptions of characters and events, and the correspondences between members of the candidates' staff and their interactions with client groups and political leaders.

[53] Bowles, *Nixon's Business: Authority and Power in Presidential Politics*, 35.

# 2 A THEORY OF AGENCY

## (I) CHOICE IN NOMINATION POLITICS

'We are planning agents', states Michael Bratman, and we attempt to follow through future-directed plans of action to solve the array of problems that we confront.[1] Candidates in nomination politics are no different. Before taking actions, they generally make plans based on their goals and assumptions about their operating environment. They update these plans as their goals change or they receive new information about their options. Close empirical analysis of nominations contests reveals that candidates regularly face situations where they must make choices (and avoidance or delay is tantamount to a choice); and that these decisions affect nomination races in fundamental ways.[2]

Moreover, candidates demonstrate a genuine awareness of these facts, and their campaign planning illustrates that they believe in their ability to exercise choice – 'the capacity to have done otherwise' (Pettit, 2002: 257) – between consequential alternatives.[3] However, such a capacity is meaningless if politicians' cognate actions are pre-determined; so a meaningful theory of agency implies a conception of candidates as free actors and the state of the world as such that different choices can produce different outcomes.

Focusing on candidates' campaign choices does not exclude consideration of important financial, ideological, legal, procedural, and technological influences on the nomination process. Instead, my aim is to provide a different perspective on the effects of these structural factors by focusing explicitly on the choices facing candidates. This viewpoint offers advantages over discussions that trace the changing nature of structural factors such as the political parties' nominating rules. Such structures often provide unclear or conflicting signals concerning a candidate's best course of action. Under such circumstances, the choices that a candidate makes cannot simply be inferred from the structures of his political environment. The empirical chapters in this thesis demonstrate that such situations, where structural incentives are ambiguous, are plentiful. Indeed, it is my contention that this interpretation offers a reasonable depiction of nomination politics in general.

As they pursue their party's presidential nomination, candidates face three sets of choices. Their *identity* choices concern their decisions to advocate or reject association with issue arguments. Such decisions determine the perception of candidates' positions on salient political questions. Because a number of aspirants seek an indivisible prize, the nomination contest is competitive. Candidates make *tactical choices* to defeat their rivals, and these include decisions relating to entry into and exit from the race, and attempts to build support in order to promote their candidacy and eliminate their rivals'. Candidates do not pursue their

[1] *Faces of Intention: Selected Essays on Intention and Agency*, 1.
[2] As Neustadt warned, '[d]ecision is so often indecisive, and indecision is so frequently conclusive, that *choice* becomes the preferable term'; *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*, 49.
[3] Pettit, *Rules, Reasons, and Norms: Selected Essays*, 257.

aims on their own. Instead, they operate as principals in small campaign organisations constructed to promote their aspirations. Candidates' *management choices* concern their decisions with respect to their campaign teams, including recruitment, organisational structure, decision-making processes, and the means by which conflicts between team members are resolved. Candidates' management decisions have received less attention than the identity and tactical spheres in the political science literature, but can also be fundamental to their prospects. Commenting on the failings of the President Ford campaign team in its struggle against Ronald Reagan's challenge, for instance, Robin Kolodny observes that 'The lesson to be garnered from these events is that campaign organizations, especially since 1968, are political variables in themselves and not simply mechanical structures for the running of campaigns'.[4]

These identity, tactical, and management choice types are distinct. They comprise different kinds of problems; success in one arena does not necessarily produce success in others; and candidates' abilities may vary between these arenas. Consider, for example, Senator Gary Hart's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984. Hart, media observers agreed, offered fresh and innovative thinking on issues such as taxation, environmental protection, and foreign policy where his plans included use of America's economic superiority for democracy promotion.[5] Tactical experience as Senator George McGovern's campaign manager in 1972 provided him with expertise in planning campaign strategy. Important strategic objectives, such as demonstrating viability and exceeding media expectations in the New Hampshire primary, were achieved, especially in the early stages of Hart's campaign. However, throughout his presidential effort, Hart's campaign was plagued by management frailties. A group of *Time* reporters summarised Hart's central conundrum:

> Hart is a shrewd political tactician. But it is exceedingly difficult to be a winning candidate and an artful campaign manager at the same time … when Hart delegates, he often finds himself trying to clean up the mistakes of his young and inexperienced staff.[6]

Among other errors, Hart's aides solicited advice from political reporters, aired ads on television that Hart had promised had been pulled, and released information contradicting the policy positions that their candidate had publicly espoused.

Hart's 1984 campaign illustrates that the choices that candidates face in one sphere differ from those in other spheres; and that the skills pertinent to success vary across these choice types. In the Hart case, the candidate effectively espoused a coherent reform programme and pursued sound campaign tactics (at least early in his campaign). Hart's campaign management choices, concerning staff recruitment, the integration of his team into his decision-making process, effective delegation of tasks, and motivation of his subordinates, were less successful.

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[4] Kolodny, 'The 1976 Republican Nomination: An Examination of the Organizational Dynamic' in Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford and the Politics of Post-Watergate America*, 597.
[5] Henry, *Visions of America: How We Saw the 1984 Election* and Germond and Witcover, *Wake Us When It's Over: Presidential Politics of 1984*.
[6] Thomas, Stacks and Beckwith, *Time*, April 2, 1984.

Hart's 1984 campaign also illuminates connections between identity, tactical, and management choices. To use George Tsebelis's terminology, these arenas of choice are *nested*: 'events or strategies in one arena influence the way the game is played in another arena'.[7] Hart's campaign management problems impeded his ability to implement his campaign strategy, and meant that the coherence of his issue messages splintered as the nomination race developed. For instance, in advance of the New York primary election, Hart was accused of 'flip-flopping' because a staffer rejected claims that Hart supported transition of Israel's capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, even though Hart had recently converted to supporting such a move. This vacillation undermined Hart's political identity, and contributed to his resounding defeat to Walter Mondale in New York, and in future primary contests.

The linkages between identity, tactical, and management spheres go beyond connections between the consequences of candidates' choices in these arenas. Candidates exhibit different goals motivating their actions in each of these arenas, and these aims affect each other. Identity success is tantamount to pursuit of policy positions from which the candidate gains personal satisfaction. It reflects a policy motivation.[8] Success in the tactical arena involves rupturing opponents' strategies in order to win in electoral contests. These goals may be at odds with each other and a candidate might, for instance, compromise long-standing ideological commitments in order to improve his chances of defeating his rivals in an electoral contest. However, this Downsian scenario, where candidates trade policy commitments for potential votes, is not the only viable campaign strategy. Alternatively, for instance, a candidate might strive to build a viable electoral coalition from a clearly defined set of issue positions. This allows a candidate to pursue his policy and office goals simultaneously, and avoid exposing his campaign to the harmful charge of dithering. As Jeff Taylor explains with reference to the Democratic pragmatism of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, duplicity is frequently counter-productive:

> Soft-pedaling your positions and flip-flopping on issues will take you only so far. When there is a seemingly clear, viable alternative present, you tend to be out of luck in terms of attracting support from all sides of a controversial issue. People will rightly wonder if your latest pronouncement is a change in position or just a change of strategy after realizing that the position is a net political liability.[9]

Management choices concern candidates' desire to build capacity: to research, clarify, and promote issue messages; identify, communicate with, and mobilize potential supporters; and anticipate and react to opponents' activities. Staffers can also lend valuable credibility to a campaign. Reagan's decision to keep John Sears, a renowned strategist, as his campaign manager in spite of his poor performance in operational matters reflected Sears's high reputation in press circles. Thus, campaign organisations should extend a candidates' reach, endowing him with additional competence irrespective of his mix of policy and office goals.

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[7] Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics*.
[8] Muller and Strom, *Policy, Office, or Votes? How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*.
[9] Taylor, *Where Did the Party Go? William Jennings Bryan, Hubert Humphrey, and the Jeffersonian Legacy*, 265.

However, in practice candidates' search for capacity affects their policy and office goals, and vice versa.[10] For example, recruitment and retention of campaign workers often hinges on perceptions of a candidate's political identity, and a candidate's staff might be more or less willing than the candidate to see him conduct particular activities in pursuit of policy or office goals. Peter Hannaford describes the building tension in the Reagan campaign between moderates, who tried to push Reagan to dilute his issue stands, and uncompromising conservatives. One conservative declared that 'If we're talking about fresh ways to sell Ronald Reagan's conservatism, fine, but if we're talking about ways to change his positions on issues, forget it'.[11] These frictions are not unique to ideologically-charged campaigns. Speechwriter Robert Shrum resigned from Carter's campaign after becoming disillusioned with his candidate's equivocation on issues – a demonstration that issue strains develop even in consciously non-ideological campaigns.

*(a) Identity Choices*

Struggle over issues is fundamental to American politics. William H. Riker compares issues in politics to organisms in biology and John Gerring explains that 'American political history … [is] irreducibly ideological'.[12] In nomination politics, candidates' identity choices concern their perceived location in relation to topical relevant issues. As Alex Callinicos argues in *Making History: Agency, Structure, and Change in Social History* 'agents' ability to realize their goals is determined by their place in social relations'; and in nomination politics, candidates' identity choices affect the nature of competition between them and its interpretation by voters. There are four major ways in which candidates reveal their political identities:

1. Issue Advocacy. Speeches, statements, interviews, clarifications, and explanations serve to create impressions of candidates' preferred positions on policy questions. Furthermore, their willingness to highlight some issues instead of others indicates their ranking of issue priorities.

2. Group Association. Candidates' professional and personal connections to members of groups with avowed political agendas or interests can be sources of interpretations of their political identity. A common inference is that an actor shares perspectives with the individuals he chooses to associate with.

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[10] In *Campaign '72: The Managers Speak*, May and Fraser claim that most campaign histories assume that candidates take positions based either on their true beliefs or, more cynically, on calculations of political benefits. This dichotomy, they explain, is simplistic and evidence that 'we have a great deal to learn about how [campaign] choices take shape'. Instead, they hypothesize, 'positions on issues may reflect neither principle nor calculations but be products instead of problems within the campaign organization or accidental results of the way the organization works …' (pp. 26-27).

[11] Hannaford, *The Reagans: A Political Portrait*, 212.

[12] Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, 211. Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America 1828-1996*, 6. Smith draws attention to the importance of multiple ideological traditions in American political history, including liberalism, republicanism, and ascriptive forms of Americanism (especially those stressing racial and gender divisions). ('Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America', *American Political Science Review*, 87:3 (1993), 549-566). These arguments and research by other political scientists and historians profoundly challenge the claims of scholarship supporting non-ideological views of American politics. Non-ideological research includes the argument, espoused by Hartz (*Liberal Tradition in America: an Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution*) and Hofstadter (*The American Political Tradition*), that ideological appeals are ineffective in American politics because of general consensus on liberal tenets such as property rights, economic individualism, and capitalist competition.

3. Legislative Activity. For candidates who have held legislative office, their voting records can provide information concerning their stance on issues. Similarly, their attempts to introduce bills also signal information about candidates' political identities.

4. Executive Activity. For candidates who have held executive office, their legislative proposals and priorities, use of vetoes, and independent executive orders, constitute instructive identity choices.

Candidates contribute to perceptions of their political identity by acting in ways that are interpreted in identity terms. They may intend for some activities – such as speeches, votes, and executive acts – to augment or diminish aspects of their political identity. However, important dimensions of a candidate's political identity tend to be inferred from their actions in complicated circumstances. It might be the case that only the results of their activity in combination with other actors' is observable; and their actions are often subject to multiple interpretations with members of the public drawing conclusions by following elite cues or filtering new information through existing psychological filters.[13] Thus, in most situations candidates have composite identities and the representation of some aspects instead of others requires careful cultivation, demonstration, and promotion. In these complex tasks, aspirants can easily lose control of the essence of their identity, to their rivals or even their subordinates. This latter handicap, explains Skowronek, lay at the core of George H.W. Bush's problems in his 1992 campaign: 'he turned the whole problem of identity over to his handlers and got himself lost in their strategies'.[14]

Candidates develop aspects of their political identity early in their lives, as a result of their family background, schooling, and early career decisions. However, most of this background information provides few meaningful clues about a candidate's political preferences. More significant to their identity are their actions in prominent public arenas – as a member of a president's cabinet, or as a state governor or legislator. These positions offer repeated opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their policy commitments and preferences. As observers learn more about a candidate's positions, and uncertainty about his political identity diminishes, it becomes risky for him to attempt to drastically alter relatively stable perceptions of his identity. Voters generally prefer authentic candidates, with clear and consistent positions, over those perceived to be fuzzy or inconsistent.[15]

Debates over topical political questions and candidates' relationships to these salient issues are central to fluctuations in the course of a nomination race. The campaigns of George McGovern in 1972 and Barry Goldwater in 1964 readily accepted the critical role of their candidate's identity to building and sustaining support in primary elections. Accounting for Goldwater's rise to the Republican presidential nomination,

[13] Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.
[14] *The Politics Presidents Make*, 441.
[15] Though in *Political Hypocrisy: the Mask of Power, from Hobbes to Orwell and Beyond*, Runciman argues that all we can do is choose the best hypocrite. In a recent field experiment Tomz and Van Houweling find that ambiguity can actually attract voters if they are risk-averse, feel uncertain about their own policy preferences, or strong partisans (because these voters assume the candidate to lean in their direction instead of implementing policies at the centre of an ambiguous platform); 'Candidate Ambiguity and Voter Choice', *American Political Science Review*, 103:1 (2009), 83-98.

Andrew E. Busch explains that 'Barry Goldwater was sought out and drafted by the conservative movement', which targeted not only the presidential nomination in 1964 but long-term domination of the Republican Party.[16] However, even for candidates running campaigns that appear less issue-focused than Goldwater's, their political identity – manifest in subtle but powerful undercurrents – can be crucial to their prospects. Though Jimmy Carter was frequently criticised for espousing fuzzy proposals bereft of specific details, his identity as an outsider without connections to a discredited Washington establishment was elemental to his appeal. In contrast, President Ford, a moderate Republican, faced obstacles to his re-nomination because of his close associations to the Nixon White House.

In *The Politics That Presidents Make*, Stephen Skowronek argues that politicians' identity to the dominant partisan regime coupled with perceptions of this order shape political possibilities, and in particular constrain an incumbent's opportunities for transformative action. 'A president's political authority', writes Skowronek

> turns on his identity vis-à-vis the established regime; warrants for exercising the powers of the office vary depending on the incumbent's political relationship to the commitments of ideology and interest embodied in preexisting institutional arrangements. Presidents attempt to build all sorts of nuance and subtlety into this relationship, but stripped to essentials, it come in two forms: opposed and affiliated.[17]

An analogous situation obtains prior to a president's inauguration, as he begins his run for the White House by contesting his party's presidential nomination. As Ford's difficulties in 1976 illustrate, success or failure can turn on a candidate's ability to portray himself as untouched by an unpopular partisan regime; or indeed the entire Washington establishment, as demonstrated by a number of successes by aspiring state governors.

Contests over ideas in nomination campaigns have shaped more than swings in particular nomination contests. A number of scholars point to the effects of identity struggles originating in nomination politics on the institutions of the nomination process and the historical development of the Democratic and Republican parties. James Ceaser in *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development* argues that ideas are the motors of institutional change in nominating mechanisms. 'The history of presidential selection … can best be viewed as a struggle between two different models of the national electoral process, one having its origins in the view of Martin Van Buren and the other in the thought of Woodrow Wilson and the Progressives'.[18] In the *American Direct Primary*, Alan Ware analyses the process by which an idea – direct primary legislation – was

[16] Busch, 'In Defense of the 'Mixed' System: The Goldwater Campaign and the Role of Popular Movements in the Pre-Reform Presidential Nomination Process', *Polity*, 24(4) (1992), 534.
[17] Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 34-35.
[18] Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development*, 213. According to the Van Buren or party-dominant model, effective representation of the people's interests can be achieved by working through established party channels. Proponents of this view hailed the inception of the convention system of nomination in the middle of the twentieth century that instituted a hierarchy of representation. Progressives maintained that such a representative process, while theoretically defensible, is prone to corruption and domination by a small group of elite politicians. Hence, the most democratic procedures are those that access the preferences of as large a number of citizens as possible, in as direct a way as possible. Theodore Roosevelt, for instance, claimed that 'popular government is incomplete, unless it includes the right of the voters not merely to choose between candidates when they have been nominated, but also the right to determine who these candidates shall be.' Quoted in Odegard and Helms *American Politics: a Study in Political Dynamics*, 500.

conceived, politicised, and sponsored.[19] Brown details the effects of identity struggles between candidates on partisan structures since 1796. She explains that 'aspirants not only respond to partisan incentives, but also foster institutional changes to serve their electoral aims'.[20]

*(b) Tactical Choices*

Nomination politics is a struggle for power and opportunities to exercise power. As Schlesinger explains, 'Ambition lies at the heart of politics. Politics thrive on the hope of preferment and the drive for office'.[21] Consequently, candidates act constantly with an eye to the future. Schlesinger explains some of the tactical consequences of this. 'Ambition theory', he writes, 'focuses on the ways in which men cooperate – form organizations, coalitions, or factions – to serve their political ends'.[22] The tactical arena is the sphere of competition between office-seeking aspirants. A candidate's tactical choices concern activities targeted at imposing his path to the nomination and disrupting the plans and progress of his rivals. Some tactical decisions will need to be made spontaneously in response to events. In these circumstances, candidates must be able to deal effectively with the uncertainty thrust upon them; acting to minimize it when it interferes with their decision-making, seizing it when it offers opportunities for gains by innovation, and imposing it on their rivals to inhibit their planning. However, candidates must also anticipate their need to develop plans in four areas:

1. Strategy. Candidates must define a viable path to victory, and the nomination must be attainable by successfully implementing this strategy.[23] The details of such a strategy depend on the competitive circumstances and candidates' resources and liabilities but rupturing rivals' viable routes to victory is elemental to strategic planning by candidates. This strategic planning generally takes place under conditions of high uncertainty that encourage candidates to make working assumptions about their operating environment and their rivals' actions.[24]

Political scientists have paid insufficient attention to candidates' purposeful planning of their nomination campaigns. Brown's study of presidential aspirants' backgrounds is an exception.[25] She demonstrates that 'opportunists' make the strongest candidates: 'Those who are most capable of turning exogenous factors and unforeseen occurrences to their favor are the most likely to succeed. These politicians tend to possess both

[19] The primary system, Ware argues, resulted from the self-interested desire of dominant politicians to manage party affairs at the end of the nineteenth century under conditions of rapid immigration and urbanisation. Politicians seized upon the primary because it offered a convenient and cost-effective solution to the legitimacy problems undermining the old system.
[20] Brown, *Potential Presidents: Aspirants, Parties, and the Politics of Opportunities*, 7. See also Ceaser, *Presidential Selection*, 213.
[21] Schlesinger, *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States*, 1.
[22] Ibid, 5.
[23] For example, Gurian established that in the campaigns of 1976 and 1980, well known candidates prioritised delegates while lesser known long-shots emphasised momentum, hoping that exceeding expectations in early primary contests would help them to generate greater recognition, finance, and ultimately a sufficient number delegates to win; 'Resource Allocation Strategies in Presidential Nomination Campaigns', *American Journal of Political Science*, 30 (1986), 802-21.
[24] Kayden argues that 'uncertainty is perhaps the most important of the environmental factors because it is the most pervasive'; *Campaign Organization*, 63. Even polling, and other efforts to reduce uncertainty, rarely produce consensus about a candidate's optimal set of activities.
[25] Brown, 'Around Closed Doors and Through Open Windows: A Theory of Aspirant Opportunism, 1796-2004', *Congress & the Presidency*, 36:1 (2009), 1-28.

situational awareness and intuitive – even reflexive (because timing is often crucial) – appropriateness'. Her statistical evidence supports this contention.[26] However, viewed from the perspective of real world candidates and their campaign staff, strategic planning (and execution) are more fundamental than intuitive responses. Indeed, actions that appear spontaneous are frequently the fruits of intricate planning or indirect results of thorough processes. Explaining Karl Rove's mastery of George W. Bush's 2000 presidential run, for instance, journalists Halperin and Harris highlight the distinctively 'synoptic view' in Rove's political planning, reflecting his understanding of the connections between issues, events, personalities, and the public.[27] Indeed, effective planning enables candidates to pre-empt with greater accuracy and consider alternative future scenarios, strategies likely to be more effective than reliance on intuition alone.

2. Entry and Exit. 'Potential candidates', explains Barbara Norrander (2006: 487), 'calculate the probability of victory and compare it to the costs of waging battle'. These costs are both financial and political, as defeats can damage a politician's prestige and victories can sow bitterness among losers. This entry / exit calculus is more complicated in nomination politics than in most other electoral settings because of the number of caucus and primary contests, important differences between the rules governing and participants involved in these contests, and the staggered sequencing of these events.

3. Promotion. The news media, via television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, provides the platforms through which most observers gain their knowledge of candidates and issues. Candidates try to gain positive publicity to enhance their recognition and appeal. They also seek endorsements from significant local political elites. Association with popular elites can improve perceptions of a candidate, and may also signal the commitment of an endorser's networks in support of the candidate. Candidates also work to influence the attention paid to issues that affect their candidacy, favourably or adversely – a task with three dimensions: an understanding of the issue space, an assessment of its malleability, and knowledge of the issue strengths and weaknesses of each candidate.[28]

4. Finance. Campaigns source money by combining the following: direct contacts with large donors, solicitation by direct mail, and federal matching funds.[29] However, these fund-raising efforts occur within a complex legal structure as candidates must adhere to reporting requirements, contribution limits, source limitations, and spending limits (if they choose to opt in to the voluntary public

[26] Ibid, 7. Using an aspirant's breadth of political experience as a proxy measure for opportunism, Brown's regression estimates show that 'aspirant opportunism' is a significant variable in understanding who wins and who loses nomination battles and presidential elections.
[27] *The Way to Win: Taking the White House in 2008*.
[28] See for instance Riker's *Liberalism Against Populism: a Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy*. Medvic develops a matrix that captures a variety of framing techniques. His typology categorises issues based on their salience and the degree to which candidates diverge in the stances that they espouse; 'Understanding Campaign Strategy: 'Deliberate Priming' and the Role of Professional Political Consultants' in Steger, Kelly and Wrighton (eds), *Campaigns and Political Marketing*.
[29] Kayden, *Campaign Organization*, 83.

> financing programme). Raising finance is necessary for the purchase or lease of essential products and services, including premises, office equipment, advertising, polling, and transport. However, finance beyond this minimum essential to run a viable campaign provides a candidate with flexibility: he can combine tactics to reduce risks, keep reserves to handle unforeseen liabilities or opportunities, and can more easily survive setbacks. Generally, however, candidates must work within financial constraints and therefore carefully allocate their resources between different priorities.

Institutional resources, and most notably White House incumbency, provide politicians with tactical advantages over their rivals. Coining the term 'permanent campaign' to characterise the Reagan presidency, journalist Sidney Blumenthal alerted observers to White House structures created explicitly for campaigning rather than governing, including the Office of Communications, the Office of Public Liaison, and the Office of Political Affairs.[30] Kathryn Dunn Tenpas explains the overriding political function of these units: 'Each pays attention to critical groups within the president's electoral coalition while striving to maintain and expand presidential support'.[31] Evaluating his chances of winning the Democratic nomination in 1968 in opposition to President Lyndon Johnson, Bobby Kennedy reveals a further, potent asset from incumbency: a president's ability to shape the national issue agenda.[32] Schlesinger writes that

> Kennedy could not see in particular how he could overcome the advantage that Johnson had through his command of foreign policy. Nothing, Kennedy thought, would restrain Johnson from manipulating the [Vietnam] war in whatever way would help him politically – he could escalate, de-escalate, pause, bomb, stall, negotiate, as the domestic political situation required.[33]

'For example', Kennedy confided to Walter Lippmann, a close associate

> suppose, in the middle of the California primary, when I am attacking him on the war, he should suddenly stop the bombing and go off to Geneva to hold talks with the North Vietnamese. What do I do then? Either I call his action phony, in which case I am lining up with Ho Chi Minh, or else I have to say that all Americans should support the President in his search for peace. In either case, I am likely to lose in California.[34]

The president also benefits from publicity and instant name-recognition, and his status as his party's chief standard-bearer – for a party to reject a president's re-nomination is for it to admit that an administration bearing his name has failed. Given these resource advantages, it is unsurprising, therefore, that a president only rarely faces a meaningful challenge to his re-nomination.[35] Though uniquely formidable, the 'bully pulpit'

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[30] Blumenthal, *Permanent Campaign: Inside the World of Elite Political Operatives*. The Offices of Communications and Public Liaison were established by Nixon. Though the Office of Public Affairs was formally created by Ronald Reagan, nascent semblances existed in the Nixon, Ford, and Carter Administrations.

[31] 'The American Presidency: Surviving and Thriving amidst the Permanent Campaign' in Ornstein and Mann (eds), *The Permanent Campaign and Its Future*.

[32] While a president's association with issues reflects identity choices, his issue-manipulation to increase the salience of some issues and diminishing the importance of others is tactical. Riker describes such activity as heresthetics.

[33] Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 838.

[34] Ibid, 838. Note however that Johnson's failure to control these issues offers a powerful demonstration of the difficulties of successful issue management by presidents.

[35] Epstein explains that it is invariably the case that '[i]ncumbent presidents are able to win [their party] nomination … From 1888 even unpopular elected incumbents [Taft and Hoover] secured re-nomination, and the four incumbents who had succeeded to the

– Theodore Roosevelt's apt description of the Presidency – is not the only office that provides its incumbents with exploitable advantages. Other prominent positions – in a president's cabinet, as House Speaker, US Senator, or state governor – can be used as viable platforms for presidential bids.

*(c) Management Choices*

There is broad consensus in the business management literature that the effectiveness and efficiency of business organisations are variables. Consequently, writes William V. Muse, 'a body of managerial practices when properly performed in a business organization greatly affects the success of that enterprise'.[36] Furthermore, management scholars generally hold that 'these practices have applicability and are equally valid when employed in political [and other social] groups…'[37] However, Muse explains that 'the documented evidence of the validity of the contention is less extensive for these types of organizations than it is for business and industrial firms'.[38] There are obviously important differences between organisations pursuing different objectives, but there are also many common problems: setting goals, prioritizing, organizing, co-ordinating work, evaluating progress, recruiting and motivating staff. In nomination politics, an effective campaign organisation helps a candidate to clarify his options under conditions of uncertainty, make informed choices on the basis of a clearer understanding of his objectives, and increase the returns to decisions that have been taken.

For any campaign, the optimal mix of management techniques depends on the candidates' aims and the style of campaign that he seeks. Candidates invariably reach different answers to a similar set of questions concerning the organisation of their campaign: Who should be recruited to run the campaign? What kinds of competences and experience are deemed important for staff members? What will be the relationship between the campaign's centre and periphery, and between senior officeholders? How will the campaign apportion resources? In general, however, there are three dimensions that serious candidates must consider carefully:

1. Structure. The candidate must recruit motivated workers with valuable skills, and create an organisational structure, with relationships between staff positions, to co-ordinate the activities of his organisation. The candidate must allocate scarce resources to the different sections of his team. Of critical importance is how to deal with the problem of scarce campaign expertise and experience. Can his campaign recruit sufficiently skilled operatives or will the campaign have to employ the services of external political consultants?[39]

2. Process. Candidates can adopt decision-making practices that involve varying degrees of deliberation and delegation. Though clarity of relationships between organisational units can improve co-

presidency by the death of their predecessors also won the nominations that they sought'; 'Political Science and Presidential Nominations', *Political Science Quarterly*, 93:2 (1978), 17, 178-9.

[36] 'The Universality of Management', *The Academy of Management Journal*, 10:2 (1967), 179.

[37] Ibid, 179.

[38] Ibid, 179.

[39] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*.

ordination and reduce duplication, candidates must ensure that their organisations' systems remain receptive to innovation and sufficiently flexible to respond to unforeseen events. [40]

3. External Relations. An organisation with a culture of openness encourages candid and transparent relations with media and client groups. By contrast, more secretive organisations tend to create greater distance between staff and external actors.

## (II) CANDIDATES' FLUCTUATING PROSPECTS

A candidate-centred theory of the nomination process relies on a perspective of candidates as purposive agents striving to impose and rupture paths to the nomination. The process is inherently unstable because each candidate favours stability only when it is consistent with his interests. When the *status quo* benefits one of his rivals, he will try to introduce instability by enhancing his appeal (and thereby pulling support toward him from his opponents), attempt to disrupt the progress of his rivals, or otherwise alter the strategic environment in ways that systematically favour his candidacy ahead of his rivals'.

Two features of the political landscape tend to stabilise candidates' trajectories over the course of a nomination race. Firstly, there are limited chances to gain real advantages over rivals. For instance, votes can be secured only at primaries and caucuses, and there is only one such contest for each state in the union.

Secondly, the number of viable openings is even smaller than this because the nomination process tends to lock in outcomes. Leaders tend to gain momentum effects, and followers are penalised for losses. This creates a dynamic where future results tend to replicate past ones; and victors garner increasing returns from early successes.[41] This idea that 'politics is motion' became John Sears's leitmotif as he planned Reagan's 1976 and 1980 campaigns; and, more generally, this phenomenon is an oft-cited characteristic of the post-reform, primary-dominated system. But momentum effects were also present during the era of brokered conventions, though normally candidates gained momentum more slowly, and sometimes it only became apparent during the balloting at the national party convention. In both situations – pre- and post-reform – stability between turning points follows from the desire of primary voters, campaign sponsors, volunteer workers, and professional politicians to make their choices congruent with their expectations of outcomes. These sets of actors, for varying reasons, tend to back a 'winner'.

The concept of *critical junctures* captures the idea that there are moments in nomination politics where clear shifts occur in the perceptions of the likely winner in any particular contest. In a recent paper on the theory and application of critical junctures, Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Kelemen explain that 'Historical

[40] As Henry Kissinger observed in a different context (foreign policy bureaucracy), 'certainty is purchased at the cost of creativity'); quoted in Burns, *Presidential Government: the Crucible of Leadership*, 300.
[41] The opposite dynamic – an underdog effect where losses enhance one's prospects of future victories – is rarely observed.

outcomes are determined by a long series of events…'[42] Some of these events are 'critical' while others are not, and the significance of a juncture depends on its impact on the final outcome of interest. 'To be "critical", the duration of the juncture must be brief relative to the duration of the causal process or outcome it purports to affect, and the probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome of interest must be high relative to that probability before and after the juncture.'[43] By focusing on change points and the trajectories following from these, the Capoccia and Kelemen account of critical junctures captures elemental features of nomination politics. Crucially, it implies that the nomination process should be largely unpredictable. Consider, for instance, the vivid reflections of an early-twentieth century journalist:

> In national conventions, the law of chance or the law of politics or the law of whatever…often plays strange tricks. Contestants who hold the seemingly 'best hands' frequently, if not usually, lose out. Sometimes those who hold the apparently worst hands win. Occasionally those who hold no visible cards at all are winners in the end.[44]

These remarks are consistent with a critical junctures frame: because the events that prove to be critical can be predicted only rarely, the contest as a whole inherits this property.[45]

However, an important limitation of critical junctures frames is their inattention to important secular changes. The effects of technology in the nomination process, for instance, have often been gradual, and focusing on change moments can belittle incremental trends. However, a 'thick' account of the formation and effects of turning points can, at least to some degree, mitigate this problem. Thus, I aim to use critical junctures as lenses through which to analyse not only the impact of candidates' choices but their intermixing with the activities of other political actors and broader constraining and enabling forces. In his study of choices by WWII protagonists, Ian Kershaw explains that a focus on key individuals' choices quickly produces second-order questions about the context in which those choices were made. Such questions promote insights into how alternatives were moulded and actions funnelled in certain directions:

> The choices made by the leaders of Germany, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, Japan and Italy … fed from and were interwoven with each other. How were these decisions reached? … But related questions arise straight away. What influences were brought to bear on those responsible for the decisions? How far were decisions pre-formed by government bureaucracies, or shaped by competing power-groups within the ruling elites?...

*(a) Observing Critical Junctures*

We can observe significant shifts in candidates' prospects by gauging the reactions of financiers, pollsters, contemporary analysts in politics and the media, and scholars assessing the historical significance of the

[42] Capoccia and Kelemen, 'Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in the Analysis of Critical Junctures', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, 2005.
[43] Ibid, 11. This definition accords with Andrew Abbot's use of 'turning points'. As Capoccia and Kelemen state, '[w]hat makes a turning point a turning point rather than a minor ripple is the passage of sufficient time on the new course such that it becomes clear that the direction has indeed been changed'. (Ibid, 7).
[44] Ulm, 'Candidates Leading At Start Often Lose', *New York Times*, June 22, 1924.
[45] Critical junctures offer an important benefit over other theory precisely because the unpredictability that is observed in real world politics can be reconciled with a theoretical account of politics. Carpenter claims that '[n]arratives have value precisely because they can show us what theory tends to cloud: historical change is contingent and rarely foreordained'; *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*, 35. By highlighting rather than obfuscating unpredictability, critical junctures theory avoids this problem.

events that comprise a particular contest. Engaging with this diverse data set, I observe that a variety of events can be interpreted as critical junctures, including Jimmy Carter's gubernatorial victory in 1976, President Roosevelt's announcement that he would only serve one additional term as president, and President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon. At each of these historical moments, the prospects of the candidates shifted, clearly and significantly.

Since the introduction of primary elections at the turn of the twentieth century, and especially since the post-1968 reforms, a substantial proportion of turning points occur at primary elections.[46] This reflects the fact that primaries perform an important information-revelation function for candidates, political elites, expert observers, and primary voters. Candidates use primary elections to focus their campaign resources and assess their prospects; potential financiers, searching for perceived winners, give disproportionate weight to the rival candidates' primary election results; and, for party elites and primary voters, the primaries provide a clear window through which to observe the candidates' campaign styles and popularity.[47] Closely tracking the mass and elite perception of candidates, the news media magnify the effects of success or failure by popularizing results and interpretations of their significance.

When the perceptions of these disparate groups converge and there exists a widespread belief that a primary is critical to the outcome of the nomination, this widely held belief frequently becomes self-fulfilling. Political resources – money, workers, endorsements, public opinion – gravitate towards the strong performers at such events. Faced with diminishing resources, poor performers face ever greater constraints in the future – eventually exiting the race, normally before the national party conventions.

*(b) Causing Critical Junctures*

In any nomination contest, the candidates who compete are *agents* and their actions are *agency factors*. *Structural factors* refer to the actions of individuals who are not candidates (i.e. non-agents) and exogenous events or states of affairs. Non-agents include elite endorsers and financiers; exogenous events include economic crises or military events; and states of affairs are persistent conditions such as economic stagnation. Individuals' status as agents or structures is fluid and depends on their status in the nomination contest that we are concerned with analysing. Thus, a politician might be an actor in one nomination race but a structure in a previous or subsequent contest. Using these definitions, the causes of critical junctures can be categorised in five ways:

1. *An agency factor(s) causes the critical juncture and there are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome*. The causes of the critical juncture may also include other, though less determinative, structural or agency factors. I label this scenario 'A'.

[46] It does not follow that *most* primary elections are turning points. Rather, I claim that in the class of events that I categorise as turning points primary election constitute a large subset.

[47] Scholars disagree regarding who takes cues from whom. Cohen et al argue that both party leaders and primary voters lead the behaviour of the other group, but that the effect of party leaders (measured by endorsements) on public opinion (polls) is three times stronger than the reverse effect; 'Beating Reform: the Resurgence of Parties in Presidential Nominations, 1980-2000'. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, Aug, 2008.

2. *A structural factor(s) is (are) determinative and there are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome*. The causes of the critical juncture may also include other contributory, though less determinative, structural or agency factors. I label this scenario 'S'.
3. *An agency factor(s) is (are) determinative even though another structural factor would have caused a different outcome, but for the presence of this agency factor(s)*. I label this scenario 'A > S'.
4. *A structural factor(s) is (are) determinative even though an agency factor would have caused a different outcome, but for the presence of this structural factor(s)*. I label this scenario 'S > A'.
5. *An agency factor(s) is (are) determinative even though another agency factor would have caused a different outcome, but for the presence of the predominant agency factor(s)*. I label this scenario 'A > A'.[48]

Employing this categorisation to analyse case studies, we can make claims about the relative importance of agents and structures in a particular nomination contest.[49]

### (III) CHANGING CHOICE SETTINGS

Candidates run for president in environments consisting of legal procedures that constrain how they raise finance and compete in primaries and caucuses; technologies that facilitate and constrain the modes through which they can transmit messages to voters; and local political conflicts and currents. This maze of opportunities and constraints comprises candidates' *choice setting*.

The choice setting in which candidates compete has altered through time, and with it the relative importance of identity, tactical, and management choices. To the extent that changes make one kind of choice more important than other, candidates with relatively high ability in this sphere tend to win.

The salience of particular kinds of choices depends on a number of factors, including institutional rules, technology, and competitive factors. Technology or institutions, for instance, might increase the importance of a particular kind of decision-making, and thereby increase the returns to capacities in this dimension. Furthermore, competition – for instance, convergence in terms of policies or tactics – might increase the importance of management choices, and therefore the returns to management skills, relative to other kinds of competences.

#### *(a) Party Capacities*

Scholars of political parties have detailed the decline of American political parties – in a number of different capacities – since WWII. Associated with, and in some accounts a cause of, this decline has been the spread of presidential primaries in the aftermath of the McGovern-Fraser reforms. The most significant consequence of the decline of the parties, argues Martin P. Wattenberg, is the rise of candidate-centred

[48] In my study there was no critical juncture in which a structural factor was determinative despite the influence of a contrary structural factor (i.e. S > S), but this is a theoretical possibility.
[49] These claims rely on implicit counterfactuals, but highly reasonable ones because my causal analysis depends on considering the probable effects of removing only one variable. Lebow, 'What's So Different About a Counterfactual?', *World Politics*, 52 (2000), 551.

politics. The focus on candidates' choices provides a new perspective on this development, and related debates concerning the decline, or persistence, of party influence in the nomination process. The story that I tell is one in which candidates have always played a critical role in the nomination process: their choices at critical moments have invariably affected their prospects and their paths to the nomination. However, the mid-century changes associated with the McGovern-Fraser commission, technology, and financing legislation, raised further the importance of agency factors relative to structural factors. Wattenberg's identification of a central role for candidates only after the McGovern-Fraser reforms follows from a focus on a presidential campaign when it moves from latency to activity. However, aspirants for the presidency make many – indeed often their most important – moves before declaring their candidacy.

*(b) Ideology*

The content of conservatism and liberalism, the dominant ideologies in American politics, have mutated considerably over the course of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the parties' relationships to these philosophical schools has been marked by tension, as elements of each strive to push their party to affiliate more closely with some principles and compete with factions advocating the rejection of these ideas and embrace of alternatives. It is frequently the case that nomination politics is the arena where these intra-party struggles are most apparent.

Often the leading candidates have represented the parties' rival factions and perceptions of the candidates' positions on issues are critical. However, there have also been nomination contests where ideological differences are perceived to be slight, and in such scenarios the decisive choices lie in the tactical and management realms. The depth of division on issues between the candidates generally depends on their identity to debates occurring about salient, and divisive, political questions. However, as the Republican nomination contest of 1976 illustrates, whether or not a contest contains serious ideological components also depends on the candidates' campaign plans and their implementation. Confronted by Reagan, Ford's campaign stuttered, partially because of indecision about whether to interpret Reagan's effort as a response to the president's ideology or leadership.

*(c) Technology*

Technology is a vital component in campaign planning, and innovations in polling, data storage (computers), information transfer (radio, television, internet), and advertisement production, have transformed presidential campaigns. Most studies of voters find that improvements in technology are, on their own, insufficient to boost engagement, participation, and learning.[50] However, new technology can provide innovative campaigns – rooted in appealing ideas and capable of effective tactical planning – with opportunities to outpace rivals who use less advanced techniques. Media commentators lauded the Obama campaign's use of the internet to

[50] Recent research on the effects of the internet on public opinion and agenda-setting has largely mirrored the findings of an earlier generation of scholarship, dating from Lazarsfeld's work in the 1940s, that found mass media to have limited effects on these dependent variables; Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*.

fundraise and mobilise volunteers.[51] Mark Halperin and John F. Harris highlighted Karl Rove's nimble use of technology in campaigns since the 1980s:

> For most of his career, Rove was a man in search of technology's new, new thing … [He] spent a career living by this Trade Secret: The way to win elections is to be first in adapting new technology, and putting that technology at the center of your political strategy.[52]

## (IV) CAMPAIGN EFFECTS

The scholarship on the impact of political campaigns on election outcomes has found that campaigns have only marginal effects on election results. Election forecasting models featuring measures of economic performance, and a notable absence of campaign variables, generally make close predictions of election outcomes.[53] In an older tradition, incumbency is also a reasonable predictor of outcomes, and theories of elections premised on reliable evidence of stable partisan identification have also been popular.[54] These predictive theories have only limited applicability to nomination politics. In this realm, incumbency is an excellent predictor of success, but partisanship usually plays no part and the economic variables used in forecasting models offer no clear expectations regarding internal party competitions.[55] While the performance of the economy may favour some candidates instead of others (perhaps because of their advocacy of remedies), this possibility also exists for other relevant issues. Thus, when an incumbent president is not running, campaigns have considerable impact in nomination politics, even if these effects diminish after a candidate wins his party nomination.

In their introduction to *Campaigns and Political Marketing,* Wayne P. Steger, Sean Q. Kelly, and J. Mark Wrighton locate the frontier in the research agenda on campaigns: 'The research [on campaigns]', they appraise, 'is increasingly branching into virtually all aspects of campaign activity as campaigns become something to be explained, rather than existing as an undifferentiated, underspecified independent variable'.[56] This thesis aims to contribute to this new focus on campaigns. In particular, this study supports a growing stream of work that encourages a deeper understanding of the ways in which campaigns matter and differ.

## (V) TESTING AN AGENCY THEORY

### *(a) Case Studies*

John Aldrich presents an excellent analysis of candidates' choices in one particular campaign, and this leads him to conclude that '[t]he candidates … should be the central focus of any attempt to understand

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[51] See for instance Miller, 'How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics', *New York Times*, November 7, 2008.
[52] Halperin and Harris, *The Way to Win*, 227.
[53] See for instance the contributions in 'Symposium: Forecasting the 2008 National Elections', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 41:4 (2008).
[54] The seminal studies are Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (on the effects of incumbency) and Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, *The American Voter*.
[55] Though partisanship is generally irrelevant to the vast bulk of nomination contests, there are exceptions. For instance, John Lindsay's candidacy in 1972 was hampered by his recent conversion to the Democratic Party. The presidential aspirations of John Connally, a turncoat in the opposite direction, were also influenced by the effects of his party switch in intra-party contests.
[56] Steger et al, *Campaigns and Political Marketing*, 2.

nomination politics'.[57] And, for four decades, after each election, the Harvard Institute of Politics has hosted a post-election workshop where the rival candidates and their campaign staffers discuss nomination and election strategies. However, there are no studies that systematically examine the ways in which candidates' choices in nomination politics have changed over time. In this study I analyse contested Democratic and Republican nomination contests in six years: 1912, 1924, 1932, 1972, 1976, and 1980. These cases offer snapshots of trends in partisan, financial, legal, and ideological structures, and thereby represent a diverse set of cases suitable for limited generalisations. As Gerring states 'the diverse-case method often has stronger claims to representativeness than any other small-N sample … The selection of diverse cases has the additional advantage of introducing variation on the key variables of interest'.[58]

In order to maximise the leverage from the empirical data that I examine, my case selection strategy follows four distinct steps. The first principle of case selection is partisan balance. In any year, there are important connections between the parties' nomination contests, and anchoring a study on one side risks a glaring neglect of these linkages. Consequently, for each year that I examine, I include cases from both the Democratic and Republican nomination contests, unless one of the party nominations is uncontested.[59]

Second, I select cases that allow me to assess the impact of the McGovern-Fraser reforms. By comparing the nature and consequences of the candidates' choices before (1912, 1924, 1932) and after (1972, 1976, 1980) these reforms, we can gain insights into patterns of continuity and change in candidates' decision-making. Furthermore, within both subsets – pre- and post-reform – the cases cover important sub-group variation. An oft-cited feature of nomination contests prior to 1972 was the difficulty of forming a winning coalition at the convention. This was especially apparent in the Democratic Party because of its diversity and use of a two-thirds majority rule to select its nominees (until 1936). Thirdly, therefore, I choose pre-reform cases that capture varying degrees of deadlock, as measured by the number of ballots required to select the winning candidate. 1912 represented a 'moderate' case with forty-three ballots preceding Wilson's nomination. 1924 was an 'extreme' case with 103 ballots required to secure the nomination of John W. Davis. 1932 represents a case of 'minimal' deadlock, with the nomination of Franklin Roosevelt requiring four rounds.

A primary consequence of the institutional reforms of the 1970s was widespread uncertainty about optimal strategies in nomination politics. However, as candidates observed the successes and failures of previous competitors, a body of knowledge emerged detailing the logics of the new system and a number of 'best practices' – such as targeting early primary contests – became widespread. In order to capture this process of institutionalisation, I analyse early and later responses to the new institutional setup. Consequently, my post-reform cases run concurrently from 1972 to 1980. Uncertainty about the new process peaked in 1972, but was still significant to the way the 1976 contests in both parties played out in both parties. By 1980, expertise in the process, and the marshalling resources to exploit it, was refined and widespread.

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[57] Aldrich, *Before the Convention: Strategies and Choices in Presidential Nomination Campaigns*.
[58] Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, 100.
[59] By this clause I do not analyse the uncontested Republican Party nominations of 1932 and 1976.

*(b) Causal Process Analysis*

Analytic narratives explore cases through theoretical prisms. Such studies connect theoretical proposition with specific cases by elucidating the ways in which general factors translate into outcomes in particular instances. At the heart of these accounts is process-tracing: uncovering 'what stimuli the actors attend to; the decision process that makes use of these stimuli to arrive at decisions; [and] the actual behavior that then occurs…'[60] My empirical chapters follow this method. They aim to advance understandings of nomination politics in general by unpacking the processes that operate in specific nomination contests. My causal analysis is based on two assumptions: firstly, that we can identify the critical moments on a path to a particular outcome of interest; and, secondly, that we can identify the contributions of candidates' choices to the shaping of these events.

Close analysis of cases offers the most fruitful strategy for examining the *Theory of Agency* developed in this chapter. However, case study analysis invariably raises validity problems. Quantitative scholars generally criticise case studies for their lack of internal and external validity. The former concerns the fact that case studies attempt to analyse more variables than is possible given the number of separate observations. Consequently, it is difficult to eliminate potential hypotheses. According to the external validity criticism, case studies deal with too few cases for reasonable generalisations to be made. Both of these criticisms apply to my study, but not in their purest forms. My theoretical setup allows me to make causal claims about the relative impact of agents and structures, probe the sorts of agency factors that are especially important at critical junctures, and thereby reject alternative causal accounts. My case selection method offers reasonable opportunities to generalise about the two major systems of nominations (pre- and post-reform) because of the steps I take to maximise leverage.

*(c) Critical Juncture Analysis*

Identifying critical junctures in historical narratives is troublesome for at least two reasons. First, a 'critical' juncture is a subset in a larger class of junctures, and is special because it has a greater impact on future outcomes. However, distinguishing 'critical' from 'non-critical' junctures is an exercise in judgment. I rely on a combination of primary and secondary sources to determine which junctures pass this critical threshold. These sources include the observations of contemporary journalists, political elites, and campaign operatives; significant changes in candidates' polling and fundraising; and historical interpretations of events by scholars. Before flagging an event as 'critical', I stipulate that it must be identified by commentators and analysts as 'critical', or some similarly significant term such as 'important' or 'essential', to a future critical juncture or the outcome of the nomination race. A broad base for constructing narratives – including chronicles by politicians, campaign workers, journalists, and scholars – increases the range of perspectives on events. These sources also provide the basis by which I assess the degree to which consensus obtains concerning the

[60] George and McKeown, 'Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making', in Coulam and Smith (eds), *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations*, 35..

importance of an event; and I signpost as 'critical' those events that a significant minority of observers identify to be critical. By this requirement, a critical event must be identified as such in at least two different sources; and to reduce the risks associated with presentism – a tendency to view recent events as more significant than they appear with the benefits of hindsight – claims for the importance of an event must include historical assessments.

Secondly, pinpointing the precise start of a historical narrative that ends in an individual's nomination is also challenging. While the end of a nomination process is clearly defined, its start is not, and one can plausibly trace important aspects of the nomination race back to formative moments in the candidates' lives that occurred many years before the contest. However, I exclude speculative assessments and limit my studies to politically relevant events that lead observers to make explicit statements about individuals' prospects in a particular nomination contest. Invariably, therefore, my narratives begin with important events that promote aspirants from the crowd of hopeful speculators to the pack of viable prospects.

## (VI) THEORETICAL CLAIMS AND EMPIRICAL CASES

The *Theory* that I have presented above can be summarised in five propositions. These claims have implications for our understanding of nomination politics. However, the historical narratives that I develop in the chapters that follow complement these theoretical claims with nuances that emerge from close empirical scrutiny of real world politics.

1. *Critical junctures*. Nomination politics is dominated by stasis processes and the candidates' relative positions shift only at relatively rare path-changing moments. In the empirical chapters I find support for this idea: the perceptions of likely outcomes shift at critical moments. Some contests are highly fluid, while others are generally more stable. Additionally, some turning points exaggerate and exacerbate the consequences of earlier critical junctures, while others introduce new phases in the contest.

2. *Centrality of candidates' choice*. Outcomes in nomination politics are affected significantly by the choices of competing candidates. My empirical chapters demonstrate that the vast bulk of changes in candidates' prospects result from agency factors rather than structural factors.

3. *Choice structure*. In pursuit of their party nomination, candidates make identity, tactical, and management choices. These kinds of choices are distinct though interconnected. In each of the cases candidates make these different choice types; but it is apparent that the importance of these choices varies. In the pre-reform nomination contests, identity choices play a fundamental role in the determination of the victor, though his path turned upon tactical and, to a lesser extent, management

decisions. In the post-reform environment, identity remains a significant factor, but tactical and management factors rise to similar levels of importance.

4. *Candidate competence*. Candidates vary in their abilities to make effective identity, tactical, and management choices. Furthermore, candidates' skill levels can be inconsistent across these arenas. In the cases that I examine, the winning candidates combined highly varied combinations of these political aptitudes.

5. *Dynamic choice settings*. Though agency structures were more fundamental than structural factors in pre-reform contests, they became even more important after the 1970s reforms. Additionally, change in the choice setting in which candidates make choices alters the mix of abilities that are important to candidates' success in nomination politics. In particular, the 1970s superimposed new layers of pre-convention management problem on the mix of identity and tactical dilemmas that had been central to candidates' prospects before the McGovern-Fraser reforms.

# 3 THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1912

Woodrow Wilson's victory in the 1912 presidential election relied on a momentary collapse of the American two-party system. The new Progressive Party, headed by former Republican President Theodore Roosevelt, divided American Republicanism and thereby guaranteed Wilson's victory. The origins of electoral defeat must therefore be sourced at the creation and entrenchment of division within the Republican Party in the run-up to the election. In *Progressivism in America*, Ekirch contends that:

> [t]he solemn referendum on Progressivism in 1912 was in large part a contest centred on the personality and program of Theodore Roosevelt. The unusual nature of the campaign had its origins in a number of vital decisions that the ex-President made in the months before the election.[1]

In this chapter I examine these path-changing decisions by Roosevelt and his successor.

The Republican contest in 1912 was initiated, in effect, by Roosevelt's public promise in 1904 not to seek re-nomination in 1908. This was the first of seven significant turning points in the Republican race, where I observe a marked shift in expectations of the party's likely presidential nominee. (See Table 3.1 below). As a consequence of Roosevelt's two-term promise, a reluctant Taft was propelled to the presidency in 1908, with Roosevelt's support of his candidacy a decisive factor at every stage of Taft's rise. However, a number of Taft's decisions in office convinced Roosevelt that his appointed successor had reversed the progressive advances secured in Roosevelt's terms. Roosevelt's entry into the Republican nomination contest followed, and competition between Taft and Roosevelt over delegates' votes and convention procedures culminated in Roosevelt's call, on Saturday, June 22, 1912 for his supporters to withdraw from the Republican National Convention.

Table 3.1 Critical Junctures in Republican Nomination, 1912

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE[2] (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE[3] | AGENT[4] | NATURE OF CAUSE[5] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Roosevelt's Two-Term Promise** | November 8, 1904 | Precludes possibility of a third-term for President Roosevelt; raises possibility of Taft Presidency. | A > S | Roosevelt | A: anticipation of tactical gains (Identity, Tactical)<br><br>S: exogenous restraint (two-term convention) |
| **Payne-Aldrich Tariff Law** | August 6, 1909 | Taft sides with conservative coalition in Congress, disillusions Progressives. | A | Taft | A: decisions concerning tariff policy (Identity, Tactics) |
| **President Taft's Dismissal of** | January 7, 1910 | Taft severs association with key Roosevelt ally. | S, though contributory A | Taft | S: decision of a non-agent (Congress) |

[1] *Progressivism in America: A Study of the Era from Theodore Roosevelt to Woodrow Wilson*, 154.
[2] On the test that this thesis proposes for when a juncture is 'critical', see text at pages ???.
[3] On the ways that this thesis categorises the causes of critical junctures, see the key at the bottom of this table, and text at pages ???.
[4] On the way that this thesis defines 'agent' as ???, see text at pages ???.
[5] On the way that this thesis defines a 'agency factor' and a 'structural factor', see text at pages ???.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gifford Pinchot** | | | | | A: abdication of own executive responsibility (Management, Identity) |
| **1910 Mid-Term Elections** | November 8, 1910 | Referendum on Taft Administration demonstrates president's unpopularity, Roosevelt keeps options open for 1912. | A | Taft | A: Taft's choices as President (Identity, Tactics) |
| **US Steel Corporation Suit** | October 26, 1911 | Taft violates principles established by President Roosevelt; Roosevelt decides to contest Taft. | A | Taft | A: Taft's desire to act independently of Roosevelt (Identity, Tactics, Management) |
| **Ohio Primary** | May 21, 1912 | Roosevelt triumphs, and establishes himself as popular choice. | A > A | Taft; Roosevelt | A (Roosevelt): Identity with popular issues (Identity, Tactics)<br><br>A (Taft): (Identity, Tactics) |
| **Roosevelt Withdraws his Supporters from RNC** | June 21, 1912 | Roosevelt deserts Republican Party after disputing its seating of disputed delegations in favour of Taft. | A | Roosevelt | A: decision to withdraw (Identity, Tactics) |

Key:

(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

## (I) ROOSEVELT'S TWO-TERM PROMISE (NOVEMBER 8, 1904)

*In this section, I show, first, that Roosevelt's two-term promise in 1904 was a critical juncture in the 1912 Republican race. Secondly, Roosevelt's decision to limit his tenure was due more to his anticipation of tactical gains than the exogenous restraint that the two-term convention placed upon him.*

The Republican contest in 1912 was initiated, in effect, by Roosevelt's public promise in 1904 not to seek re-nomination in 1908. Carrying 330 votes to his rival's 136, Roosevelt's victory over Democratic presidential candidate Alton B. Parker in 1904 was sizeable – 'by far the largest popular majority ever hitherto given any presidential candidate', Roosevelt reflected.[6] On the night of his election in 1904, Roosevelt announced that:

> [o]n the Fourth of March next I shall have served three and one-half years, and this three and one-half terms constitutes my first term. The wise custom which limits the President to two terms regards the substance and not the form. Under no circumstances will I be a candidate for or accept another nomination.[7]

With this statement, Roosevelt set in motion a series of events that led to Taft's ascent to the presidency. Roosevelt's announcement was a surprising one because of his nature and the circumstances under which he pledged to abstain in 1912. President Roosevelt remained ambitious and endowed with seemingly boundless energy. Moreover, Roosevelt's declaration was made from a position of political strength: it followed

[6] Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 387.
[7] *New York Times*, November 9, 1904.

immediately after the publication of his impressive election victory. During the campaign he avoided queries about his intentions beyond the term for which he was running and thus his statement cannot be interpreted as a fulfilment of an election promise or a consequence of a diktat from party elites in exchange for support.[8] It was a personal decision made by the president without compulsion or acute pressure; but it was a choice that created new possibilities.

Given his zeal and popularity in November, 1904, why did Roosevelt foreclose the possibility of a third term? Einstein explores three potential explanations.[9] First, Roosevelt's promise, though historic, was careless and made with little forethought. Secondly, Roosevelt's statement might have reflected his belief in the two-term tradition handed down by the Union's founding fathers. Mowry supports this interpretation: Roosevelt was prepared to 'give up the office he so much wanted to retain because in many important things he was a man of principle, and because he was committed to democratic traditions and institutions'.[10] A third possibility considered by Einstein was that Roosevelt sought to commit publicly to abdication out of fear that an additional term would encourage him to consider lifetime tenure in office. As Einstein speculates, 'Before it was too late, [Roosevelt] intended to block his own path by the only barriers which could deter him' from seeking a never-ending presidency.[11]

Einstein rejects the first of these arguments. Carelessness at such a defining moment would be too uncharacteristic to admit as a likely cause. 'Roosevelt, seemingly most impulsive of men', Einstein writes, 'rarely said anything on impulse, and the renunciation of his future power as President came from a hidden deliberate thought …'[12] Einstein's remaining account therefore stresses a combination of Roosevelt's respect for the established two-term precedent and self-knowledge of his ambitions and temptations. Although Roosevelt became associated with a stewardship theory of presidential power that was more flexible and expansionist in scope than the strict constitutional conception held by most of his predecessors, his two-term promise marked a border that he did not envisage he could justify crossing.[13] Roosevelt's eventual entry into the 1912 contest proved even his public pronouncement to be an insufficient commitment.

An important oversight in Einstein's account is the tactical advantage that Roosevelt gained from his pronouncement. From this perspective, Roosevelt's two-term promise sprung from his realisation that such a statement could create exploitable opportunities in his operating environment in the near future. He had identified a potentially significant constituency to be gained by active, progressive intervention in the political

[8] Skowronek contrasts Roosevelt's political strength at the time of his abdication pledge with President Polk's in 1844. Polk's pledge was ventured from a position of weakness and was crucial to his efforts to build support for his candidacy amongst disappointed aspirants; *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*, 252.
[9] *Roosevelt: His Mind in Action*.
[10] *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 227.
[11] Einstein, *Roosevelt: His Mind in Action*, 163.
[12] Ibid, 163.
[13] Roosevelt, Einstein states, 'believed that his place in history would show him in a more disinterested light by his renunciation than if he attempted to violate a tradition handed down from the nation's birth. With his instinct for the workings of the popular mind, he knew that many people would feel disappointed if he tried to occupy the Presidency longer than Washington had'; *Roosevelt: His Mind in Action*, 163.

economy, but felt constrained by entrenched conservative influence in Congress. By announcing his willingness to limit his tenure, Roosevelt could appease conservatives who feared the consequences of a third Roosevelt term. He could achieve more as president; and carefully choose a successor with a similar political disposition who could advance his agenda relatively unaffected by the residue from past conflicts.[14] This multilayered strategy, conjectured Roosevelt, offered the most feasible route to entrench progressive policy and institutional innovations; and his ability to conceive it and impose it would be a political masterstroke and his lasting legacy.[15]

By foreclosing the possibility of a third term, Roosevelt increased sharply the likelihood that his chosen successor would win the Republican presidential nomination and the 1908 presidential election. Not only would Roosevelt's choice benefit from association with a popular president, Roosevelt was prepared to use the tools of the Office, including patronage, to improve his chances of success.[16]

*(a) Roosevelt Chooses Taft*

Roosevelt considered Charles Evans Hughes, the reforming Governor of New York City, Elihu Root, Roosevelt's Secretary of State, and William Howard Taft, Secretary of War, to be the most suitably qualified candidates. Though Roosevelt admired Hughes he withheld his approval for the New Yorker's candidacy, perhaps because he feared for his future political influence if New York became home for two ex-Presidents, 'both with strong personalities, both with a large following, and who could not always be expected to see eye to eye'.[17] Elihu Root, who would be sixty-six in 1909, affirmed that he was 'not willing to pay the price' that the presidency demanded.[18] Unsure of his executive abilities, Taft had always sought a seat on the Supreme Court, and not the presidency, as his leading ambition.[19] Taft repeatedly turned down offers of a seat on the Court when offered by Roosevelt, but he nonetheless he remained unenthused by the prospect of a run for the presidency: 'he wriggled and squirmed and suggested other men almost up to the day that the Republican National Convention assembled in June, 1908', explains Taft's biographer.[20]

Remaining faithful to his two-term pledge, Roosevelt planned for his succession. He publicly avowed confidence in Taft's executive abilities. 'I do not believe there can be found in the whole country a man so well fitted to be President,' he wrote of Taft. 'He is not only absolutely fearless, absolutely disinterested and upright, but he has the widest acquaintance with the nation's needs without and within and the broadest

[14] Skowronek provides evidence for this proposition. Explaining his desire to pass the presidency to a handpicked successor, Roosevelt affirms his belief that his re-election in 1912 would be 'inadvisable because it is almost certain that someone can be found with the same principles, who, from the mere fact that he is someone else, can better succeed in putting those principles into practice'; *The Politics Presidents Make*, 253.

[15] Skowronek argues that Roosevelt achievement would make him disdainful of Taft's struggle in the White House, which he viewed to be less challenging than the political problem that he had solved; *The Politics Presidents Make*, 255.

[16] Roosevelt confided his pro-Taft leanings in his employment decisions: 'I appointed no man *for the purpose* of creating Taft sentiment; but I have appointed men *in recognition* of the Taft sentiment already in existence'; Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 320.

[17] Einstein, *Roosevelt: His Mind in Action*, 169.

[18] Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 428.

[19] Indeed, Taft's ambitious wife Nellie was more ambitious for the Presidency than her husband. [insert evidence from Chace ???]

[20] Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 318.

sympathies with all our citizens'.[21] Roosevelt acknowledged that Taft lacked the vigour about, and enjoyment of, politics that he consistently displayed, but he believed Taft to be highly capable. Crucially, according to Roosevelt, Taft shared his perspectives on the nation's major political challenges and had faithfully supported Roosevelt's policy initiatives in a variety of areas.

*(b) The Roosevelt-Taft Schism*

Early twentieth century progressivism was a cluster of ideas that, in response to growing concentrations of economic and political power, advocated measures to empower workers, consumers, and citizens.[22] In his first term, Roosevelt's most notable breaks with the conservative, laissez-faire policies of his predecessors consisted of the 1903 Elkins Act strengthening federal control of railroad pricing, the creation of a Bureau of Corporations to investigate corporate practices, the Meat Inspection Act, and the Pure Food and Drug Law. These measures, Ekirch affirms, served to 'illustrate the Progressive tendency toward further centralization of power in the federal government … [and] typified a conception of democracy that was nationalistic as well as reform-minded'.[23] However, Roosevelt's progressive ambitions exceeded these achievements, and he believed that the political environment would become more fertile for further progressive legislation in future years. In his second term, Roosevelt was more active and vigorously enforced the Sherman Anti-Trust Act by entering suits against some of the nation's largest companies, and even attacked the conservatism of the Supreme Court, but he steered clear of tariff reform where conservative opposition in Congress was trenchant. However, he publicly flagged tariff revision as an issue to be dealt with after Taft's election to the presidency in 1908. Indeed, the Republican platform pledged 'unequivocally for a revision of the tariff by a special session of Congress immediately following the inauguration of the next President …'[24]

Roosevelt's two-term promise and anointment of Taft as his successor reflected his commitment to progressivism in his second term and beyond. And, initially, President Taft considered himself an adherent of Roosevelt's political philosophy. In the close of 1907, in a private letter, Taft revealed his steadfast commitment to Roosevelt's policies.[25] In light of their break in 1912, how robust is this claim? According to Roosevelt's supporters in 1912 and in standard historical accounts, the Roosevelt-Taft split was the result of conscious efforts by Taft to repudiate his predecessor's legacy. Mowry, for instance, asserts Taft's conservative centre of gravity; and he explains Taft's departure from this stance as Roosevelt's Secretary of War as a transient response to the force of Roosevelt's domineering personality.[26] In opposition to this

[21] Ibid, 356.
[22] For this standard interpretation of the genesis of progressive discourse see for instance Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era*. Hofstadter (*The Age of Reform: from Bryan to FDR, 1916-1970*) and Kolko (*The Triumph of Conservatism: a Re-Interpretation of American History, 1900-1916*) offer alternative accounts of the development of American progressivism. Hofstadter stresses the importance of old-new elite rivalries, and Kolko argues that some progressive reforms, especially in federal regulation, were sponsored by capitalist executives to limit competition by establishing barriers to entry.
[23] *Progressivism in America*, 133.
[24] Porter and Johnson, *National Party Platforms, 1840-1956*, 158.
[25] 'I agree heartily and earnestly in the policies which have come to be known as the Roosevelt policies'; Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 339.
[26] Mowry writes that 'Taft was a conservative instinctively, emotionally, and ideologically. He revered the law, the judicial process, and the order that accompanied it. He respected the past and its institutions and disliked change, especially if that change was initiated by

mainstream interpretation, Pringle argues that it was not Taft who embarked on a different course upon entering the Presidency, but Roosevelt when he left the Office. Taft, Pringle explains, 'was to be charged with having abandoned the principles of liberalism which had marked the Roosevelt years. I think it can be shown that the charge is untrue'.[27]

Mowry and Pringle demonstrate that plausible narratives can be constructed showing the Taft administration's conservative turn in 1908 or Roosevelt's co-optation of a new set of progressive principles. However, implicit in both interpretations are the tactical considerations that conditioned the choices and actions of Roosevelt and Taft. My account emphasises these pivotal interactions. I argue that tactical manoeuvres by Roosevelt and Taft both nested and fuelled the Roosevelt-Taft identity schism.

## (II) THE PAYNE-ALDRICH TARIFF LAW (AUGUST 6, 1909)

*I argue that the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Law was a critical juncture because it represented the first significant occasion where Taft's actions were perceived by progressive politicians to advance conservative interests. It thereby marked the inception of the ideological fissure that motivated Roosevelt's entry. The causes of this juncture were Taft's identity and tactical choices: his personal beliefs about an optimal tariff regime and the appropriate scope of presidential influence in the legislative process, and his understanding of and willingness to exploit opportunities to achieve the outcomes he desired. At this turning point, Taft faced few structural constraints or pressures from other nominees in his decision in this crucial area.*

In the late 1890s commodity prices rose steadily and, coinciding with the enactment of the Dingley Act of 1897 which raised tariff schedules to unprecedented levels, small businesses and consumers blamed the high tariff for eroding both profits and income. The major beneficiaries of the Dingley tariff regime were North-Eastern manufacturers, and their interests were protected effectively by a cadre of influential congressional conservatives, the most prominent of whom were House Speaker Joseph G. Cannon and Rhode Island Senator Nelson W. Aldrich. Leading a cohesive group of elder Republican statesmen – including Sereno E. Payne, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee – the conservative leadership dominated the powerful committees in both chambers.

True to the campaign commitments of his party, Taft summoned Congress into a special session within two weeks of his inauguration. At the meeting Aldrich and Cannon maintained that tariff 'revision' could be *upward*, an audacious claim that fractured the established assumption that tariff levels must be lowered by some margin. Despite the opposition of insurgents led by Wisconsin Senator Robert La Follette, the Payne-Aldrich Bill was passed in both chambers. The new bill, on balance, lowered rates, but only slightly, and left most of the old regime untouched. Conservative leaders held floor majorities together with threats of targeted reductions on the tariffs for products from rebellious legislators' states. The doctrine underpinning

political pressure from below … During the Roosevelt years he was quite content to permit his superior to call the tune.' (Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 234, 236).

[27] Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 339.

congressional debate – that the tariff should equalize the cost of production at home, plus a fair profit, with the costs of imports – was abused by the representatives of industry in Congress. In particular, costs were exaggerated when they were unknown or difficult to calculate, and there was little consideration for the possibility that manufacturers quoting high costs were producing goods inefficiently.

These results fell far short of the expectations of tariff reform advocates, and heavy criticism of Aldrich was followed by demands for veto action by President Taft who had remained by the sidelines in the legislative battles over the bill. Pringle explains that '… This was the first disappointment of the embattled low-tariff men in both houses. They clearly expected that the President would sound a stirring call for action'.[28] Much to their surprise, the president made only a token response, and it took the clerk only two minutes to communicate in full the president's comments on the bill. Pringle chronicles the reaction of the insurgents present at the reading: they 'exchanged glances as they listened; had the President already deserted their crusade?'[29]

Anxiousness about Taft's apparent complicity in the conservatives' tariff plot diffused beyond Congress. Mowry highlights a swell in public concern about the politics of tariff reform in Washington: 'As the tariff rates mounted closer to the heavens after each roll call', Mowry writes, 'the public began to wonder why Taft did not move to stop this violation of his pledges'.[30] Indeed, Taft's veto threats while the bill was considered by a joint House-Senate conference committee secured only minimal concessions: free hides and reductions on glass, timber, coal, and iron ore. 'The victory rested with Aldrich and high protection', but despite this Taft, on a cross-country trip to Winona, Minnesota, exclaimed 'I am bound to say that I think the Payne bill is the best bill the Republican party ever passed'.[31] The public reaction was swift and intense. Progressives were furious, fearing that the President had unwittingly unmasked himself as a reactionary, an ally of Cannon and Aldrich and therefore an opponent of the insurgent faction of the Republican Party. La Follette announced that 'Taft's course upon the tariff legislation had raised, in the mind of every real Progressive, doubts as to his availability as a candidate to succeed himself'.[32] In her biography of the Wisconsin Senator, Unger confirms that La Follette was 'appalled' by Taft's declaration, an opinion that she claims was shared by a 'vast number of his fellow Americans, especially those in the West'.[33] On this critical issue – a key plank in both parties' election platforms – the President had shown his true colours.

Taft's involvement in the formulation of tariff policy took the form of three key decisions: relative passivity while the initial House and Senate bills were debated, a threat to veto unsatisfactory legislation emerging from the congressional conference committee created to reconcile differences between the House and Senate

[28] Ibid, 426.
[29] Ibid, 426.
[30] Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 63.
[31] Ibid, 63; Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk: Electing a President in 1912*, 34.
[32] La Follette, *Autobiography: A Personal Narrative of Political Experiences*, 204.
[33] *Fighting Bob La Follette: The Righteous Reformer*, 188.

versions of the tariff bill, and signing the bill into law on August 5, 1909. With important, viable alternatives available at each decision juncture, Taft's choices were real ones.

Taft's reluctance to bring his influence to bear early in the legislative process was a direct result of his strict interpretation of the separation of powers principle – a deference to Congress in legislative matters that was not shared by his predecessor. However, by ceding important ground at this initial stage, Taft increased the likelihood that the final law would be crafted by powerful conservative forces in Congress. Instead Taft chose the House-Senate conference committee as the forum at which he would attempt to exert influence. Dissatisfied with the bills emerging from both houses, but especially critical of the Senate's version, Taft aimed to achieve important modifications before agreeing to sign the bill into law. Solvick wrote that '[i]f the reductions both in the House and Senate bill could be embodied in the conference bill, and the increases eliminated, I believe we should have a good bill'.[34]

In his negotiations with congressional leaders, Taft was aware both of their skill and objectives. Taft historians, explains Stanley D. Solvick, mistakenly 'underrate Taft's knowledge of political reality'.[35] Commenting on the tariff bill's progress through the Senate, for instance, Taft observed that 'Mr Aldrich is engaged in getting the bill through the Senate, and there is the place of special interests, and there is the most difficult place to deal with a recalcitrant minority'.[36] However, rather than demanding significant concessions from his rivals – under a credible veto threat – Taft failed to act optimally in the pursuit of his own objectives. Solvick is correct to claim that Taft was more attentive than some of his critics give him credit for, but the observed results from the actions he took were indistinguishable from those that would have followed had the president been an amateur in bargaining and compromise. These outcomes occurred because Taft was unwilling to use his awareness of his opponent's objectives to his benefit, and thereby carried considerable bargaining disadvantages that limited the concessions that he could force on his opponents.

While Taft desired downward revision of tariffs, his position was more subtle and moderate than the demands of the leading progressives in Congress who professed to represent the interests of Western farmers and consumers. Taft contended that tariff revisions should be periodic and based on two principles. The 'normative' principle held that the proceeds of civilization should be distributed between producers and consumers.[37] His 'scientific' principle was the observation that business expenses tended to decline over time as manufacturing became more efficient and technology advanced. In combination, these ideas implied an expectation of moderate tariff reductions at frequent intervals to ensure redistribution of income in favour of consumers as businesses gained returns from falling production costs. However, Taft's balanced and sophisticated position was exploited by conservatives in the conference committee who benefited from their

[34] 'William Howard Taft and the Payne Aldrich Tariff', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 50(3) (1963), 432.
[35] Ibid, 431.
[36] Ibid, 431.
[37] Some protectionists and industrialists argued that manufacturers deserved special treatment as consumers were already 'rewarded' by higher wages than foreign workers.

initial capacity to draft the bills under discussion and present a degree of resolve over their demands that was unmatched by the more judicious president. Following the initial meetings of the House-Senate conference committee the president, writes Mowry, 'moderated his demands for free raw materials and reductions in woollen, glove, and hosiery schedules'.[38] Thus, Taft's temperate analysis of an ideal tariff policy became a weakness because his opponents were both more entrenched and more extreme. As a prominent Washington contemporary put it, Taft was a 'ponderous and amiable man completely surrounded by men who knew exactly what they wanted'.[39]

Taft's vulnerability was exacerbated by his unwillingness to use his legislative veto. His reluctance stemmed from his genuine desire to maintain harmony within the Republican Party and between the president and Congress in his first year in office. Because of these subsidiary objectives, however, Taft ceded ground to his opponents and remained entirely disinclined to cause tension by using his legislative veto. Clarifying Taft's final negotiation position, Solvick surmises that 'Taft did not intend to approve any version that the conference committee might produce.'[40] However, Solvick adds, Taft was prepared to accept even marginal changes towards his preferred position: President Taft 'felt obliged to sign any bill which would be a substantial improvement over the Dingley Act'. Given the excesses of the Dingley regime such a reference point was likely to produce a bill more to the liking of conservatives than progressives.

Taft had aimed initially to force concessions on both the House and Senate versions of the tariff bill, but finally signed into a law a bill that resembled more closely the aggressively protectionist Senate version.[41] And rather than candidly admit defeat or disappointment with this outcome, Taft, by electing to claim victory in his speech at Winona, ensured a hostile reaction by progressives to his actions. Taft's choices in the tariff episode undermined his support within his party, and emboldened his opponents as they sensed his calamitous position and postured to exploit it. William F. McCombs, Woodrow Wilson's campaign manager, wrote that '[t]he back of the Taft Administration had been broken by the passage of that Act. Mr. Taft's political future was ruined by his signature to the Bill'.[42]

### (III) PRESIDENT TAFT'S DISMISSAL OF GIFFORD PINCHOT (JANUARY 7, 1910)

*Taft's dismissal of Pinchot marked a turning point because by his action, Taft appeared to reject his predecessor's programme of conservation policy and revealed further his conservative identity. However, the predominant cause of the juncture was structural: a Congressional inquiry found Pinchot guilty of insubordination and Taft had no viable option but to dismiss Pinchot. Taft contributed to the juncture through his reluctance to investigate the matter himself.*

[38] *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 62.
[39] James Chace, *1912: Wilson, Roosevelt, Taft and Debs – The Election that Changed History*, 17.
[40] Solvick, 'William Howard Taft and the Payne Aldrich Tariff', 438.
[41] In the final report, the House yielded on 522 Senate amendments to its Payne bill, the Senate yielded to 124, and 201 amendments had been compromised; Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 63.
[42] McCombs and Lang, *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 67.

Relaxing on a post-presidency safari in Congo, Roosevelt received a Press Agency cable with the news that Chief Forrester Gifford Pinchot, an ardent conservationist, had been dismissed by President Taft. Serving under Secretary of the Interior James R. Garfield, Pinchot had become vital to Roosevelt's campaign to protect the American wilderness from industrial pressures. Roosevelt lavished high praise on his chief forester claiming that 'among the many, many public officials who under my administration rendered literally invaluable service to the people of the United States, he, on the whole, stood first'.[43]

The controversy began when Pinchot publicly protested against his superior, Secretary of the Interior Richard A. Ballinger, when Ballinger released coal lands in Alaska for private development. The Secretary enjoyed close links to the corporations that were seeking to use the lands and Pinchot quickly seized upon these connections to explain Ballinger's actions. Pinchot's insubordination, explains Broderick, was 'a conscious act of defiance intended to produce just the public brawl that did occur'.[44] A congressional inquiry cleared Ballinger of wrongdoing and Pinchot was summarily dismissed.

Pinchot had secretly supplied newspapers with damaging material about Ballinger throughout the autumn of 1909, and, as details of the controversy leaked, public attacks against the president and his administration increased. 'Newspapers, Republican and Democratic alike,' Mason comments, 'were quick to sense and exploit the significance of this dismissal'.[45] Their common inference was that a significant rupture had occurred in the ranks of the Republican Party. As Mason tells it, 'Some [journalists], in fact, saw it for what it was, the first step toward that historic schism in the Republican Party which led in 1912 to ignominious defeat'.[46]

However, Taft did not panic. Nor did he initially consider the position of his Chief Forrester – whom he had long considered 'a radical and a crank' – in his administration.[47] Rather, he cautioned Pinchot for his attacks against Ballinger. Responding to his brother's suggestion that he let Pinchot go, he displayed awareness of the motives and likely actions of Pinchot and the progressives attacking Ballinger. Dismissal, and the further controversy that it would ignite, 'was exactly what Pinchot wanted so that he could appeal to Roosevelt against the administration'.[48] Furthermore, Taft sensed, accurately, that a movement was building demanding Roosevelt's 'return from Elba', and Roosevelt might not be able to resist such a call. Pinchot's close personal relationship with Roosevelt would only increase further the political costs of his dismissal. As Taft candidly admitted regarding the Pinchot-Ballinger affair, 'Theodore may not approve of all I have done and I don't expect him to do so'.[49] However, he desired to keep peace with his former mentor, and to placate the increasing demands on Roosevelt to disavow his successor. Thus, while Taft was willing to act in ways that

[43] Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 394.
[44] Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk*, 34.
[45] *Bureaucracy Convicts Itself: The Ballinger-Pinchot Controversy of 1910*, 31.
[46] Ibid, 31.
[47] Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk*, 34.
[48] Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 79.
[49] Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 507.

his predecessor would not, he admitted his concern to 'try not to do anything which he might regard as a challenge'.[50]

The debate on conservation was interwoven with the progressive-conservative division within the Republican Party. During the Roosevelt administration, the federal government engineered a break with the existing paradigm concerning America's natural resources and their exploitation. The prevailing wisdom had held that important natural resources – gold, silver, coal, timber, oil – were, in practice, inexhaustible and that conservation was therefore unnecessary and artificially limited economic expansion. As Mason summarises, '*Laissez-faire* prevailed in the administration and disposition of our public lands, to permit, even encourage, private control over vast areas containing potentially valuable water-power sites…'.[51]

Roosevelt, influenced heavily by Pinchot's knowledge of and zeal for conservation, advocated an important policy shift from 1901. In his first message to Congress, Roosevelt affirmed conservation as a new government priority: 'The forest and water problems are perhaps the most vital internal problems of the United States'.[52] Conservationists argued that the current rate of exploitation was unsustainable, and that federal control of industrial exploitation could help to reduce waste and improve the distribution of returns from acquisition. To achieve these ends, federal government legislation was necessary. In addition, because enterprising profiteers would inevitably find ways to circumvent rigid rules, a strong administrative apparatus was essential to the effective implementation of conservation policies. By Roosevelt's reasoning, changing the legislative framework was impractical: 'The laws were often insufficient, and it became well nigh impossible to get them amended in the public interest when once the representatives of privilege in Congress grasped the fact that I would sign no amendment that contained anything not in the public interest'.[53] Accordingly, President Roosevelt rationalised, 'It was necessary to use what law was already in existence, and then further to supplement it by Executive action'.[54] It was on these premises that Roosevelt based his argument that 'the President could at any time in his discretion withdraw from entry any of the public lands of the United States, and reserve the same for forestry, for water-power sites, for irrigation, or other public purposes'.[55] Under President Roosevelt, the agencies of the Department of the Interior charged with preserving the nation's endowment of natural resources – Geological Survey, the Reclamation Service, Forestry Service, General Land Office – gained new importance. The resources of the Forestry Service alone increased nearly 200-fold.[56]

Though Taft professed his faith in his predecessor's policies on conservation, his narrower conception of presidential power limited his fervour. He set up the Bureau of Mines to guard the nation's mineral resources, but his appointment of Richard Ballinger proved to be his most significant contribution. Shunning

[50] Ibid, 507.
[51] *Bureaucracy Convicts Itself*, 21.
[52] Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 396.
[53] Ibid, 405.
[54] Ibid, 406.
[55] Mason, *Bureaucracy Convicts Itself*, 25.
[56] Ibid, 24.

Roosevelt's appointee – Garfield – Taft's appointee was an open critic of Garfield's interventions. Within three months of entering office, Ballinger restored over three million acres of land that Garfield had withdrawn, claiming that his predecessor had acted without the requisite legal authority.[57]

Mason analysed the proceedings of the congressional committee investigation into the Pinchot-Ballinger affair. He argues that although the committee was stuffed full of orthodox conservatives, the merit of Ballinger's opposition was apparent. Louis Glavis, who made the initial allegations publicised by Pinchot, was described as a model witness by Representative Madison:

> He was for days upon the stand and every question that was put to him received a concise and clear-cut answer. His recollection of past events was remarkable, his sincerity and earnestness of purpose was apparent. He evaded no issue and in but few respects has it been proven that he was incorrect in his relation of the facts.[58]

Though Pinchot's testimony was less assured, the prosecution case – led astutely by Louis Brandeis – was strong. In his cross-examination of Ballinger, Brandeis exposed the striking coincidence between the acts of Ballinger's department and the interests of Cunningham business interests and, according to Mason, Ballinger could offer no satisfactory explanation. Indeed, he sought to avoid responsibility by pleading ignorance, even to documents carrying his personal signature. In summarising Ballinger's inconsistencies, Brandeis declared of Ballinger that 'Wherever there is pressure, there you will find him yielding. The only cases where there can be any doubts as to what Mr. Ballinger will do is where there is pressure from both sides at the same time'.[59]

According to Mowry's account of the Pinchot-Ballinger affair, Taft's hand was forced by the results of the congressional investigation of the Interior Department. 'There was nothing for Taft to do but to dismiss Pinchot', explains Mowry.[60] By contrast, Mason claims that Taft had more options open to him, especially before the congressional hearing. He could have studied the case carefully himself before reaching a judicious decision. Alternatively he could have summarily dismissed the charges against Ballinger and swiftly dismissed Pinchot. He did neither, and by temporizing at this important time, the President lost control of the affair and its interpretation in a deeply contested political climate. Indeed, he passed the investigation of his subordinate to his institutional rivals in Congress. Contrasting this (flawed) choice with his actions in similar situations, Roosevelt wrote that '[m]y secretaries and their subordinates were responsible to me … As long as they were satisfactory to me I stood by them against every critic or assailant, within or without Congress'.[61] Roosevelt claimed that their contrasting responses were sourced at their different interpretations of presidential power. However, even within Taft's more limited conception, a management conflict of the type embodied in the Pinchot-Ballinger dispute remained a matter to be resolved by the President.

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[57] Ibid, 61.
[58] Ibid, 115-116
[59] Ibid, 17.
[60] Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 80.
[61] Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 364.

Instead, Taft's decision to give Congress the power to conduct this investigation of his administration was the result of Taft's awareness of the potential volatility of the issue because of Pinchot's identity as a progressive symbol. By the time the Ballinger-Pinchot conflict began, progressive sentiment had united cohesively against the President and even policy neutral actions such as his dismissal of Pinchot – primarily a management decision – were observed through filters constructed from interpretations of Taft's earlier choices. Consequently, the limited options available to Taft after the congressional inquiry did little to diminish the impact of Pinchot's dismissal: 'Immediately it had profound effects upon the Taft administration and the history of the Republican progressive movement', Mowry evaluates.[62] The episode extended the fracture within the Republican Party between conservatives and progressives and further entrenched perceptions of Taft as a conservative sympathiser. Assessing the Pinchot affair from the perspective of progressive Republicans, Pringle asserts that 'The charge against the President was … far more sweeping than the Glavis accusation [that Pinchot publicised]. It was to be that he had turned his back on conservation, so vital a part of the Roosevelt program'.[63] It is also clear that the affair further alienated Roosevelt who declared that by dismissing Pinchot, Taft had 'completely reversed' the conservation policies of the federal government.[64]

Mowry argues that the only effective means by which Taft could have affirmed his commitment to conservationism would have been to dismiss Secretary of the Interior Ballinger, a traditionalist who prioritised economic development ahead of resource protection. And though Taft appointed a leading conservationist, Walter L. Fisher, to replace Ballinger when he resigned the following March, this act was, according to Mowry, 'too late by a year'.[65] Mowry's prescription might have helped Taft as he struggled to maintain credibility as a progressive, but Ballinger was exonerated by the congressional Committee of Investigation; and Taft would open himself to different, though still acute, criticisms if he dismissed Ballinger. Such an action could be interpreted as a presidential indictment of a congressional investigative committee or an admission of guilt on the part of a senior member of his cabinet.

### (IV) 1910 MID-TERM ELECTIONS (NOVEMBER 8, 1910)

*These Congressional elections were a turning point because they signalled clearly popular disillusionment with the Taft Administration, and lowered the barriers to entry for Roosevelt. Agency factors were the predominant cause of this event because the elections were widely interpreted as a referendum on Taft's choices as President.*

Taft's vulnerability was glaringly exposed in the electoral contests of 1910. For the Republican Party – Old Guard and insurgents alike – the results were disastrous. The Democrats gained their first House majority since 1892, and the loss of twenty Republican seats in the Senate gave the Democrats a majority (of only eight) that could be overturned by the insurgent faction of the party. The conservatives were punished acutely, losing seven Senate seats. Pringle states that:

[62] Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 73-74.
[63] Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 513.
[64] *New York Times*, May 20, 1912.
[65] Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 86.

> Taft's misfortune was that he had to ask for a vote of confidence in the face of a vigorous and noisy opposition, of which Roosevelt became the leader, in his own party. His was a house divided. And so, during the summer of 1910, the credit side of the administration ledger was almost entirely forgotten.[66]

However, Pringle's suggestion that Taft was unlucky with the (constitutionally mandated) timing of the mid-term elections overlooks the consistent downward trajectory of the Taft administration's popularity since 1908. Consider, for instance, the opinions of the nation's leading progressive insurgent. 'From the beginning' of his presidency, Unger finds, La Follette viewed Taft as a 'bumbler and compromiser'; and in spite of these first impressions, 'La Follette's disgust with Taft grew daily'.[67]

Dissatisfaction with Taft's performance coalesced in two ways. Elihu Root, Henry Cabot Lodge, Henry L. Stimson, and other mainstream party loyalists, accepted the inevitability of Taft's re-nomination in 1912, and the dangerous precedent that the party would establish if it did not re-nominate an incumbent President. Indeed, some were hopeful that Taft might choose to step aside for Roosevelt, but did not believe he ought to be pushed. If Roosevelt refrained from opposing Taft's re-nomination, he would win the party's nomination for 1916 and, in the aftermath of defeat, could lead the party in a new direction.

The radical wing of the party responded to the 1910 election by forming the Progressive Republican League, led by Wisconsin Senator Robert La Follette but also including Senators Jonathan Bourne of Oregon and John Bristow of Kansas, and committed to obstructing Taft's re-nomination in 1912. In their 'Declaration of Principles', the League's signatories committed their association to 'the promotion of popular government and progressive legislation'. This was necessary, they lamented, because 'under existing conditions legislation in the public interest has been baffled and defeated', as evidenced by legislation concerning tariffs, railroads, and monopolies.[68] They argued that these outcomes were the fruit of conservative control of democratic and executive institutions: 'the special interests … control caucuses, delegates, conventions, and party organizations; and through this control of the machinery of government, dictate nominations and platforms, elect administrations, legislatures, representatives in Congress, United States Senators, and control cabinet officers'. 'Left unstated', observes Nancy C. Unger, 'was the League's crusade to deprive Taft of re-nomination in 1912' by supporting a presidential bid by Robert La Follette, the acknowledged leader of the insurgents in the Senate.[69] Following the adjournment of the extra session of Congress on March 15, La Follette began an extended series of speaking engagements in a bid to build sentiment in favour of his candidacy.[70]

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[66] Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 566
[67] Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 186, 180.
[68] La Follette, *Autobiography*, 495-496.
[69] Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 194.
[70] La Follette suspected both Roosevelt's intentions and the depth of his progressivism. Roosevelt, La Follette professed, was 'not a progressive, except with his tongue, and never was'; *Autobiography*, 265; see also Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 189. 'Roosevelt's talk', La Follette determined, 'was generally at right-angles to his legislative policy', where, like his chosen successor, he co-operated with Cannon and Aldrich; *Autobiography*, 207.

Roosevelt hesitated to align himself with either the moderate faction or La Follette's insurgency.[71] Instead he pursued an alternative – and intensely personal – route. While remaining careful to avoid direct criticism of the president, he increased his presence on the national stage and reinforced his political identity in ways that would enable him to oppose Taft's nomination if later he chose to do so. During the summer months of 1910, in the run-up to the mid-term elections, Roosevelt campaigned aggressively for both Taft supporters, like Senator Albert J. Beveridge in Indiana and Henry L. Stimson in his gubernatorial bid in New York (both of whom lost), and progressive Hiram Johnson for the governorship of California (who won). Roosevelt, on the stump, resisted arraigning his successor but used his speeches to outline the central tenets of a New Nationalism. Although Roosevelt urged avoidance of class conflict and stressed the need for a moderate pace of reform, he called for a 'genuine and permanent moral awakening'.[72] A pervasive influence in Roosevelt's thought was Herbert Croly's *The Promise of American Life*. Croly provided a defence of government remedies to redress inequalities that result inevitably from 'the chaotic individualism of [American] political and economic organization'.[73] The 'Promise of American life', wrote Croly, is the promise of a better future which, stripped to its core, implies 'the increasing comfort and economic independence of an ever increasing proportion of the population'.[74] However, Croly explained, progress in the twentieth century will no longer be automatic. Instead, the Promise will flourish, declared Croly, when 'the American state [makes] itself responsible for a morally and socially desirable distribution of wealth'.[75] Like Croly, Roosevelt had reached the conclusion that a new era of government activism offered the surest means for national progress.

John Milton Cooper emphasises the mixed effects of Roosevelt's campaigning activities. 'Although Roosevelt was delivering messages of moderation, he was stirring up the insurgents even more than before'.[76] According to Cooper, 'This disparity between intent and effect was a corollary of his vivid, dynamic personality'.[77] Clearly Roosevelt's intentions were more complex than simple campaign support for Republicans. Aware of Taft's dwindling support, Roosevelt was acting in a way that readily kept open his options for 1912. Avoiding a direct confrontation with Taft kept Roosevelt amicably allied with the party's Old Guard. However, by espousing policies that were more radical than either those pursued when he was President or by his successor, Roosevelt was deliberately keeping alive the possibility that he might be the leader of a progressive transformation of the Republican Party. Taft believed that Roosevelt, on his speaking tour, was 'going quite beyond anything that he advocated while he was in the White House, and has proposed a program which it is

[71] Thelen stresses that 'insurgency' connoted opposition to established power elites, while 'progressivism' was applied more frequently to the activities of reformers in power. Insurgents, explains Thelen, were moralistic and more radical in their outrage against modern capitalism. Thus, La Follette is appropriately described as both progressive and insurgent, while Roosevelt's more timid approach to reform might qualify him to be classified as progressive but not insurgent. Thelen, *Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit*, 83.
[72] Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt*, 146.
[73] *The Promise of American Life*, 23.
[74] Ibid, 17.
[75] Ibid, 23. Mowry highlights the importance of interchange between Roosevelt and Crowly. The effects of Roosevelt's ideas on Croly is frequently overlooked by historians, Mowry explains but '[a] glance at his messages and speeches of 1907 and 1908 would seem to argue that Roosevelt may have had as much influence on Croly as Croly had on him'; Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 222. Michael McGerr highlights the important differences in the thoughts of Croly and Roosevelt. In particular, Croly, rejected individualism for state control, while Roosevelt emphasised the importance of individual autonomy while supporting the expansion of state power; *The Promise of American Life*, Foreword.
[76] *The Warrior and the Priest*, 149.
[77] Ibid, 149.

absolutely impossible to carry out except by a revision of the Federal Constitution'.[78] For La Follette, Roosevelt's hedging made him untrustworthy. By contrast, for Gifford Pinchot, James Garfield, and other prominent members of the new Progressive Republican League, seducing Roosevelt from his neutral stance in time to seek the 1912 Republican nomination became a priority.

Roosevelt's indecision was consequential. While it kept alive the possibility that he could seriously contest Taft's nomination, the delays it implied reduced Roosevelt's prospects. His chances of defeating Taft depended on early, decisive action to contest the president's re-nomination. By vacillating in the critical year following the mid-term elections, several commentators inferred, Roosevelt squandered opportunities to plan and build coalitions that included Republican power brokers. McCombs, for instance, wrote of Roosevelt that his sense of political judgment about issues of identity was not matched by his tactical skills: 'Mr. Roosevelt was a great judge of politics. But as a tactician he was a tremendous failure'.[79]

In a striking contrast with his behaviour in the Payne-Aldrich tariff episode, Taft acted swiftly to pre-empt the movement developing to contest his re-nomination. Early in 1911, he sent Charles D. Hilles, his secretary, to organise state delegations, and began planning a nationwide speaking tour from September through early November of 1911. While Taft highlighted his progressive credentials at his speaking engagements, Hilles gained commitments of support from state party elites in the South and Washington DC, many of whom were federal officeholders in Taft's administration.[80] In the South, office-holding Roosevelt supporters were dismissed. Hilles consistently opposed presidential primaries in states considering passing primary legislation – and by doing so he purposefully closed off opportunities for a rival candidate to accrue delegates opposed to Taft's nomination.[81]

### (V) US STEEL CORPORATION SUIT (OCTOBER 26, 1911)

*The Suit was the final wedge that caused Roosevelt to enter the 1912 race. Its cause was agency factors. Especially important was Taft's desire to act in ways that were independent of his predecessor after resolving that their identity differences were irreconcilable.*

In late October 1911, President Taft's Attorney General George W. Wickersham indicted the United States Steel Corporation for violating the Sherman Anti-Trust Act by absorbing the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company. Roosevelt's interpretation of this event was unequivocal. Pringle comments that 'The suit filed against the United States Steel Corporation offended Roosevelt mortally'.[82] Roosevelt became a vocal opponent of the president, and moved perceptibly from his wait-and-see posture regarding his intentions for

[78] Ibid, 151.
[79] McCombs, *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 244.
[80] In spite of the attacks on Taft by disillusioned progressives, Taft had not rejected fully the progressive agenda. After temporizing, Taft eventually supported the Mann-Elkins Act that extended the powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission to include the telephone and newspaper industries; Unger, *Fighting Bob La Follette*, 189.
[81] Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk*, 39. Taft even tried to drive the muckraking magazines out of business by raising their postal rates in 1911. (Thelen, *Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit*, 84).
[82] Ibid, 673.

1912. Before the suit Roosevelt was non-committal, but after it he actively prepared for entry into the 1912 contest. The suit, scholars agree, convinced Roosevelt that Taft needed to be confronted sooner rather than later. Before this turning point, explains Pringle, 'There was an outside chance that harmony, of a sort, might be achieved again [between Roosevelt and Taft]. But it was not possible after the steel suit'.[83] Mowry claims that 'by that action [the US Steel suit] the president lit the fuse of a powder bag. The resulting explosion changed the course of American politics.'[84] Consequently, assesses Mowry, the decision was 'the most costly political mistake of his entire career'.[85]

A key question concerns why Roosevelt was angered by the Taft administration's action against US Steel. Was it not the case that the aggressive pursuit of monopolists was consistent with the progressivism that Roosevelt professed to lead? The US Steel case, however, was one with which Roosevelt was intimately familiar; and, according to Roosevelt, the company was a monopolist that served the public good in its acquisition of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company. US Steel's takeover of its rival occurred while Roosevelt was president. During the panic of 1907, the Tennessee Iron and Coal Company deposited the bulk of its shares in New York banks as security in exchange for loans. However, the market panic had driven the value of these shares below the total sum of the loans. In a meeting with President Roosevelt, US Steel Corporation representatives explained that the current situation could lead to a series of bank runs if the banks had to sell these shares. Claiming only public duty motivations, US Steel proposed to buy the stock of the Tennessee Iron and Steel Company from the struggling banks and therefore help the country to avert impending financial collapse. Their only fear, the US Steel representatives confided to the President, was that the company would suffer prosecution under the Sherman Act.

Roosevelt assured the US Steel representatives that the federal government would not intervene in the proposed takeover should the company choose to proceed with it. Thus, by opposing the merger as President, Taft had implicated Roosevelt to be either complicit in the collusive action or guilty of significant naïveté. Clearly, Roosevelt viewed himself a savvy and shrewd politician, especially compared with the clumsy Taft, and in the October 28 issue of *Outlook* Roosevelt explained his theory of industrial regulation. According to his exposition, a dutiful government could and should discriminate between potentially gainful and harmful mergers. He asserted that he had taken his well-considered actions in the public interest, and that it was the Taft administration that was acting without due care. Roosevelt was incensed further by the fact that Taft supported, or at least did not oppose, Roosevelt's policy on US Steel while he was a member of Roosevelt's cabinet.

Taft explained that the decision to close US Steel was entirely that of his Attorney General, but this is not entirely plausible. The incumbent president would have, and should have, involved himself in such a key decision. His crucial decision (or non-decision) might have reflected a carefree confidence that he began to

[83] Pringle, *Taft*, 673.
[84] Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 189.
[85] Ibid, 188.

develop after the 1910 election and Roosevelt's seemingly imminent entry into the Republican nomination contest. Accepting of likely defeat in the forthcoming presidential election, Taft resolved to act independent of the strictures which had made his tenure in the White House deeply uncomfortable: the tension between his inheritance and his natural political identity. His administration's activity in respect of the suit marked a clear disjuncture between his presidency and his predecessor's, and this was becoming increasingly important to Taft who believed he had grown out of Roosevelt's shadow and desired independence from his legacy.

Roosevelt's article was acclaimed nationally, and increased the demands for his entry into the 1912 contest to replace his successor. The feedback assured Roosevelt that he still commanded the confidence of the American people, and he made tactical adjustments in response. Though he did not say anything publicly that would have committed him, he permitted his friends on December 1 to build up a national organisation to work for his nomination. On the day that the suit against US Steel was filed, Roosevelt wrote to Governor Hiram Johnson in California that: 'I have a right to ask every friend of mine to do everything possible to prevent not merely my nomination, but any movement looking toward my nomination …'[86] One month later, however, and Roosevelt was willing – though apparently not eager – to accept the nomination if the public call was overwhelming. To make an announcement that he would seek the nomination was therefore out of the question. Instead, Roosevelt wrote a letter to newspaper editor Frank Munsey explaining that only 'tangible evidence' of an overwhelming demand for his candidacy would lead him to enter.[87] When the contents of Roosevelt's letter to Munsey were leaked, an alarmed Elihu Root presciently wrote to Roosevelt that 'No thirsty sinner ever took a pledge which was harder for him to keep than it will be for you to maintain this position'.[88]

Consistent with Root's prediction, Roosevelt, before making a speech at Columbus, Ohio on February 21, 1912, declared that 'My hat is in the ring'.[89] Three days later in a letter to eight governors who had formed a nationwide organisation promoting Roosevelt's candidacy, Roosevelt announced his intention to contest Taft's re-nomination.

*The Primary Season and Republican National Convention*

There were fourteen presidential preference primary elections in 1912, and in total they would select 445 delegates – less than half of the 1076 delegates who would attend the Republican National Convention in Chicago in June. The vast remainder was selected by state conventions dominated by local and state party politicians. It was primarily to this group that Taft turned in his desire for re-nomination. His significant investments in patronage and the organisational efforts of Charles D. Hilles on his behalf reaped rewards as delegates were allocated between candidates in state conventions. Taft emerged as the near-unanimous choice for the nation's Republican Party establishment. Roosevelt's managers complained vigorously – and to no

[86] Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk*, 41.
[87] Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 209.
[88] Ibid, 210.
[89] Ibid, 219.

avail – that the rules had been fixed against them. Their best chances lay in persuading state parties to introduce primary legislation, but Taft had anticipated these efforts and encouraged the opponents of primary legislation. In Michigan, for instance, the Roosevelt managers came close to enacting primary legislation, but Taft supporters in the Michigan Senate provided sufficient obstruction to prevent the bill gaining the two-thirds majority necessary for its passage.

From the start of the primary season, with the first primary election in North Dakota, Taft held a towering advantage over his rivals, leading with 127 delegates – one quarter of the votes that he would need for nomination.[90] His opponents shared between them fewer than 10 delegate votes.[91] La Follette defeated Roosevelt in North Dakota, though Roosevelt's representatives in the state explained his unexpected result as a consequence of attempts by North Dakotan Democrats voting in the Republican primary to derail Roosevelt's candidacy. The primaries following North Dakota, in March and early April, produced mixed results with Taft winning in New York on March 26, La Follette in Wisconsin on April 2, and Roosevelt in Illinois (April 9) and Pennsylvania (April 13). By this stage Roosevelt's campaign was operating at full capacity, and he campaigned with an intensity that had earlier been lacking. Roosevelt scored impressive victories in the primary contests in the month that followed in Nebraska, Oregon, Maryland, and California. Only in the Massachusetts primary at the end of April did Taft manage to win a majority in a presidential preference ballot.

Ohio, the president's home state, offered Roosevelt the opportunity to confirm his status as the party's popular choice for president. Though confirmation of this fact would, on its own, be insufficient for Roosevelt's nomination, its demonstration could form the cornerstone of efforts to persuade party regulars to desert Taft. It could provide precisely the shock to the Republican establishment upon which Roosevelt's nomination hinged.

### (VI) OHIO PRIMARY (MAY 21, 1912)

*This primary contest was a critical juncture because Roosevelt's victory established him as his party's popular choice in the 1912 race. Its cause was the combined campaign activities of the race's dominant agents: Roosevelt and Taft. And Roosevelt's effective campaigning style and identity with popular issues proved to be determinative in this contest.*

Roosevelt, Taft, and La Follette devoted significant resources to campaigning in the state. The President arrived early and embarked on an ambitious tour of the state including every congressional district. He attacked Roosevelt's recent conversion to radicalism, exposing the fact that Roosevelt was pragmatic while president, most notably in his dealings with political bosses, not one of whom he attempted to unseat. In a

[90] Ibid
[91] Taft's managers conceded 2 votes for Senator Albert B. Cummins and 1 to Roosevelt (though Roosevelt's managers disputed this figure and claimed the support of an additional 7 delegates from New Mexico). (*New York Times*, March 14, 1912).

speech at Canton, Ohio, Taft accused Roosevelt of spreading fear in the ranks of capital owners, with detrimental effects on the national economy:

> [I]t is prosperity and business that we should look to, and the agitation that creates a lack of confidence among those who have capital invested is not good for the people.[92]

Roosevelt continued to espouse his progressive principles, claiming that Taft had only begun to view Roosevelt as dangerous to the people after Roosevelt had labelled Taft as useless to the people.

Roosevelt's late entry had made it difficult for progressives who had already promised to support La Follette to renege on their commitments. However, in Ohio Roosevelt secured late support from John D. Fackler, Chairman of Ohio's progressive Republican organization and one of the state's most prominent progressives. Using La Follette's disastrous speaking appearance in Philadelphia in February as a pretext, Fackler, who had previously committed to La Follette, defected to support Roosevelt who he believed could garner sufficient popular support to win both the nomination and election.[93]

Roosevelt won fifteen of Ohio's twenty-one districts, and from Roosevelt's headquarters came news that Roosevelt might stop his campaigning in primary elections at this point – Ohio, for them, had settled the nomination question.[94] Taft, it seemed, was now the underdog, for now there was 'no reasonable doubt that Roosevelt, not Taft, was the popular choice for the Republican nomination'.[95] Roosevelt stormed the primaries that followed with victories in New Jersey and South Dakota.

Assessing the significance of Taft's defeat, Pringle states that 'Ohio was a grievous blow'.[96] However, he still controlled the votes of most non-primary states, and with the uneven balance between states running primary elections and those with boss-dominated caucuses, Taft's perceived unpopularity would not necessarily transmit into votes for his opponent. Broderick summarizes the state of play on the eve of the convention: 'The great Republican debate was over, the people having spoken for Roosevelt, the party organization having remained with Taft. The convention itself now had the authority to choose between them'.[97]

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[92] The Star Newspaper, Peoria, Illinois. March 8, 1912. Maurice Lyons Collection, Box 2.

[93] On February 2, La Follette spoke at the Periodical Publishers Association banquet in Philadelphia. Rejecting the advice of his campaign associates, La Follette went ahead with the speech although he was suffering stress because his daughter Mary was due to undergo surgery the following day to remove a gland near her jugular vein. La Follette feared that his withdrawal from such a high profile event would be tantamount to conceding the progressive cause to Roosevelt. Underfed and plied with whiskey, he rambled for two hours, losing his temper on several occasion, and causing a section of his audience to walk out. Newspapers claimed that La Follette was suffering a nervous breakdown. David Thelen claims that the efforts of the newspapers to discredit La Follette stemmed from their acute realisation that he threatened the commercial-industrial complex upon which their success depended. For the nation's 'wealthy newspaper publishers', Thelen explains, La Follette was a 'genuine menace'; *Robert La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit*, 91.

[94] Roosevelt, in fact, continued campaigning. The following week he won twenty-six of New Jersey's twenty-eight districts.

[95] Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft: A Biography*, 787.

[96] Ibid, 787.

[97] Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk*, 53.

## (VII) ROOSEVELT WITHDRAWS HIS SUPPORTERS FROM THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION (JUNE 21, 1912)

*Roosevelt's call to his supporters to abdicate from the National Convention confirmed Taft's re-nomination by the Republican Party. This turning point was caused by Roosevelt's choice, which was unconstrained by either structural factors or the decisions of other agents.*

On June 21, 1912, one of Roosevelt's agents at the convention delivered the Colonel's request that his delegates desist from further participation in the proceedings of the Republican National Convention. 'Though Shalt Not Steal', Roosevelt declared in the speech in which he agreed to run as a third candidate of a new party.[98] With this action, Roosevelt confirmed Taft's re-nomination, heralded the inception of the Progressive Party and, with his nomination by this new party, made the Democratic Party presidential nominee the strong favourite in the forthcoming presidential election.

On the back of a number of impressive victories in primary elections, initially Roosevelt was buoyant and confident about his chances of defeating Taft in the convention. Was this confidence groundless? In one sense, it clearly was. Though beaten in the popularity contests, Taft retained the allegiance of the Republican Party elite who controlled the votes of the state parties that selected delegates by caucuses instead of primaries. This provided him with a majority going into the convention. Taft certainly controlled the votes of 553 delegates, and possibly more, at a convention with a total of 1076 delegate votes.[99] Consequently, the strategic circumstances were weighted firmly in favour of the president: 'the tactics of the Taft forces had an engaging simplicity: Hang tough. If everyone kept the bag tightly shut, then no deluge of oratory could move Taft out of the nomination'.[100] If the Taft forces could maintain discipline in these delegations, the President would be re-nominated.

Roosevelt's strategy therefore involved attempting to persuade the elites who controlled these delegations to abandon the president. His strongest argument was his demonstration of popularity among rank-and-file Republicans. However, Roosevelt also faced criticism for threatening the unity of the party with his ambitions, and stoking the flames of inter-class rivalry that threatened the stability of the party and the privileges of its established elite.

With even some of Roosevelt's closest political associates remaining loyal to the President, Roosevelt's frustration turned to anger even before the opening of the convention as important contested seats, which Roosevelt would need to overturn Taft's majority, were seated for the President by the Taft-leaning national committee. Of the 254 contested seats, the President was awarded 235 and Roosevelt 19. However, as Broderick claims, most of Roosevelt's challenges smacked of desperation: 'An astonishing 164 of Roosevelt's

[98] Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft: A Biography*, 810.
[99] Hilles claimed a further twenty for Taft.
[100] Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk*, 53.

contests were transparent shams, McHaig, Roosevelt's agent, having fashioned competing delegations out of cobwebs and fantasy'.[101] The committee rejected the whole 164 without objection. Indeed, even Roosevelt partisans on the committee, including Senator William E. Borah of Idaho, refused to stake their reputations on these hopeless possibilities.

Despite the dubiousness of most of Roosevelt's delegation challenges, defeats in these matters intensified his belief that Taft had stolen the nomination; and increased his determination to contest Taft's election, even without the endorsement of the Republican Party. When Roosevelt was guaranteed sufficient financial support to see him through a presidential campaign, he bolted, and his supporters – the new Progressive Party – soon announced his nomination by them for President. Taft became the unanimous choice of a Republican Party now purged of its progressive wing.

[101] *Progressivism at Risk*, 54.

# 4 THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1912

Woodrow Wilson's campaign began bereft of state-based units to nourish his support, and the Wilson campaign's organisation improved only marginally through the primary season. With managers that were more organised and dynamic than Wilson's William F. McCombs, Wilson's rivals translated more efficiently the sentiment in their favour into delegate votes. For Robert M. Saunders, these handicaps were 'inherent flaws' in Wilson's efforts to win the Democratic nomination. Wilson's campaign, claims Saunders, was characterised by:

> his failure to recognize that he had to be nominated for the presidency … before he could be elected. Acting as if the nominating process was the same as the general election, he slighted the political pros and appealed directly to the public on the apparent assumption that high esteem among the electorate would be translated into delegate support at the convention.[1]

Saunders assesses that this strategy 'proved to be nearly fatal' for it ignored the central political requirements for presidential nominees in the Democratic Party at the turn of the twentieth century. Saunders outlines two essential characteristics of the Democratic Party that dictated tactical consideration by candidates. First, '[t]he Democratic party in 1912 consisted essentially of three blocs of professional politicians organized largely along regional lines [Northeast, South, West]'.[2] Secondly, to win the nomination, a candidate had to gain the support of two of these blocs. The problem for Wilson was that his political identity created difficulties in achieving nomination given these constraints:

> With his progressive image strategy, Wilson had to foreswear the support of the [North-Eastern] big-city machine politicians who were the *bête noire* of progressives. Thus he attempted to win over the other two blocs in the party – the white South and the progressives of the West. Despite speaking forays by Wilson into both of these parts of the country in 1911, the political insiders who had an important base in Congress possessed ambitions of their own and turned a deaf ear on Wilson's appeals to the public.[3]

Saunders's insights about Wilson's campaign portray accurately the context in which Wilson struggled for the Democratic nomination: power in Democratic nominations concentrated in the hands of officeholders representing three regional blocs.[4] However, Saunders's critique of Wilson is simplistic. Clearly Wilson's campaign was managed ineffectively and inefficiently. However, in terms of his political identity and tactics, Wilson's campaign held important strengths. Wilson's moderate progressivism made him a reasonable option for many bosses who preferred alternative candidates. In this way, Wilson positioned himself to be a likely beneficiary if the convention became deadlocked and party leaders felt compelled to search for a compromise

[1] *In Search of Woodrow Wilson: Beliefs and Behavior*, 47
[2] Ibid, 47.
[3] Ibid, 47.
[4] As Link explains in *American Epoch: a History of the United States Since the 1890's*, North-Eastern politics was dominated by the morphology of dense conurbations with large immigrant populations. See also Wesser, *A Response to Progressivism: the Democratic Party and New York Politics, 1902-1918*. In *Southern Politics: in State and Nation*, Key and Heard describe the uniqueness of the racial politics of the South. The politics of the West reflected the importance of both the farm and the factory in Western states, and the tensions between frustrated farmers and the representatives of large business interests.

candidate. A key Wilson tactic – avoiding competition when entry threatened local fiefdoms – served to reinforce his appeal as a second preference. By conflating the basic distinctions between Wilson's identity, tactical, and management choices, and reducing Wilson's eventual nomination to little more than a chance event, Saunders presents a critique of Wilson that is too sweeping.

Ironically, Wilson appeared to have believed a variation on this theme. Hence Wilson summarised his nomination success as an act of providence.[5] However, analysis of the critical moments in his rise to national prominence and success at the Democratic National Convention in Baltimore reveals, however, that Wilson continually boosted his status as a politician of stature while re-positioning himself in the salient conservative-progressive issue dimension. (See Table 4.1 below). His choices, and especially his cultivation of a progressive political identity, enhanced greatly his chances of nomination.

Table 4.1 Critical Junctures in Democratic Nomination, 1912

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE | AGENT | NATURE OF CAUSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **New Jersey Gubernatorial Election** | November 8, 1910 | Establishes Wilson as prominent national politician. | A | Wilson | A: tactical manoeuvring (Tactics, Identity) |
| **US Senator from New Jersey** | January 25, 1911 | Wilson defines himself as a progressive, gains visibility from decisive actions. | A | Wilson | A: decision concerning legitimacy of preferential primary (Identity) |
| **Georgia Primary** | May 1, 1912 | Underwood defeats Wilson and sweeps South, but by accepting covert support from Klan – boosts Wilson's standing beyond South. | A > A | Wilson; Underwood | A (Underwood): association with KKK (Identity, Tactics)<br><br>A (Wilson): (Identity, Tactics) |
| **Illinois Primary** | April 9, 1912 | Establishes Clark as leading candidate in North. | A > A | Wilson; Clark | A (Clark): superior management (Management)<br><br>A (Wilson): (Management) |
| **Temporary Chairman Debate** | June 12, 1912 | Wilson allied with Bryan, who opposes Clark and castigates him as an instrument of Tammany and Wall Street. | A, though contributory A | Clark; Wilson | A (Clark): decision to support Parker (Identity, Tactics)<br><br>A (Wilson): decision to oppose Parker (Identity, Tactics) |
| **Illinois Vote on 43rd Ballot** | July 2, 1912 | Triggers landslide that guarantees Wilson victory. | S | N/A | S: choice of a non-agent (Sullivan) |

Key:

(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

[5] McCombs reminisces that 'I went up to Sea Girt with the National Committee to congratulate Governor Wilson the day after his nomination for President… When I spoke to him, he said: 'McCombs, you know I am a Presbyterian and believe in predestination and election. It was Providence that did the work at Baltimore'; *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 180.

## (I) NEW JERSEY GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION (NOVEMBER 8, 1910)

*This election constituted a turning point in the 1912 Democratic race because it established Wilson as a national political figure. Its causes were predominantly agency factors: Wilson's tactical manoeuvring in order to reveal elements of his political identity that appealed to New Jersey voters but which he had concealed from Democratic political elites when they sought him out for their party's nomination.*

Wilson's path to the governorship was a complex one: as a political outsider he needed to gain the support of the overwhelmingly conservative Democratic Party elite in New Jersey while building a reputation as a progressive in order to win the election. As early as 1906, George Harvey, president of the publishing firm Harper and Brothers and editor of *Harper's Weekly* publicly supported Wilson's candidacy. This marked Wilson's initiation into the public domain: 'Wilson's name was first seriously mentioned for the presidency of the United States' in these articles.[6] Harvey alighted upon Wilson because he had a proven aptitude for governmental affairs, and offered a moderate, and potentially electable (both in New Jersey and nationally), alternative to the radicalism of William Jennings Bryan that had led the party to successive defeats. As he wrote in the New York *Word*, Wilson could save the party 'from falling into the hands of William J. Bryan as a permanent receiver'.[7]

Wilson's political identity left Harvey with few fears. In 1907 Wilson drew up a 'Credo' summarising his political philosophy and positions on relevant issues for perusal by William M. Laffar, publisher of the New York *Sun*, possibly the nation's most conservative paper. Wilson defended corporate and industrial complexes: 'Great trusts and combinations are necessary, because [they constitute] the most convenient and efficient, instrumentalities of modern business; the vast bulk of their transactions are legitimate and honest; their methods are for the most part legitimate and honest.' All American history has been a 'brilliant and successful' protest against the 'fruitless … experiment of paternalism', he said.[8]

When Harvey started to investigate the conditions under which Wilson would accept the Democratic nomination, Wilson set a restrictive proviso. Aware that exposure of his political ambition could undermine his work at Princeton, Wilson explained that he could accept the nomination only if it were offered 'on a silver platter', with no conditions attached.[9] Crucially, this arrangement meant that Wilson would have to expend little effort to obtain the nomination and would not be subjected to the probing by elites of his beliefs and ambitions.

After Harvey received Wilson's requirements he set about appealing to the state Democratic leadership and in particular his friend James Smith, Jr., former US Senator and prominent New Jersey Democratic boss. Smith

[6] Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson: A Medical and Psychological Biography*, 217.
[7] Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk: Electing a President in 1912*, 62.
[8] Ibid, 62.
[9] Ibid, 62.

was interested: Wilson was politically appealing – knowledgeable and moderate; and he did not carry the liabilities incurred from a lengthy career in politics. Wilson could win, and might bring a Democratic majority with him to the state legislature that would return Smith to the US Senate.

However, Smith's plan hinged on Wilson's reliability: would he remain deferential to the party's existing power arrangements if he became governor? Smith asked Wilson this question directly. Wilson replied with a vague assurance: 'So long as the existing Democratic organization was willing to work with thorough heartiness for such policies as would re-establish the reputation of the State and the credit of the Democratic party in serving the State, I should deem myself inexcusable for antagonizing it, so long as I was left absolutely free in the matter of measures and men'.[10] Wilson and Smith held clear incentives to interpret this commitment in the ways that most favoured their aims. In mid-July 1910, Wilson issued a public statement that he would accept the nomination for governor as a duty, honour, and privilege if 'a decided majority of the thoughtful Democrats of the State' were to confer it upon him.[11]

Wilson's commitment to work within the strictures set by the party establishment helped him to gain the support of those factions of the New Jersey Democracy that backed Smith, but the progressive wing of the party remained cynical about the latest attempt of its rival to foist its candidate on the party. After a series of bitter confrontations in the run-up to, and at, the convention, Wilson was nominated. Wilson's agreement with Smith made it possible for him to gain the benefits from Smith's contacts and organising skills. These proved sufficient for Wilson to gain the nomination.

### (II) US SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY (JANUARY 25, 1911)

*This event was a turning point because Wilson revealed his progressive identity on the controversial issue of the legitimacy of the preferential primary result. Wilson's stand was the result of only his own decision-making.*

Wilson's first important test came even before his inauguration. Smith wished for the new Democratic majority in the state legislature to return him to the US Senate instead of James F. Martine, who had won the non-binding presidential primary. A rebuff of such a prominent boss would signal to political observers that Governor Wilson was progressive on this important question at this intense time. Wilson recognised that he did not have the authority to make the nomination – it was legally the decision of the Senate; but he backed Martine, and encouraged his fellow office-holders in the New Jersey legislature to do the same. The people, Wilson argued, had expressed their clear preference for Martine, and for Wilson that vote was 'conclusive'.[12] 'Absolute good faith in dealing with the people, an unhesitating fidelity to every principle avowed, is the highest law of political morality under a constitutional government … It is clearly the duty of every

[10] Ibid, 64.
[11] Ibid, 64.
[12] Ibid, 68.

Democratic legislator, who would keep faith in the law of the State and with the avowed principles of his party, to vote for Mr Martine.'

Wilson's conservative opponents – many of whom had supported his nomination and election – complained of his ingratitude and lack of honour. However, unpopularity amongst party bosses was more of an asset than a liability in New Jersey politics in 1910-11. Indeed, it proved to be the foundation of Wilson's presidential bid. In contrast to Wilson's decisiveness in dealing with the Smith-Martine issue, John A. Dix, the new Governor of New York, maintained a neutral position; and while the activist Wilson was lauded and saw his presidential prospects soar, Dix was widely criticised. Wilson's intervention was impactful: Martine was nominated by the New Jersey legislature for the Senatorial seat on January 25, 1911.

Wilson had taken full advantage of the first-mover benefits afforded him in his deal with Smith. He made commitments that were weak and he was willing to renege these under circumstances where he stood to make further gains. The primary cost resulting from his actions was the alienation of political elites – like Smith – whose power was declining, and whose influence relied on Wilson fulfilling the commitments he had made in exchange for support. The benefits, however, were manifold and cumulative. Wilson was able to demonstrate his progressive credentials and gain publicity at the start of his term.[13] This gave him influence as a legislative leader – and, without hesitation, he employed this power in the law-making process. He led important legislative achievements in a number of policy fields, including laws enforcing employers' workplace liabilities, workmen's compensation, and corrupt practices. Governor Wilson also oversaw the creation of a public utilities regulatory commission, and primaries were made compulsory for the election of most public officials. Wilson was fully aware of his dominant role in setting the legislative agenda and mobilizing support. Reflecting on his first term to an associate, Wilson boasted 'I wrote the platform, I had the measures formulated to my mind, I kept the pressure of opinion constantly on the legislature, and the program was carried out to its last detail'.[14]

*Wilson Campaigns as a Progressive*

Wilson's achievements as governor meant that he was widely touted as a presidential possibility, and he augmented his visibility with high-profile speeches throughout the nation from late 1911. Throughout he straddled skilfully the treacherous divide between insurgent and machine politics. To 4,000 Democrats in Richmond, Virginia, for instance, he explained that a '[party] organization is the systematic co-operation of men for a common purpose, while a machine is the systematic co-operation of men for a private purpose', and he declared himself an 'organization man'.[15] In New Haven, Connecticut he declared that '[g]overnment to my mind is nothing more or less than organizing the general interest so efficiently that no special interest

[13] Bryan commended Wilson for his break with Harvey. Indeed, he suggested that Wilson's career might follow his own: 'It should matter little whether he reaches the White House or not' because 'the joy that comes from the faithful rendition of service surpasses any satisfaction that one can derive from gratification of political ambition'; Koenig, *Bryan: A Political Biography*, 479.
[14] Ibid, 69.
[15] *New York Times*, February 2, 1912.

can dominate it'.[16] Wilson's conversion to progressivism was less tactical than it appeared. It is true that the increasing popularity of progressive ideas had led many opponents of Bryan in 1896 to embrace key tenets of the Great Commoner's reform programme, but Wilson's identity transformation was fraught with risks. And the perception that his embrace of progressivism was driven simply by his political ambitions alienated conservatives and progressives. However, Wilson knew that this reaction was likely but still chose to turn. '[T]he Smith incident has put me out of commission with organized politics in this country', he admitted. More generally, his 'course in the Legislature had been such as to make people afraid of [him]'.[17] William F. McCombs, who managed the loose network of politicians who supported Wilson's presidential bid, was forced to reject allegations of Wilson's hypocrisy. McCombs also confirmed that, on his peaking tour of the states, latent risks about Wilson's political identity had become real costs:

> in Kansas City … he came out for the Initiative, Referendum and Recall, but not the recall of judges. His position was very sweeping and applicable to all states and all conditions… I knew that the views expressed therein were contrary to that which he had taught in college. I knew, also, that such doctrine would set the more or less conservative states against him. This included the great and popular states in the East and in the South. As I anticipated, the speech immediately aroused the greatest hostility. That and the Smith incident became powerful weapons in the hands of our opponents.[18]

With his awareness of the substantial liabilities that he would carry if he attempted to recast his political identity, it is unlikely that Wilson's identity choices derived solely from his political ambitions. A fuller account of Wilson's seemingly late embrace of progressivism should therefore take account of two further factors. First, Wilson, even as a graduate student, supported the strengthening of federal powers to foster American political development.[19] Second, as Weinstein argues, Wilson's affair with Mrs Peck caused him, by October 1908, to re-consider his previous belief that morality was a private matter. Instead Wilson abruptly decided that morality in public affairs was of greater importance: '[i]f there is a place where we must adjourn our morals, that place should be in what we call the private life. It is better to be unfaithful to a few people than to a considerable number of people'.[20] 'The new morality', claims Weinstein, 'may have saved [Wilson] from an emotional breakdown'.[21] Thus, Wilson's latent preferences and extra-political pressures are central to explaining why he embarked on his risky journey to a new progressive identity.

Foundering on the rocks of moderation, Wilson's presidential movement was squeezed further by the candidacies of Beauchamp (Champ) Clark of Missouri, Representative Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama, and a handful of 'favourite sons'.[22] Despite a third defeat in a presidential contest in 1908, William Jennings Bryan was also mentioned occasionally as a potential beneficiary of a serious deadlock. With the exception of Harmon, Underwood was considered by observers to be the most conservative of the candidates. Indeed,

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[16] Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, New Haven Address, February 16, 1932.
[17] McCombs, *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 34.
[18] Ibid, 36.
[19] In *Congressional Government: a Study of the American Constitution*, Wilson identified the separation of powers as the principal defect of the American constitutional system. He called for a greater executive powers for Congress, but by the publication of *Constitutional Government* in 1905 he advocated presidential leadership as the solution to the stalemate inherent in the American system.
[20] *Woodrow Wilson: a Medical and Psychological Biography*, 222.
[21] Ibid, 225.
[22] The most notable among these were Gaynor of New York, and Governor Harmon of Ohio.

Bryan regarded Underwood as a 'reactionary Wall Street pawn' and waged a highly personal campaign of criticism, much of it without substance, against the popular and highly skilled chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.[23] Like many progressives, Bryan was sceptical of Wilson, but he also questioned the depth of Speaker Clark's professed progressivism. Clark had displaced Bryan's preferred choice of candidate, Governor Joseph W. Folk, as Missouri's favourite son; and crusader Bryan was a persistent critic of Clark's willingness as Speaker to compromise with Democratic conservatives.[24] Led by his friends in Congress, Clark's campaign was broad and carefully organised. Underwood's campaign benefited from a strong base in the South and funding from Wall Street.

Wilson was generally quite popular – at least second favourite in most states. However, under the Democratic Party's unit rule this general goodwill might reap few delegate votes. Furthermore, Wilson's national campaign remained patchy and had thinned periodically as Wilson weathered charges relating to his political identity. Indeed, McCombs's political tactics for Wilson's presidential movement would aim to exploit his candidate's ambiguous political orientations. McCombs's strategy was based on the acceptance that Wilson could win only as a second-choice candidate. To this end, he sought to maximize Wilson's support among delegations that were nominally pledged to other candidates, and to avoid direct confrontations with Wilson's political rivals. McCombs reasoned that it was 'inadvisable and impractical' to make a fight for delegates in a lengthy list of states where prominent favourite sons were candidates.[25] This included Alabama (Underwood), Indiana (Marshall), Missouri (Clark), Ohio (Harmon), Massachusetts (Foss), Connecticut (Baldwin), and North Dakota (Burke). However, in these states he sent out messengers to build sentiment for Wilson which could be critical to his candidate's chances should the prospects of other competitors dwindle.

### (III) GEORGIA PRIMARY (MAY 1, 1912)

*This primary election is a turning point because Underwood's victory initiated a series of wins for him in Southern primary contests. The cause of this outcome was a competitive struggle between two agents: Underwood and Wilson. Underwood emerged as the victor because of his associations with the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia.*

Wilson began his career in Georgia, and Mrs Wilson was a native. The state emerged as a critical contest for the region as Wilson battled Underwood in the state's primary election. Influential Georgia demagogue Thomas E. Watson played a decisive role in steering public opinion away from Wilson and toward Underwood. Watson had been a Populist congressman with a record for reform proposals, but by 1912 he had abandoned his progressive social and economic ideas and had become a devout apologist of the reactionary faction of the Georgia Democratic Party. Watson disliked Wilson personally, and made the

[23] Link, *Wilson: the Road to the White House*, 232.
[24] Sparlin, 'Bryan and the 1912 Democratic Convention', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 22:4 (1936), 537-546.
[25] McCombs and Lang, *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 91.

politically devastating charge that Wilson was 'ravenously fond of the negro' because Wilson had sent a message of condolence to Booker T. Washington as he recovered from a savage beating.[26]

As Arthur S. Link emphasises, concerning Wilson's position on race 'The truth is, that although he never shared the extreme anti-Negro sentiments of many of his contemporaries, Wilson remained throughout his life largely a Southerner on the race question … Not once in his entire career before 1912 had he lifted his voice in defense of the minority race'.[27] However, in spite of his Southern heritage and his romantic recollections of Southern life, Wilson's stands on race also reflected in part his extended exposure to political theory and Northern social and political affairs. Blumenthal explains that Wilson's stance on race reflected the fact that he was 'torn between the ideals and realities of democracy'.[28] Though he accepted the desirability of negro enfranchisement, he lamented that the emancipated slaves had not been prepared for their freedom. In his *History of the American People*, Wilson revealed latent sympathy toward the Ku Klux Klan who he explained as a (lawless) reaction to the lawlessness of Reconstruction. Moreover, he believed that only through gradual economic, social, and educational progress could black people reach a level of sophistication at which they could be trusted with involvement in political matters. This was a commonly held set of beliefs among the Southern progressives to whom Wilson appealed for support, but it left him exposed to attacks from radical segregationists.

Repeated broadcasts of Watson's misleading characterisation of Wilson's position on the single most important issue in Georgia politics injured Wilson's prospects in the state and the South. Though Wilson won every urban area except Columbus, Underwood's success in rural Georgia was sufficient to ensure his victory. Underwood thanked Watson publicly for his assistance in these farming communities where Watson's words carried important weight.

Link stresses the centrality of race to the pre-convention campaign in the Democratic nomination race of 1912. He writes of it as a 'case in point' of importance of race in southern politics, primarily because it provided 'an eternal whipping boy for southern demagogues … furnishing for politicians with their backs to the wall a bogus issue with which to becloud the real issues at stake'.[29] Grantham observes that Wilson continued to gain the backing of the liberal factions in states like Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas.[30] However, he was consistently opposed by the regular and generally more conservative factions in the South, who generally backed Underwood. On the back of his Georgia campaign, and with the race issue in play in other contests, Underwood swept to victories in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi. Wilson won control of the Texas and South Carolina delegations, three-quarters of North Carolina's, half of the Louisiana delegation, and a minority of the delegates from Virginia and Tennessee.

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[26] Washington had been accused of attempting to rape a white woman.
[27] Link, 'The Negro as a Factor in the Campaign of 1912', *Journal of Negro History*, 32 (1947), 87.
[28] 'Woodrow Wilson and the Race Question', *Journal of Negro History*, 48:1 (1963), 1.
[29] Link, 'The Negro as a Factor in the Campaign of 1912' (n 27), 82.
[30] *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds*, 62.

## (IV) ILLINOIS PRIMARY (APRIL 9, 1912)

*This primary contest was a turning point because Clark's victory triggered a wave of successes for him in subsequent primaries in the North-East and West that established him as the leader in the Democratic race. This outcome was the result of competition between Clark and Wilson, and Clark's superior organisation in the State was pivotal to his victory.*

Wilson and Clark fought for most of the states outside of the South, and the better organised Clark movement was able to defeat Wilson in most contests. Illinois was critical, but also typical. 'Mr. Clark's supporters had organized the state most thoroughly and with great skill', admitted William F. McCombs.[31] In contrast, Wilson's erratic campaign manager made a last gasp attempt to create a Wilson organisation from scratch in the weeks immediately preceding the contest. Completely out-organised by the Dunne and Sullivan machines – both committed to Clark – a panicking McCombs sent Wilson touring Illinois in a desperate bid to woo voters. McCombs explained his action as a consequence of inadequate funds, but his Illinois campaign proved to be both expensive and unsuccessful; a consequence of poor management planning and execution. McCombs admitted that '[f]or three months Speaker Clark had had a perfect organization throughout the state with men in each county, abundantly supplied with funds, who were looking after his interests'.[32]

Wilson was defeated by over 140,000 votes but the Illinois result was crucial for two other reasons: it exposed the tactical ineptness of the Wilson team and it catapulted Clark to the front of the race for convention delegates. According to McCombs, the Clark movement benefited from 'a tremendous and thoroughly organized swing'.[33] Nebraska, Iowa, California, Washington, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Maryland fell into the Clark column, 'almost in succession'.[34]

The results of delegate selection before the Democratic National Convention showed that Wilson held 327 delegates of the 1088 available – less than one third. Nonetheless, the presence of favourite son candidacies implied that Clarke's nomination could be vetoed; and blocking Clark's progress would necessarily encourage delegates to consider alternative candidates. Amongst these alternatives, Wilson was the most viable option. McCombs suffered management handicaps, but he developed an astute awareness of the broader state of play and maintained the steadfastness of his belief in Wilson's long-term chances. After Illinois, Wilson was ready to concede victory to Clark. He dispatched a Princeton colleague to meet with McCombs carrying the message that

> The Governor feels it is useless for him to remain longer in the field. He authorizes me to say to you that he wishes to withdraw from the contest from the Presidential nomination. He desires to do this gracefully now, so as to avoid the humiliation of defeat.[35]

[31] McCombs, *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 99-100.
[32] *The Herald*, April 10, 1912, Maurice Lyons Collection, Box 2.
[33] McCombs, *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 99.
[34] Ibid, 99.
[35] Ibid, 145.

McCombs, however, ignored the message. Realising that a quick Wilson victory at the convention was impossible, McCombs remained optimistic that Wilson could still win but only in a deadlock, and this remained a real possibility. Furthermore, in spite of Wilson's crushing defeat, he remained popular amongst the state's delegates and this would be pivotal in Wilson's eventual success.

*The Democratic National Convention*

Going into the convention, Clark had a commanding lead over Wilson who lay in second place, with Underwood trailing in third. Saunders assesses the prospects for Clark and Wilson as the convention opened: 'on the eve of the Democratic convention Wilson trailed Clark badly in delegate strength and had only a slim, outside chance of receiving the nomination'.[36] However, a number of uncertainties that shaped the course of the nomination contest were yet to come into play. And as the convention proceeded, Wilson's political identity became a potent asset that his managers used to obstruct Clarke's candidacy and ultimately build a winning coalition in favour of their candidate.

## (V) SELECTION OF TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (JUNE 12, 1912)

*This event was a critical juncture because it provided Bryan with evidence that Wilson, rather than Clark, was a faithful progressive. Clark's (unconstrained) decision to support Alton Parker, who Bryan viewed to be conservative, resulted in Parker's selection as Temporary Chairman. A contributing cause was Wilson's choice to align with Bryan to oppose Parker.*

The first pressing issue with which the convention was to deal was introduced by Bryan, and concerned the fight for the Temporary Chairman of the convention whose duty it was to officially start the convention with a keynote speech. Bryan objected to Alton B. Parker's selection to the post of Temporary Chair claiming that a 'reactionary' should not be opening a convention dominated by progressives. The *New York Times* quoted Bryan as saying that 'the Democratic Party was four-fifths progressives; that a progressive man should be named, and that if Judge Parker were proposed as Temporary Chairman he would be prepared to oppose his selection on the floor of the convention'.[37] Although Parker – as a former presidential candidate and loyal party man – was probably as deserving as any of the complement of initiating the convention's proceedings, progressives feared that if he were seated, the conservative element would resolve to write the platform and name a conservative nominee, probably Harmon or Underwood, for President.

It was well known that Parker was supported by Tammany 'boss' Charles F. Murphy and the conservatives in the management of the national party. Led by Norman E. Mack of New York, Roger C. Sullivan of Illinois, and Thomas Taggart of Indiana, this faction was strong enough to obtain a plurality in the Sub-Committee on Arrangements a week prior to the start of the convention. Incensed by this result, Bryan sent a telegram to prominent Democrats with progressive leanings urging them to join him in opposing the selection of Judge Parker. As Koenig emphasises, '[i]n Bryan's eyes, the nominee would symbolize the outcome of the struggle

[36] *In Search of Woodrow Wilson*, 47.
[37] *New York Times*, June 20, 1912.

between progressivism and conservatism'.[38] Their response set the tone for the forthcoming convention. While the Wilson managers felt that their candidate should agree with Bryan, Champ Clark answered that it was his opinion that the 'supreme consideration should be to prevent any discord in the convention'.[39] Rumours spread that the Clark leaders were plotting against Bryan in order to improve their standing with Murphy's delegation. On the floor of the convention, when it opened, Bryan personally contested Parker's proposed chairmanship – he was defeated. This was an important victory for Clark's floor managers, but to Bryan it signalled an alliance between Clark and Tammany; and 'it convinced thousands of progressive Democrats that the fight was on between Wilson and Bryan on the one hand, and Clark, Wall Street, and Tammany, on the other'.[40]

Bryan's intentions throughout the contest and at this critical juncture were shrouded in secrecy. While professing indifference between Clark and Wilson, Bryan supported moves during primary contests to split votes evenly between Clark and Wilson, a strategy that might deadlock the convention in such a manner as to make his own nomination possible. Indeed, after the twenty-sixth ballot, Bryan revealed his ambitions to McCombs in a private meeting in the latter's hotel room: 'McCombs, *you* know that Wilson cannot be nominated. *I* know that Clark cannot be nominated. You must turn your forces to a progressive Democrat like me'.[41] McCombs rejected Bryan's proposal. As the rounds of balloting proceeded it became clearer to Bryan that the party's elite were not going to turn to him again for leadership. There was no groundswell in support of Bryan – the Great Commoner had had his chances; and Bryan had lost the commanding influence that had enabled him in the past to commandeer such occasions to his advantage. The diverse state party leaderships were united in their belief that Bryan's selection would cause more problems than it would solve.

While his own nomination appeared impossible, Bryan could use his remaining authority to further or depress the chances for the viable candidates. During the night and early morning of June 27 and 28 the nominations for president were made. When the first ballot was taken, the vote totals were as follows: Clark 440.5, Wilson 324, Harmon 148, Underwood 117.5, Marshall 31, Baldwin 22. During the first nine ballots little change in the voting occurred. Clark gained 14 votes, and Wilson picked up 28. On the tenth ballot, New York's votes were transferred from Harmon to Clark. It was the signal for the Clark landslide; Clark's total clearly exceeded the 545 needed for a simple majority; and only in 1844 had a candidate – Martin Van Buren – received a majority of votes without going on to secure the required two-thirds vote. Small accessions from Connecticut, Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania brought Clark's vote to 556; and Clark, who was in the Speaker's Office in the Capitol, prepared a telegram of acceptance which he expected to send to the convention. Wilson sent a message to McCombs releasing his delegates, but again McCombs

[38] *Bryan: a Political Biography*, 478.
[39] Wilson sent the following reply: 'The Baltimore convention is to be a convention of progressives… in principle and by conviction. It must… express its convictions in its organisation and in its choice of men who are to speak for it. You are to be a member of this convention, and are entirely within your rights in doing everything within your power to bring that result about… No one will doubt where my sympathies lie; and you will, I am sure, find my friends in the convention acting upon clear conviction and always in the interest of the people's cause…'; Werner, *Bryan*, 180).
[40] Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, 437
[41] McCombs, *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 162.

refused his orders. The Underwood delegations remained staunchly committed to their man. They knew that they could maintain the deadlock at the convention and still believed that their man could be nominated. Furthermore, Wilson and not Clark was the second choice of most of these delegates; and the Wilson managers had offered the support of their delegates if Wilson was put out of the race at any point.

Rumours of a deal between Clark and Wall Street leaders was rife, and on June 27 Charles W. Bryan informed his brother that Clark's managers had reached an agreement with the Tammany-Wall Street bloc according to which the 90 votes at their disposal would be delivered to Clark at a propitious moment in the balloting. Bryan introduced a resolution that denounced, by name, the Wall Street interests and 'other member[s] of the privilege-hunting and favour-seeking class', and amidst a frenzy of cheers and insults the resolution was passed.[42] And on June 28, when the convention roll was being called for the fourteenth ballot, Bryan made his move. He boldly announced that 'Nebraska… is not willing to participate in the nomination of any man who is willing to violate the resolution adopted by this convention, and to accept the high honour of the presidential nomination at the hands of [Tammany Boss] Mr Murphy'.[43] He explained further that

> When we were instructed for Mr Clark, the Democratic voters who instructed us did so with the distinct understanding that Mr Clark stood for progressive Democracy… Upon no other condition could Mr Clark have received a plurality of the Democratic vote of Nebraska…. Speaking for myself, and for any of the delegation who may decide to join me, I shall withhold my vote from Mr Clark as long as New York's vote is recorded for him… With the understanding that I shall stand ready to withdraw my vote for the one for whom I am going to cast it, whenever New York casts her vote for him, I cast my vote for Nebraska's second choice, Governor Wilson.[44]

By this action Bryan did not initiate an observable reaction in other delegations – evidence that confirms his lower status in the party. But an announcement by Bryan could still cause a reconsideration of options and actions by other actors.

## (VI) ILLINOIS VOTE ON FORTY-THIRD BALLOT (JULY 2, 1912)

*Illinois's shift triggered a winning vote-swing for Wilson. The move was the result of structural factors: the decision of a non-candidate, Roger Sullivan, to back Wilson.*

As Clark's totals began to fall, Roger Sullivan, under prompting by McCombs, called a meeting of Illinois's delegates. Much to the Prairie State boss's surprise, Wilson sentiment dominated his delegation. Wilson had 40 delegates and Clark 18. Under the unit rule, Sullivan could cast the entire delegation for Wilson and, after receiving personal assurances from Wilson that his control of the Chicago Democratic Party would not be attacked, he promised to do so at the next ballot, the twenty-sixth.[45] However, immediately after the meeting of the Illinois delegates, Sullivan was confronted by Murphy and Taggart who persuaded him to delay. It was not until the forty-third ballot that Sullivan fulfilled his promise. Illinois's fifty-eight votes were followed

[42] Werner, *Bryan*, 187.
[43] Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics*, 411.
[44] Ibid, 411.
[45] McCombs, *Making Woodrow Wilson President*, 157-158, 308.

quickly by a number of other delegations' into Wilson's column. Wilson's total swelled to 612, with Clark's falling to 329. Underwood's managers withdrew their candidate and the Alabaman's followers joined Wilson's winning bandwagon. They were followed, in short order, by Charles Murphy's New York.

## 5 THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1924

President Wilson's progressivism in domestic affairs and interventionism in foreign affairs failed to create a new national political consensus and a progressive-conservative cleavage continued to define American politics in the 1920s. In the Democratic Party, the end of the Wilson administration heralded new opportunities for the conservative wing of the party and threatened the primacy of its progressive rival. Ruthlessly aware of these opportunities, the conservative element mobilised solidly behind the candidacy of Ohio governor James Cox at the 1920 national convention in San Francisco. The progressives, by contrast, were in disarray.[1] However, Cox's election campaign suffered tragically from the desertion of Midwestern and Western progressives alienated by the conservative turn in the party's direction, and he was easily defeated by Warren Harding.[2] Defeat of the progressives at the convention and the conservatives in the presidential election made both the leadership and future direction of the party entirely contestable. Old issues once again became debatable alongside new ones, and internal party conflict over these came to a head in the run-up to the 1924 national convention in Madison Square Garden, New York.

Although prohibition had been a conflictual issue in the party since the 1850s, its capacity to divide progressive, Western, rural drys from the wet, urban, immigrant elements in the East intensified after the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment (which prohibited the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages) in 1919. The result was that 'what, when, why, and how people drank [became] questions affording limitless speculation'.[3] The regional and urban-rural divisions between the supporters and opponents of prohibition were exacerbated by reinforcing religious and ethnic cleavages.[4] Democrats in the rural South and West were predominantly Protestant (and increasingly *fundamentalist*) while their counterparts

[1] President Wilson was considering running for an unprecedented third term, and it was because of this possibility that the candidacy of William Gibbs McAdoo – Wilson's son-in-law and former secretary of the treasury – stuttered as it gathered momentum prior to the convention. At the convention, the progressives did not demand a Wilson third term, as the President had hoped, but were disastrously divided between McAdoo and A. Mitchell Palmer, Wilson's former attorney general.

[2] This is the most recent explanation by historians for Cox's defeat. Other explanations have stressed the magnetism of Harding, the disorganisation of the Cox campaign and the impact of *Eastern* disillusionment as large blocs of Irish, Italian, and German voters registered their disgust at American involvement in World War I, the Versailles peace treaty that followed, and the generally pro-British stance of Wilson's foreign policy; Craig, *After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party, 1920-1934*, 26. However, given the margin of victory – Harding carried thirty-seven of the forty-eight states – a combination of all of these factors seems entirely plausible.

[3] Cashman, *America in the Twenties and Thirties: the Olympian Age of Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, 65. Drys believed that prohibition reduced absenteeism and inefficiency at work and increased the amount that the poor spent on food, shelter, and clothing. The movement, especially in the South, tended to become devoutly moralistic with prohibitionists claiming that 'the monster of alcoholic culture' was incompatible with Christianity; Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, 7. Political opposition to the new amendment ranged from demands for its moderation to permit the sale of light wines and beers to calls for its outright repeal.

[4] Chase, *The Democratic Convention of 1924: A Study of Sectional, Religious, and Ethnic Conflict*.

in the Northeast tended to be Catholic.[5] While the South and West were populated by long-standing communities of Anglo-Saxon origins, the North-Eastern states had become destinations for waves of new immigrants from Ireland, and Eastern and Southern Europe.

Superimposed upon these old divisions were a number of pressing post-war issues. Sharpened ethnic divisions during the war, the Great Red Scare of 1917-1921, and a growing pseudo-scientific belief that new immigrants were incapable of assimilation, culminated in a move by Anglo-Saxon and Nordic nativists to pass the Immigration Act of 1924.[6] Between 1922 and 1924, the Ku Klux Klan exploded from the small-town Southern fraternity that it had been since its founding in 1915 to a mass-member organisation with an estimated membership of between 2.5 and 4 million. In the interim, none of its extremist dogmas feeding on distrust and suspicion of the Negro, the Catholic, and the immigrant had changed, and its spread from its Southern base throughout Western states angered its fierce opponents in the Northeast. An avowed commitment to Wilson's idea of a League of Nations and American entrance into the World Court isolated the Wilsonians in the party. War weary and suspicious of the support for internationalisation by the large investment banks, most Democrats were at the very least apathetic about greater American involvement in international affairs.

A *New York Times* correspondent observed presciently that there were 'more head-on collisions imminent in the convention that will meet in Madison Square Garden on June 24 than in any political gathering that has ever assembled in [the United States]'.[7] William Gibbs McAdoo aimed to avoid these clashes as he pursued the Democratic nomination. Assuming correctly that progressive sentiment outweighed conservatism in the Democratic Party, McAdoo swiftly established himself as the party's leading prospect. His appointment as President Wilson's Secretary of Treasury enhanced his visibility and solidified his progressive credentials; and McAdoo moved early to develop a sophisticated state-based campaign operation. Cultivating his reputation as a faithful disciple of a legendary president, the Californian looked set to dominate the contest, win a first-round nomination, and thereby circumvent the uncertainties inherent in a deadlocked contest. However, McAdoo's involvement in the Teapot Dome oil scandal caused a collapse in these plans, and encouraged entry by numerous rivals seeking to take advantage of McAdoo's fall from grace. In this competitive scenario McAdoo's perceived identity as a radical progressive became a liability and the stubbornness of his ideological opponents led by conservative Al Smith forced McAdoo to accept the nomination of John W. Davis, a compromise choice. Table 5.1 below summarises the principal actors and their choices at these turning points.

[5] The Act introduced quotas on immigrants in a manner designed to favour Northern and Western Europeans. Fundamentalism called for the maintenance of a purely biblical approach to Christianity. Proponents of fundamentalism rejected evolutionary theory in science and claimed that Catholicism had corrupted the purity of a biblical Christianity.

[6] A number of studies claimed to offer scientific support for white supremacist arguments. In *The Passing of the Great Race*, Madison Grant maintained that it was race that determined the quality of civilizations and that only Aryans had built great cultures. Similarly, Stoddard, in *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy*, warned that white races were being overwhelmed by more fertile coloured races.

[7] *New York Times*, June 6, 1924.

Table 5.1 Critical Junctures in Democratic Nomination, 1924

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE | AGENT | NATURE OF CAUSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Wilson Appoints McAdoo Treasury Secretary** | March 6, 1913 | McAdoo gains platform from which to affiliate closely with President Wilson's policies. | S | N/A | S: choice of a non-agent (Wilson) |
| **Teapot Dome Oil Scandal** | February 1, 1924 | McAdoo implicated in corruption, causes problems for his candidacy. | S | N/A | S: event concerning a non-agent (Doheny) |
| **Georgia Primary** | March 10, 1924 | Desperate bid by McAdoo to win South involves him courting Klan, opposed by Underwood. | A > A | McAdoo; Underwood | A (McAdoo): courting of the Klan (Identity, Tactics)<br><br>A (Underwood): (Identity, Tactics) |
| **Ohio Primary** | April 29, 1924 | Legacy effects of McAdoo's aggressive tactics and Klan-courting lowers standing with important Northern delegation and its leader (Cox). | S > A | McAdoo | S: identity of non-agent (Cox)<br><br>A: race issues (Identity); campaigning activities (Tactics) |
| **Seventy-Fourth Ballot** | July 6, 1924 | Smith obtains 'loan' of votes to demonstrate potential to veto McAdoo. | A > A | Smith; McAdoo | A (Smith): convention tactics (Tactics)<br><br>A (McAdoo): (Tactics) |
| **Cox Shift of Votes to Davis before 101st Ballot** | July 9, 1924 | Swings convention delegates behind Davis. | S | N/A | S: choice of a non-agent (Cox) |

Key:
(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.
(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.
(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.
(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.
(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

## (I) PRESIDENT WILSON APPOINTS WILLIAM GIBBS MCADOO AS TREASURY SECRETARY (MARCH 6, 1913)

*This is a turning point because McAdoo's appointment enabled him to develop the public associations with President Wilson that would form the core of his identity in 1924. It resulted from Wilson's appointment decision which, with respect to the 1924 Democratic race, was a structural factor.*

McAdoo took the oath of office on March 6, 1913, and served as Wilson's Treasury Secretary until November 1918. Secretary McAdoo's most notable achievement was the development and passage of the Federal Reserve Act and its rapid implementation. Like other progressives, McAdoo believed that the US economy needed a monetary system with centralised government control and regional flexibility. In particular, he wanted an Act that would strengthen Treasury influence over regional monetary policy and weaken New York money trusts. To this end, he lobbied Congress, banks, and the public for a bill that would

allow the government to issue a national currency. McAdoo also used the Treasury to facilitate the flow of credit and funds among regions. For instance, he maintained surplus Treasury funds in sub-treasuries and non-New York private banks that were used to assist farmers and small banks.[8]

Immediately after the congressional elections of 1922, McAdoo began, astutely, to develop a campaign organisation with the aim of establishing himself as the undisputed leader of the party's progressive wing. Well-financed by Wall Street supporters and aided by the political experience of former Wilson Administration politicians, the organisation initially succeeded in presenting McAdoo – a progressive dry of Anglo-Saxon heritage – as the natural heir to both Wilson and Bryan. Contrasting 'true Democracy' with the 'materialism and moral debauchery' of Republicanism, McAdoo claimed that he favoured a programme of 'social justice … equal opportunity for all and special privilege for none'.[9]

## (II) TEAPOT DOME SCANDAL (FEBRUARY 1, 1924)

*McAdoo's connections with this scandal rocked his candidacy and encouraged entry by numerous favourite sons. The cause of this juncture was the illegal activities by the protagonists in the scandal, which were structural factors that affected McAdoo's standing.*

On February 1, Edward L. Doheny, indicted for involvement in the Teapot Dome scandals, revealed that he had retained McAdoo at $25,000 annually for legal services after McAdoo had left the cabinet. McAdoo explained that he had left public office prior to the commencement of such work, but the suggestion lingered that he had been paid by Doheny to exert pressure on his former colleagues in Washington rather than for his legal counsel. McAdoo, writes J. Leonard Bates, 'faced at best the imputation of guilt by association'.[10] And McAdoo's viability as a presidential nominee fell rapidly as commentators highlighted the contradiction of a Democratic Party campaigning against endemic Republican corruption, but led by the tainted McAdoo. As Montefiore Levy, a New York State Democrat, put it '[Democratic Party] politicians must realize the most pithy campaign material against the Republican Party, based on the oil scandal, cannot be used with Mr McAdoo as a candidate.'[11] William Jennings Bryan thought that the Doheny affair, had 'seriously, if not fatally' damaged McAdoo's prospects. Organised labour leader William H. Johnston admitted that 'McAdoo did have the support of a considerable portion of organized labor, but there is now a very serious question of his availability as a candidate'.[12] Senator Thomas Walsh, who was to chair the 1924 convention, and had earlier lauded McAdoo as the nation's most successful Secretary of the Treasury since Alexander Hamilton, told McAdoo that '[y]ou are no longer available as a candidate.'[13] Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the Doheny revelations McAdoo was forced to release statements maintaining that he remained a candidate in

[8] Dunleavy and Benzing, 'William Gibbs McAdoo and the Development of the Federal Reserve', *International Advances in Economic Research*, 9:3 (2003), 250-51.
[9] Speech to members of the independent Democratic Convention Entertainment Committee in New York, quoted in *New York Times*, May 20, 1924.
[10] Bates, 'The Teapot Dome Scandal and the Election of 1924', *The American Historical Review*, 60 (1955), 302-322.
[11] *New York Times*, June 18, 1924.
[12] *New York Times*, February 12, 1924.
[13] Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918-1932*, 109.

the presidential nomination contest after his rivals claimed that his boom was effectively dead.[14] In response, McAdoo charged that 'the powerful financial influences' that he had actively fought while in government fear his candidacy because he 'knows them and their methods'.[15]

*(a) McAdoo's Rivals Enter*

Although it remained likely that the convention would be dominated by the progressive wing of the party – who were generally sympathetic toward McAdoo – the Doheny revelations cast serious doubt on the Californian's ability to secure the two-thirds majority required to win in the presidential contest. McAdoo's troubles and diminishing prospects caused several leading politicians to make concerted efforts to win the Democratic nomination. The most prominent of these later entrants were Alfred E. Smith and Oscar W. Underwood.

Led by Tammany's Charles F. Murphy, prominent conservatives rallied behind New York Governor Smith. Although Smith sponsored a limited programme of reforms in education and municipal administration, his associations with Tammany Democrats, urban roots and perspective, and Irish, Catholic background made him anathema to many Southern and Western Democrats. That fact was only partially mitigated by the appeal of his anti-Tammany, politically (although not personally) dry, and Protestant campaign manager, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Indeed, some of Smith's opponents went so far as to label Roosevelt a 'false front'.[16] By the summer of 1924, Smith remained a 'local candidate'.[17] Deciding that he had officially entered the contest too late to make any headway in primaries, his campaign team prepared for an accommodative strategy in which Smith avoided confrontation with local favourite sons and entered only safe primary contests in which he was assured of victory.[18]

By late 1923, Underwood had formed a campaign organisation and his prospects were temporarily ignited after the McAdoo oil revelations. With his consistent support of the League of Nations, he could legitimately claim to be a 'Wilsonian' in foreign affairs. However, as a strong advocate of state's rights, he opposed the administration's centralising tendencies. He also opposed *federal* prohibition laws on the grounds that these infringed upon states' rights. This position made him the subject of impassioned criticism by Bryan, whose position concerning states' rights was less consistent and varied from issue to issue.[19]

Several favourite sons – hoping to emerge as consensus winners at a bitterly divided convention – also expressed an interest in pursuing the nomination. Although neither Smith nor McAdoo expected these

[14] See for instance *New York Times*, February 2, 1924 and March 24, 1924.
[15] Letter to his campaign manager, David Rockwell, published in *New York Times* February 13, 1924.
[16] Poland, counsel of the Anti-Saloon League of New York, quoted in *New York Times*, May 2, 1924.
[17] Murray, *The 103rd Ballot*, 71.
[18] Discussing Smith's decision to withdraw from the Illinois primary after his name had been presented contrary to his wishes, the *New York Times'* correspondent claimed it to be 'indicative of the course his supporters will pursue in their attempt to create… an atmosphere favourable to the presentation of his name when he is brought forward as a contender for the nomination… With animosities averted, 'favourite sons' or candidates with more substantial backing will be perfectly agreeable to turning their strength over to Smith after it has been demonstrated that the nomination is beyond their own reach'; *New York Times*, March 3, 1924.
[19] Bryan conducted a speaking tour of Alabama opposing Underwood in February, 1924.

aspirants to mount a credible challenge for the nomination, most pundits predicted a lengthy, conflictual convention and several 'compromise' candidates were touted as possible nominees.[20] The most conspicuous politicians in this group were John W. Davis from West Virginia, Carter Glass from Virginia, and Samuel Ralston from Indiana.

John Davis was a progressive congressman before Wilson appointed him Solicitor General in 1913. He was commissioned Ambassador to the United Kingdom in 1918 and returned to the United States in 1921 to profitably resume his career as a private attorney in law having built a formidable reputation in diplomatic circles. Although he was well-acquainted with important Wall Street figures, prominent Wilsonians, including Colonel House, increasingly viewed his candidacy in a positive light. Davis's most significant handicap was that he was virtually unknown outside elite circles. His reputation grew in the months before the convention however, with speculation about there being strong pro-Davis sentiment throughout the West and South.[21]

Senator Glass was a progressive dry Methodist who had supported McAdoo until the Doheny testimony. Prior to the convention, several political analysts speculated that Glass – who had served as Secretary of the Treasury during the Wilson Administration – would be McAdoo's preferred choice in the event of a deadlock between Smith and himself.

Senator (and former Governor) Ralston's political principles were moderate. Raised on a farm, he appreciated the contribution made by rural communities to the social and economic life of the nation. However, having risen to the top of the Indiana bar he was also comfortable understanding and dealing with the problems of business leaders. 'Ralston', Robert K. Murray gauges, 'had very few enemies'.[22] Following Murphy's death on April 25, 1924, several conservative bosses including Boss Taggart of Indiana began to tout Ralston as a strong choice in the event of a McAdoo-Smith deadlock at the convention. And in advance of the convention Ralston's supporters began to distribute literature highlighting Ralston's distinguished career in public service.[23] However, there were concerns about the Senator's age – 66 – and unenergetic campaign style.[24]

*(b) The Primary Elections*

The unexpected Doheny revelations triggered a rethink of McAdoo's nomination strategy by the candidate and his intimates. Some of his advisers thought it best for him to withdraw from the race, while continuing to work, at the margins, for progressive principles. Others felt that a formal withdrawal might actually improve McAdoo's chances of becoming President, either in 1924 or 1928. In fact, in a more competitive environment, McAdoo decided to seek delegate commitments in primaries more aggressively than he had

[20] Asked if he knew of any dark horses, Smith jokingly replied: '[n]o, I don't. If there is a dark horse, he's too dark for me to see'. *New York Times*, June 21, 1924.
[21] *New York Times*, June, 16, 1924.
[22] Murray, *The 103rd Ballot*, 73.
[23] *New York Times*, June 16, 1924.
[24] *New York Times*, February 12, 1924.

initially planned. He hoped to use a strong level of committed first-round support to foist previously sympathetic delegations back into the McAdoo fold.

With his relentless drive for delegates McAdoo secured the pledged commitments of more delegates than any of his rivals. He was especially successful in the South, where he emerged as the near-unanimous choice of state Democratic parties in the region. Without campaigning actively in the region, McAdoo would have gained fewer delegates from the South: there was a plethora of potential favourite son candidates hoping to gain the backing of their states, and McAdoo's aggressive campaign forced these speculators to the margins in Southern contests. However, McAdoo's tactics also harmed his candidacy in serious, though less perceptible ways. First, McAdoo's decision to compete for every delegate would cause friction in his future dealings with leading party bosses. Additionally, McAdoo's desperate attempts to monopolise the South secured for him a reputation as a Klan sympathizer – an image which harmed his standing in Northern delegations. Several Northern states, including Minnesota, went to Smith 'with little or no campaign for the Governor and much intensive work for McAdoo'.[25] These second-order effects were either unanticipated or given insufficient weight by McAdoo and his managers but would contribute to his eventual defeat at the national convention.

### (III) GEORGIA PRIMARY (MARCH 10, 1924)

*This primary contest was a turning point because McAdoo's victory in Georgia caused him to sweep the South. McAdoo's purposeful courting of the Georgia Klan gave him a decisive advantage over Underwood, who also contested the state. (Although this choice caused problems for McAdoo beyond the South).*

The Georgia primary became an important test of strength for McAdoo; he had highlighted his state of birth as the ideal location to bounce back from the Doheny affair and regain momentum in the run-up to the convention. With these goals in mind, and consistent with their candidate's broader strategy, McAdoo's operation in the state campaigned intensively. McAdoo faced opposition from Underwood for whom a defeat of McAdoo in his home state was the cornerstone in his attempt to sweep the South and, from this base, force himself into contention in the race. And having successfully defeated McAdoo's mentor – Woodrow Wilson – in the state in 1912, Underwood entered Georgia confident about his chances. Conversely, however, defeat for Underwood could trigger further southern defeats and render him little more than Alabama's favourite son, alongside several others.

McAdoo comfortably defeated his rival with a two-to-one majority. Observers detailed a campaign that became unexpectedly one-sided, because McAdoo covertly accepted support from the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia.[26] Underwood had announced that he would sponsor a plank at the convention to condemn the Klan as 'an agency of intolerance in American life, organized as a secret society expounding white supremacy

[25] *New York Times*, May 28, 1924, on Minnesota primary.
[26] *New York Times*, April 2, 1924 claims that McAdoo's victory was 'unexpectedly large'.

and nativism'; and his opposition of the Klan's principles and practices was public knowledge. [27] McAdoo moved to exploit this dimension of Underwood's political identity, and his lieutenants encouraged contrasts between McAdoo's and Underwood's stances on the Klan. For McAdoo, the Klan's future was and should remain an issue for individual states, and not for the federal government – a position that guaranteed the Klan's survival in the South. As Palmer writes, 'northern liberals believed the Klan's existence was antithetical to modern democratic and moral values, [but] southern conservative opinion ranged from indifference to active support'.[28] In a state and a region where Klan influence was pervasive, Underwood's outright opposition to the 'Invisible Empire' was both anomalous and exploitable; and the Georgia primary marked the apogee of Klan influence in nomination politics. Their support punctured support for Underwood – a fact that McAdoo's managers admitted after the primary result was publicised, and helped to create an issue division that would enable McAdoo to distinguish himself from Underwood in a way that would increase his support in the South.[29] McAdoo maintained his stance on the Klan, and won the entire region's primary votes except for Underwood's home state Alabama, and Arkansas and Virginia who sponsored favourite sons Carter Glass and Joseph T. Robinson but remained favourable to McAdoo. Underwood, by contrast, resolved that his opposition to the Klan would prevent his re-election and exited politics before the 1928 mid-term elections.

### (IV) OHIO PRIMARY ELECTION (APRIL 29, 1924)

*This primary was critical because it marked the rupture of McAdoo's political relationship with an important party boss, whose later choices would be critical to the outcome of the nomination. Despite McAdoo's campaign activity (agency factors), the predominant influence determining the outcome of this election was structural: a non-candidate's (Cox) standing in the state.*

While the stealthy associations between the Klan and the McAdoo campaign in the South improved McAdoo's prospects in the region they would further distance the Georgian from Northeastern Democrats. With his prospects fading in the North McAdoo seized upon the idea that his aggressive pursuit of delegates through primaries could reinforce his progressive image because he was confronting local bosses. However, his anti-boss stand turned important Democratic power wielders against him. Illinois boss George E. Brennan had decided, for strategic reasons, to take an uncommitted delegation to the convention, leaving him the opportunity of throwing support to Smith at the most expedient psychological moment in order to maximise the effect of a large delegation's shift of votes. Aware of Brennan's pro-Smith leanings, McAdoo contested the Brennan organisation and was summarily defeated. Despite desperate efforts to mollify the impact of their rupture with Brennan, the leaders of the McAdoo movement were unable to improve their standing with the Illinois leader.

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[27] Goldman, *The National Party Chairmen and Committees: Factionalism at the Top*, 313.
[28] *The Twenties in America: Politics and History*, 105.
[29] Underwood's managers released a public statement in which they alleged that 'the votes of the order in Georgia were sufficient to swing Georgia for McAdoo'; *New York Times*, March 21, 1924. Assessing the significance of this result for the Klan, Goldman states that '[t]he McAdoo victory over Underwood in Georgia's March primary was considered a major advance in the Klan's march toward political power'; *The National Party Chairmen and Committees*, 313.

Ohio presented McAdoo's team with a similar dilemma to that over Illinois. Once again they chose to confront a local notable, and once again to no avail. In this case, Ohio's controlling figure, Governor Cox, would become the decisive makeweight at the convention by triggering a late stampede in favour of John W. Davis. Cox had initially decided to maintain a pretence of neutrality by running as a favourite son himself rather than having his state go to the convention pledged to another candidate. Although he had an outside chance at the 1924 nomination, Cox was actually more interested in playing the role of kingmaker and was known to lean toward Smith, who he regarded as the most talented governor in America. Of all the major candidates Cox liked McAdoo least, and it was rumoured that his favourite son candidacy was in part a ploy to withhold any Ohio support from the Californian. Cox was less disturbed by the Doheny disclosures than by the fact that McAdoo had opposed his own nomination in 1920 and had connived with the Klan in 1924. For McAdoo, Ohio was a debacle. The entire 48-member delegation became anti-McAdoo explicitly rather than implicitly. Prior to the election there had been some McAdoo sentiment in the state and second-choice support for Smith and McAdoo was balanced. But McAdoo's frontal assault on Cox made it impossible for such McAdoo sentiment to survive. It also reconfirmed Cox in his own anti-McAdoo position.

*The Convention*

McAdoo entered the convention with 270 pledged delegates, Smith 126, and the various favourite sons controlled at least 220. The remainder of the 1098 delegates were uncommitted. It was clear that neither McAdoo nor Smith could muster the necessary two-thirds of delegates' votes unless most of the favourite sons decided to withdraw and concentrate their strength on one candidate. Various rumours abounded that Carter Glass of Virginia, Charles W. Bryan of Nebraska, and Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas would move into the McAdoo column after making independent bids for second place; that Cox would throw Ohio behind Smith; or that Underwood would support Smith and become the New Yorker's running mate. This speculation, while not unfounded, was proven to be false as a prolonged deadlock ensued. After the first ballot, McAdoo's total was 431.5, significantly greater than the 270 pledged to him prior to the convention but still over 100 votes short of a simple majority (550), and more than 400 short of the 732 delegates required for a two-thirds majority. With the McAdoo and Smith teams squeezing out as many votes as they could, by the fifteenth round McAdoo had gained only 47.5 votes and Smith 64.5. Furthermore, none of the favourite sons was gathering any more support. The stalemate, writes Murray, was now being maintained as much by hatred and stubbornness as by genuine ideological divisions:

> The determination and intransigency of the major groups was unbelievable. Both the Smith and McAdoo forces had lost the ability even to communicate. Differing political and economic ideologies, cultural patterns and religious beliefs may have been the underlying reasons for the origin of their conflict, but now vanity, obstinacy, personal pride, jealousy, and vindictiveness took over.[30]

The log-jam continued unabated until the thirty-eighth ballot roll call when, reminiscent of 1912, Bryan demanded recognition from the floor to 'explain' his vote. After calling for 'party harmony' Bryan,

[30] *The 103rd Ballot*, 179.

characteristically, proceeded to fuel the flames of division within the party. He stated that the party had an abundance of presidential talents but omitted Smith from his 'comprehensive' list and described McAdoo as the one best suited to the task of presidential leadership. After more than an hour on the platform, and with convention delegates visibly irritated by a confrontational yet unimpressive speech, Bryan declared his vote for McAdoo. Unsurprisingly, the effects of Bryan's speech were muted. It did not create a breakthrough for McAdoo, and on the thirty-eighth ballot McAdoo's total scarcely changed at 444 and Smith's total at 321.

By the forty-ninth ballot it was clear that a number of McAdoo delegates were looking to coalesce around one of the favourite sons in the hope of breaking the deadlock. When Mississippi transferred its 20 votes for Ralston it appeared that one had been found. Although there was no further change on the fiftieth or fifty-first ballots, on the fifty-second ballot Missouri also switched all of her votes to Ralston, pushing his total to 93. At that moment Taggart was seen circulating through the delegations of different states and it was assumed that a Ralston boom was developing. However, with Ralston's total only reaching 97 by the fifty-seventh ballot and dropping to 40.5 on the fifty-eighth ballot, it was apparent that the Ralston boom had been abruptly halted. It was killed when, on Independence Day, Taggart announced that Ralston wished his name to be withdrawn from further consideration at the convention. However, Ralston's exit had no decisive effect on the fortunes of the remaining candidates and the seemingly endless deadlock: Indiana split its vote giving 20 to McAdoo and 10 to Smith.

### (V) THE SEVENTY-FOURTH BALLOT (JULY 6, 1924)

*This action by Smith's lieutenants at the convention was a critical juncture because it showed McAdoo that his nomination could be vetoed indefinitely by Smith. It marked the start of the search for a compromise candidate. Its occurrence was the result of an agreement by Smith's representatives and favourite son candidates to form a blocking coalition against McAdoo.*

The sixty-sixth round heralded the beginning of an active search for solutions to the deadlock. Some of the favourite sons opportunistically suggested that both Smith and McAdoo withdraw. Smith and McAdoo's lieutenants rejected this call. McAdoo was unable to force the convention to abrogate its two-thirds rule.[31]
The Oklahoma delegation sponsored a resolution calling for the elimination of the lowest ranked candidate for every round of balloting until only two names where left. Similarly, Nebraska proposed that the candidate receiving the lowest vote be eliminated until only five names remained. Afraid of the uncertain repercussions of such rule changes, the Smith and McAdoo groups voted down both resolutions. Governor Thomas H. Ball of Texas proposed a more complex scheme according to which the lowest candidate at the end of each successive roll call be dropped until only two were left. If neither of the remaining candidates received the necessary two-thirds majority after five ballots, the unit rule would be abandoned and the candidate receiving a simple majority would be declared the winner. Suspecting ebbing support for their candidate, McAdoo's

[31] McAdoo was a long-standing opponent of the two-thirds rule, which he described as 'mischievous and asinine' because '[i]t usually results in the elimination of all powerful candidates who might lead the party to victory and the selection, as a compromise, of some colorless personality who receives the nomination because nothing can be said against him, or for him.' McAdoo, *Crowded Years: The Reminiscences of William G. McAdoo*, 146.

leaders declined to accept the risks involved in abandoning the disciplining unit rule. The Smith men also voted against the Ball resolution: they feared that abolishing the two-thirds rule would move McAdoo much closer to the nomination and strengthen his appeal as a result.

In advance of the seventy-fourth ballot, Roosevelt met with several representatives of the favourite sons and persuaded them to 'loan' Smith the number of votes sufficient to give him a veto. Smith held out little hope of the nomination but was determined that it should not be obtained by his arch rival. Roosevelt reasoned that proving Smith's veto power was the only way that McAdoo could be persuaded that his nomination was impossible. When on the seventy-fourth to seventy-seventh rounds Smith posted 364, 366, 368, and 367 (the exact number required for a veto), an important psychological threshold was reached. It became clear that McAdoo and Smith were through. At last the McAdoo leaders began to search for a compromise solution to the tragic-comedy that the convention had become.

The contending groups' representatives set up a 'harmony conference' with the expressed aim of resolving the deadlock. However, the continued intransigence of the McAdoo, Smith, and favourite son delegations ensured the failure of this latest attempt at diplomacy. Representatives of the minority candidates met independently and proposed a resolution to the full conference calling for the release of all delegates by all candidates. McAdoo's team temporized before rejecting the proposal. They then proposed a plan nearly identical to the earlier Ball resolution. By embracing a position which they had earlier rejected as unacceptable, McAdoo's representatives disclosed the weakening of their position. McAdoo's proposal was barely considered, and his team were now increasingly viewed as a roadblock to the resolution of the deadlock. Annoyed by the seeming unwillingness of the leading 'McAdooites' to compromise, McAdoo's more marginal supporters began to desert him and his total vote consisted of a hard-core 353 by the ninety-ninth round, identical to that of Smith's.

By this stage, however, an important shift was occurring. John W. Davis's total had increased from 81.75 on the ninety-fourth roll call to 210 on the ninety-ninth. The other favourite sons, by contrast, were not gaining ground.

On the eve of the 101st ballot, Chairman Walsh announced that he had received a communication from McAdoo in which he expressed his desire to withdraw from the contest. The Californian, now 'unwilling to contribute to a continuation of a hopeless deadlock', instructed his 'friends' to 'take such action as, in their judgment, may best serve the interests of the party'.[32] This communication marked McAdoo's effective withdrawal from the contest. Although McAdoo officially remained a candidate his delegations began to leak heavily. However, these votes tended to scatter between the favourite son candidates.

[32] Murray, *The 103rd Ballot*, 200.

## (VI) COX SHIFT OF VOTES TO DAVIS BEFORE 101ST BALLOT (JULY 9, 1924)

*Cox's shift triggered the momentum swing that culminated in Davis's victory. Cox's unconstrained decision – the choice of a politician who was not contesting the 1924 nomination – was a structural factor.*

James Cox, defeated presidential candidate in 1920 and the titular head of the party, had decided to make his way to New York in an attempt to salvage a nomination from the wreckage of the past three weeks. He called the Ohio delegation into a special session, and advised them to abandon Smith and throw their support behind John W. Davis. He thought that Davis could attract support from groups pledged to McAdoo and Smith. If Davis's prospects faded, Cox advised a shift to Carter Glass.

Smith's delegations were not strongly opposed to Davis but preferred Underwood because of his principled stands against the Klan and prohibition. On the 102nd ballot, the Smith delegations began to shift votes in the direction of the Alabaman. In response, McAdoo's supporters decided to rally behind Davis. On the 101st roll call, Smith's vote had been reduced to 121 and McAdoo's 52. However, Underwood had reached 229.5 and Davis 316. Compromisers continued to flow toward Davis on the 102nd ballot. By the end of this round Davis had accumulated a total of 415.5. And despite frantic last-minute protestations by Bryan that the convention must not nominate a 'Wall Street man', Davis secured the nomination with 844 votes on the 103rd ballot.[33]

*Why Davis?*

John W. Davis' political identity as a moderate was fundamental to his success when the convention became deadlocked. He held policy preferences that were not antithetical to those of the main factions at the convention and therefore could emerge as a suitable compromise candidate. Bryan claimed that Davis was an agent of Wall Street, but Davis was in fact a centrist choice by a Democratic convention with a range of opinions but dominated by moderate progressives. With data collected from John W. Davis's personal papers held at Yale University, I have located prominent representatives of the states in a uni-dimensional issue space from a list of the salient liberal (or progressive) and conservative issues, and these are presented in Table 5.2 below.[34] Liberal issues are those promoted by Western politicians, and conservative issues represent those supported by their North-Eastern rivals. This representation of the issue space in 1924 simplifies the complex relationship between policy issues in the 1920s but, as Douglas Craig shows, most dimensions of ideological conflict tended to reinforce the basic liberal-conservative economic cleavage.[35]

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[33] Murray, *The 103rd Ballot*, 201.

[34] The Papers of John W. Davis, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. After winning the Democratic Party presidential nomination, Davis, a dark-horse candidate unfamiliar with the issues affecting rank-and-file members, sought the comprehensive advice of 264 notables – including US Senators and Representatives, state legislators, local mayors and sheriffs, and newspaper editors – from each of the states. Many of these individuals were present at the convention in Madison Square Garden, and their advice took the form of written correspondence detailing the important issues in the state, and the best positions for a Democratic presidential nominee to take on these.

[35] In particular, the uniqueness of the South – a recurring theme in the literature following Key's magisterial study – is not treated explicitly. Southern Democrats tended to be conservative on economic and states' rights issues but strong supporters of prohibition. The South is not especially problematic if we view it as a region combining elements of both progressivism and conservatism – a tripartite division to cope with its special features is therefore unnecessary.

Table 5.2: Salient Liberal and Conservative Issues in 1924

| **Liberal Issues in 1924** | **Conservative Issues in 1924** |
|---|---|
| Ethical Government | Immigration |
| Tariff Adjustment | Efficiency and Economy in Government |
| Support for Railroad / Farm Workers | Taxation |
| Internationalism (League of Nations, World Court) | Federalism (states' rights) |
| Environmentalism | Law Enforcement |
| Social Services Expansion | Anti-Prohibition |
| Race (equality) | |
| Religious (tolerance) | |
| Prohibition | |

I have coded the responses of Davis's state advisers using the following rules:

1. One progressive (or conservative) point if a salient progressive (or conservative) issue is raised.
2. One additional point if this issue is flagged as 'principal', 'priority', or 'critical'. For each respondent, only one issue can be given additional weighting.
3. There are no points attached to issues that do not fall within the list of progressive and conservative issues in Table 5.2.
4. The total score for each state is the average difference between progressive and conservative scores. (Equal to the total progressive score minus the total conservative score, divided by the number of respondents from the state).

This content analysis allows us to plot the positions of the states in liberal-conservative ideological space. The ideological positions of the states are presented in Figure 1 below. North-Eastern and Southern states are generally more conservative than the progressive West. In particular, both the Northeast and South share a preference for states' rights – the South for racial reasons; the Northeast for economic ones.

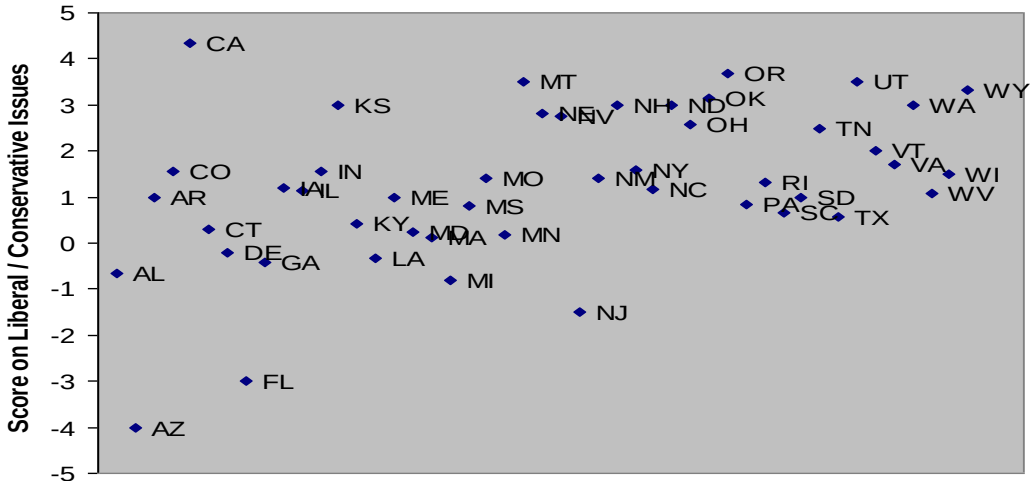


Figure 1: Ideological Positions of the States

Let us assume that Davis's advisors, many of whom were delegates to the convention, were representative of the ideological preferences of their home state delegations. It follows that if we multiply their scores by the size of their delegations, we can gain a picture of the ideological composition of the 1924 convention. Scores lying between +3.5 and +5, I label 'radical liberal'; between +1.5 and +3.49, 'strong liberal'; between 0 and +1.49 'moderate liberal'; 0 and -1.49 'moderate conservative'; -1.5 and -3.49 'strong conservative'; and between -3.5 and -5 'radical conservative' (or reactionary).[36] Figure 2 below demonstrates that the convention was dominated by progressives.

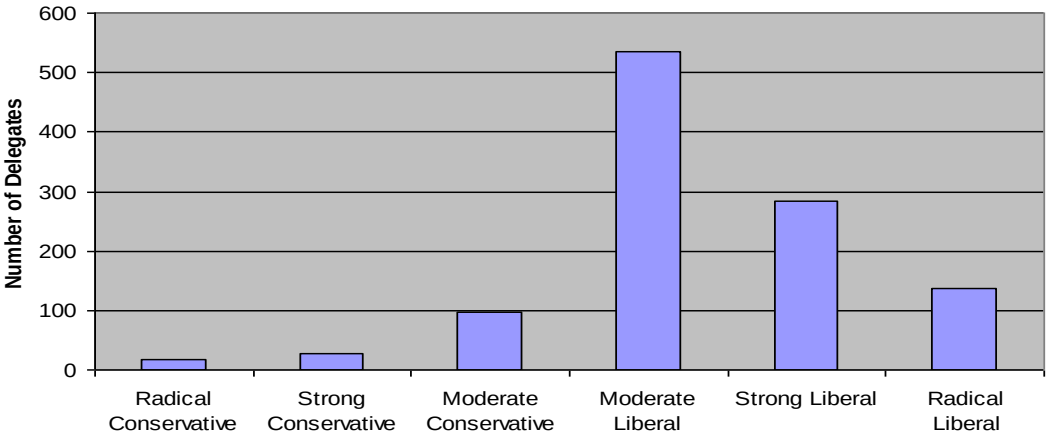


Figure 2: Ideological Composition of the 1924 Democratic National Convention

I have coded John Davis's acceptance speech at the convention in a similar way. However, the speech, according to the coding rules I have used, suggests that Davis was, in fact, a progressive radical. He makes very few statements that are conservative, and most of his speech is progressive in content. Consider, for instance, his characterisation of the Republican Party:

[36] See Appendix for the states' ideological scores and the sizes of their delegations to the 1924 national convention.

> I indict the Republican Party in its organized capacity for having shaken public confidence to its very foundation. I charge it with having exhibited deeper and more widespread corruption than any that this generation of Americans has been called upon to witness … I charge it with gross favouritism to the privileged, and with utter disregard to the unprivileged …[37]

Similarly, discussing the perils of American isolationism in the aftermath of the Great War, and the effects of such a policy on Western agriculturalists, Davis is staunch in his progressivism:

> Four years ago we were promised a new association of nations to be created in order to protect and preserve the peace of the world. No single proposal of this sort has yet appeared from any of those who so loudly promised it. With the reconstruction of Europe weighing heavily on the world; with American economic life dwarfed and stunted by the interruption of world commerce; with the agricultural regions of the West sinking into bankruptcy because of the loss of their foreign markets, we have stood by as powerless spectators.[38]

This evidence constitutes a prima facie rejection of my claim that Davis was a moderate progressive. However, there are important reasons why Davis might wish to present himself to be more radical than he was generally perceived to be. It is likely that this provided the surest means by which to galvanise a deeply divided party in the aftermath of a disastrous nomination contest and before a critical presidential election. The Democratic Party was overwhelmingly progressive in its leaning, and though Davis probably sat comfortably within the moderate progressive category, his Wall Street connections made a number of progressive radicals doubt this. Most notably, Bryan tried to reverse the momentum building in favour of Davis's candidacy. More generally, however, 'many delegates unfamiliar with Davis's actual record came to identify the lawyer with a conservatism in excess even of that which he did represent.'[39] Davis's speech reflected a shrewd political calculation. Though it failed catastrophically to unite and energise his party, post-election evidence supports Davis's fear that the party needed to cement its progressive base if it was to compete effectively in the presidential election. La Follette cut much more deeply into Davis's base than Coolidge's. La Follette's presence in the presidential competition caused Davis to run thirteen per cent behind his party's congressional vote, but President Coolidge ran only four per cent behind the Republican congressional vote. This reflected La Follette's strength in the avowedly progressive West.

Davis, most of his contemporaries and historians agree, was 'a mild liberal of indefinite commitments.'[40] 'The framework of his mind was formed in [his birth place] West Virginia', wrote Walter Lippman in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*. 'It is that of the traditional Democrat with Jeffersonian distrust of centralization, the parochial dislike of bureaucracy, and a strong prejudice in favour of home rule.'[41] 'Davis,' writes Schlesinger, was 'unqualified in his literal Jeffersonian devotion': 'I think Jefferson was the greatest political thinker this country has produced, and I expect to die in that faith,' Davis revealed.[42]

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[37] *Official Report of Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, 1924*, 1058.
[38] Ibid, 1058.
[39] Burner, *The Politics of Provincialism*, 125.
[40] Harbaugh, *Lawyer's Lawyer: The Life of John W. Davis*, 237.
[41] Lippman, *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1924, 533.
[42] Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order: 1919-1933*, 100.

In several cases, Davis, J.P. Morgan's lawyer, had represented management against labour unions; and Samuel Gompers, the American labour union leader, was not alone in his scepticism of Davis's claim to be a friend of labour.[43] In fact, however, Davis was relatively unbiased in his uptake of clients – he had defended Gompers's own American Federation of Labour (AFL), and had been a supporter of pro-labour initiatives as a congressman and Solicitor General. Unlike true progressive radicals though, he was accepting, and largely uncritical, of the prevailing economic and social order. 'There is nothing', Davis argued, 'in the purpose of the party I represent that holds for any legitimate business in this country any threat or menace whatever.'[44] Similarly, he interpreted 'the keynote of all Democratic policy, in passing upon any question … [to] be to keep the road open for private enterprise and personal initiative.'[45] Though he condemned Republican subsidies to business by campaigning against 'special privilege', he refused, as Bryan implored him privately, to make monopoly capitalism a target to be campaigned against. Furthermore, he tended to view tariff reform rather than redistribution as the solution to inequalities between financiers and farmers, businesses and consumers. Indeed, Harborough goes so far as to claim that Davis 'deemed it his *duty* to be a consensus candidate.'[46] In stark contrast to the passion associated with the radical progressive leadership offered by Bryan and La Follette, Davis – a lawyer by training and a former US Ambassador to London – was a man who tended naturally to caution and qualification. Charles Burlington, an influential lawyer and legal commentator, wrote to Harvard Law Professor Felix Frankfurter, that Davis 'has nothing of the crusader in him. He is too calm, too humorous, possibly too cynical'.[47] 'Davis', wrote his biographer, 'lacked not conviction itself, but the oratorical fire and intensity with which to give conviction verbal form.'[48]

Thus, Davis's eventual triumph should be understood as a consequence of his centrist identity under conditions of acute ideological division. Able to span the deep fissures that divided the Democratic Party's progressive and conservative elements, Davis held identity attributes that neither McAdoo nor Smith could match.

[43] Daniel Tobin of the Teamsters declared that he saw no difference between Davis and Coolidge; Harbaugh, *Lawyer's Lawyer*, 223.
[44] Harbaugh, *Lawyer's Lawyer*, 237.
[45] Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*, 100.
[46] Harbaugh, *Lawyer's Lawyer*, 240 (emphasis added).
[47] Harbaugh, *Lawyer's Lawyer*, 242.
[48] Harbaugh, *Lawyer's Lawyer*, 133.

# 6 THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1932

The weakness of President Hoover's administration following the Wall Street Crash increased the likelihood of a Democratic president in 1932 and the number of prominent aspirants for the party's presidential nomination. After his re-election in 1930, New York Governor Franklin Roosevelt moved early to organize elites throughout the nation in favour of his candidacy; and in his attempts to do so he benefited from the dominance of economic issues in the national political agenda. Only Al Smith could rival Roosevelt's reputation as a reform-minded executive who, in his time as New York Governor, demonstrated willingness to experiment with government involvement in the economy to alleviate unemployment; and Smith's appeal on economic issues was diluted by his growing conservatism since 1920. And where his rivals were perceived to be radical – Smith on prohibition, and Newton Baker on the League of Nations – Roosevelt was moderate. In combination, Roosevelt's multifaceted identity made him acceptable to the interests that dominated the nation's principal regions. Burns explains that 'the South looked on Roosevelt as a wet but a reasonable wet, the West saw him as a progressive … the East rated him as mildly wet and reasonably liberal'.[1] Endowed with high visibility and a uniquely attractive political identity, Roosevelt's candidacy held substantial potential, but his eventual success would also turn on the momentum spawned from the early organisation efforts of his campaign lieutenants.

The critical junctures in Roosevelt's path to the Democratic nomination reflected the importance of his political identity and first-mover advantages. Combined with Smith's loss in the presidential election, Roosevelt's success in the gubernatorial election of 1928 established him as New York's leading politician and a likely candidate for the presidency in 1932. His impressive re-election victory in 1930 enhanced his prestige further and afforded him opportunities to articulate social reform programmes. His campaign for the presidency began in earnest soon after, in March 1931, with Roosevelt's representatives moving to establish dedicated Roosevelt-for-President clubs throughout the nation. These efforts gave Roosevelt important advantages over his rivals who, by the start of the first primaries, headed scant organisations with only local or regional strength. Nonetheless Roosevelt's opponents collectively held the capacity to veto his nomination, and defeated Roosevelt in crucial primary contests in Massachusetts and California to frustrate the momentum that buttressed the Roosevelt boom. The New York Governor entered the Democratic National Convention in Chicago with a simple majority, but without the two-thirds of delegates necessary for his nomination. Ultimately, deadlock at the convention between Roosevelt and his opponents was broken only when the unity of the anti-Roosevelt coalition was collapsed by John Nance Garner, who shifted his delegates to Roosevelt to prevent a prolonged deadlock and in exchange for the vice presidency.

Table 6.1 Critical Junctures in Democratic Nomination, 1932

[1] *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 126.

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE | AGENT | NATURE OF CAUSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **New York Gubernatorial Election** | November 6, 1928 | Establishes Roosevelt as a prominent officeholder. | A > S | Roosevelt | A: campaign activities (Tactics, Identity)<br><br>S: activities of non-agent (rival in Governor's race) |
| **Wall Street Crash** | October 24, 1929 | Increases potency of economic divisions separating candidates. | S | N/A | S: exogenous event |
| **New York Gubernatorial Election** | November 4, 1930 | Establishes Roosevelt as a genuine presidential possibility for 1932. | A | Roosevelt | A: campaign activities (Tactics, Identity) |
| **Mayor Walker Corruption Scandal** | March 23, 1931 | Creates a conundrum for Roosevelt: back investigation or Tammany? | S | N/A | S: decision of a non-agent (NY Legislature) |
| **Jefferson Day Dinner** | April 18, 1932 | Smith declares an economic dimension of opposition to Roosevelt. | A > A | Smith; Roosevelt | A (Smith): issue opposition (Identity)<br>A (Roosevelt): (Identity) |
| **Massachusetts Primary** | April 26, 1932 | Roosevelt suffers upset to Smith in critical primary. | S > A | Roosevelt; Smith | S: exogenous event (division of Massachusetts Democratic Party)<br><br>A (Roosevelt and Smith): (Management, Tactics) |
| **California Primary** | May 3, 1932 | Roosevelt defeated by Garner. | A > A | Garner; Roosevelt | A (Garner): campaign activities (Tactics, Management)<br>A (Roosevelt): (Tactics, Management) |
| **Garner Shift for Roosevelt, Fourth Ballot** | July 1, 1932 | Roosevelt's nomination guaranteed after deadlock; Garner becomes vice-presidential nominee. | A | Garner | A: candidate selection (Identity, Tactics) |

Key:

(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

## (I) NEW YORK GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION (NOVEMBER 6, 1928)

*Roosevelt's election to the New York Governorship established him as a politician of national stature and a potentially viable presidential aspirant. Critical to Roosevelt's victory was the appeal of his identity and especially his ability to win the support of New York Protestants in a race against a Jewish contender.*

As Farley recounted, a 'good perspective' on Roosevelt's rise to the Democratic nomination 'can only be had by going back to 1928'.[2] Under pressure from New York State politicians, Al Smith, the Democratic nominee for president, drafted Roosevelt to head the Democratic ticket in New York State. Some commentators argue

[2] *Behind the Ballots: the Personal History of a Politician*, 59.

that Smith sought Roosevelt in order to help him to carry the state in his campaign for the presidency.[3] However, Smith at this stage – and indeed throughout his political career – did not view Roosevelt as a reliable vote-winner.[4] While Roosevelt might not be exceptional, he was sufficiently competent to handle the state's affairs, felt Smith. In spite of Republican charges that Roosevelt's physical disability would inhibit his capacities as Governor, Smith believed that Roosevelt was capable of handling the strains of the office: 'The work of the Governorship is brainwork. Ninety-five per cent of it is accomplished sitting at a desk. There is no doubt about his ability to do it'.[5] Moreover, Roosevelt was a faithful disciple of Smith and had served as a devoted apprentice. When faced with alternatives – as in the Democratic nomination contests of 1920, 1924, and 1928 – Roosevelt had always backed Smith. In 1924, as Smith's pre-convention manager, Roosevelt campaigned vigorously for his preferred candidate; and in 1928 Roosevelt delivered a memorable speech at the national convention in Houston nominating the 'Happy Warrior' Al Smith. It was other notable Democrats, including Thomas Lynch and Herbert H. Lehman, who more readily appreciated Roosevelt's political strengths especially among groups that had traditionally shunned Smith because of his Catholicism and overt wetness. Episcopalian Roosevelt was deemed a 'damp' or 'reasonable wet' because of his advocacy of the local option on prohibition.

For Roosevelt, 1928 was too early for a gubernatorial bid. Roosevelt held presidential ambitions, and his thoughts in this direction had become more purposeful since his debilitating bout of polio. However, in 1928 Roosevelt was still concentrating on his physical recovery, and spending lengthy periods at Warm Springs, Georgia. Louis Howe realised that a failure to win in the gubernatorial contest would jeopardise Roosevelt's future ambitions, and Mrs Roosevelt was also cool on the idea. However, in spite of her reservations, Mrs Roosevelt was willing to help Al Smith reach Roosevelt by telephone while he attempted to dodge Smith's efforts to draft him. Under persistent prompting by state party leaders, Smith urged Roosevelt to run for the good of the party, and Roosevelt's final argument of resistance – his financial commitment to Warm Springs – was demolished by John J. Raskob, who pledged $50,000 to the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation. Reluctantly, Roosevelt accepted. 'Thus it happened', Burns explained, 'that Roosevelt, against his own intentions and the advice of Howe and with his wife unsure of her own mind, took the first direct step to the presidency'.[6]

Roosevelt had to campaign on Smith's record as governor, and this restricted his scope to present radical plans; and it is clear by this stage that his political thinking had evolved in ways that distinguished him from Smith. Despite Roosevelt's assertion that he sought the governorship 'not to win personal honor but for carrying forward the policies of Governor Smith', Roosevelt's closest advisers encouraged him to speak more

[3] See for instance Perkins's account in *The Roosevelt I Knew*, 41. Perkins writes that '[b]y the time the Democratic state convention opened at Syracuse, Smith had conceived of the idea that Franklin Roosevelt was the essential man' to strengthen the national ticket in New York. (Note that the Democratic convention actually took place in Rochester and not Syracuse, as Perkins claims).
[4] Farley wrote that 'Smith always had a tendency to underrate the ability of his successor, even when they were working side by side in the smoke and fire of political battle'. Farley also notes that Roosevelt was not Smith's first choice – he preferred Townsend Scudder, a Justice of the State Supreme Court; *Behind the Ballots*, 78-79.
[5] Gosnell, *Champion Campaigner: Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 84.
[6] Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 100-101.

frequently about his belief in the government support programmes for labour and farmers that Smith had resisted while at Albany.[7] Roosevelt's Republican opponent, Albert Ottinger, was the incumbent state attorney general. He drew strength from upstate New York, where the Republican Party traditionally polled strongly, and from New York City's large Jewish community. Ottinger campaigned as an orthodox Republican: in favour of tariff protection and abolition of personal income taxes, and against public interference in private enterprise. The gubernatorial contest was close and Roosevelt won by a slim margin of 25, 564 votes ahead of Ottinger. The margin of victory represented three-fifths of one percent of the total votes cast. Analysing the sources of Roosevelt's victory, Harold F. Gosnell highlights Roosevelt's strong polling in upstate New York relative to the presidential ticket headed by Al Smith. Evidently, these voters split tickets in favour of Roosevelt's gubernatorial bid. Gosnell explains that 'upstate Protestant Republican voters preferred to vote for a coreligionist for governor', instead of the Catholic Smith or the Jewish Ottinger.[8]

'Roosevelt's success in carrying New York for governor in 1928, when Smith lost the state in the presidential race, began another chain of events. That election meant that Roosevelt was on his way to the White House', states Gosnell.[9] Even though the road from Albany to Washington was crowded and precarious, this was a perception shared by many leading Democrats after Smith's loss and Roosevelt's victory in the nation's most populous state. '[M]en who had occupied the Governor's Mansion at Albany had a pretty good chance of being considered for the White House', Farley portended.[10] In a survey of 1000 Democratic leaders conducted a week after the election by Roosevelt's staff 150 leaders from 17 states mentioned Roosevelt as their presidential choice, and a further 400 expressed admiration of Roosevelt's leadership. In his 'general analysis' of the results from his survey, Roosevelt expressed his view that the party remained resilient in spite of its election defeats: '[n]ever before in the history of the Democratic party, at least during the last 25 years, has there been shown so clearly a militant, aroused and aggressive determination to continue actively to fight not only with a view to the national elections four years from now, but for the coming Congressional elections in 1930'.[11] With Smith disavowing any future presidential ambitions, Roosevelt was poised to seize the leadership of the national party from his base at Albany.

The Republic legislature ensured that Governor Roosevelt operated under straitened circumstances. Almost immediately after Roosevelt's inauguration Republican legislators challenged a new constitutional amendment that empowered the executive with agenda-setting powers in the formulation of the state budget. After Roosevelt had submitted items and estimates to the legislature for approval or veto, the Republican majority amended the governor's proposals to a degree that made questionable the premise of executive agenda-setting, and gained legislative approval of the new budget. Unwilling to cede ground on this central issue, Roosevelt contested the budget in the courts, and won a prestigious victory.

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[7] Gosnell, *Champion Campaigner*, 84.
[8] Ibid, 90.
[9] Gosnell, *Champion Campaigner*, 2.
[10] Farley, *Behind the Ballots*, 60.
[11] Carlson, 'Roosevelt's Post-Mortem of the 1928 Election', *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 8:3 (1964), 303.

Despite his claims that he no longer dreamed for the presidency, Smith was discomfited by Roosevelt's surging popularity and status. Prior to Roosevelt's election, Smith had dominated their political friendship; but the former governor felt increasingly threatened as his successor began to force his political personality upon the politics of New York State. Indeed Burns argues that Roosevelt's inauguration ceremony 'symbolized a turning point in the closely entwined careers of the two politicians'.[12]

## (II) WALL STREET CRASH (OCTOBER 24, 1929)

*An exogenous event – the Wall Street Crash – triggered the Depression and the hardships that accompanied it forced economic issues onto the political agenda. Increased salience of these issues improved Roosevelt's prospects vis-à-vis his potential rivals because Roosevelt alone had taken innovative positions on economic policy questions.*

The causes of the Great Depression were subtle and complex but its consequences were striking and obvious. In *The Great Crash – 1929*, J.K. Galbraith highlighted three fundamental frailties in the structure of the American economic system: uneven income distribution; a weak banking system in which banks operated uninsured and with small deposit bases; and the rise of holding companies in publishing, the railroads, and public utilities with a corporate structure that prioritised short-run, and often speculative, profits over long-term growth.[13] A reduction in industrial production in October, 1927 caused Wall Street to over-react and share prices plummeted by the end of the month, ruining the assets of the small number of rich individuals who could stimulate a stock market revival; and triggering a run of bank collapses as savers withdrew their deposits from teetering banks.[14]

After the decade of prosperity that had preceded the Crash, America entered a prolonged and acute economic depression that affected both employers and employees in the industrial, commercial, and agricultural sectors of the economy. Moreover, the collapse of the economy exposed Hoover's political handicaps as much as it did his economic ones. Most of his relief efforts – including attempts to raise the tariff on farm produce to reduce competition in the agricultural market and the creation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) to lend funds to banks, railroads, and construction corporations – proved to be ineffective economically and counter-productive politically. The marginal economic benefits from raising the tariffs on farm produce were overwhelmed by the negative effects of political retaliation by Britain and Germany who abandoned free trade to construct elaborate regimes of trade barriers. Similarly, the RFC was criticised for favouring certain banks and corporations instead of others. Moreover, by neglecting workers it did little to aid the millions of unemployed, and thereby created resentment and the militant organisation of the working

[12] Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 105.
[13] A small minority of financial experts, including the correspondents of the *New York Times* and *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, urged caution.
[14] Different schools of thought exist regarding the effects of the bank collapse. Keynesians stress the collapse of consumption and investment demand. Classical economists tend to focus on the consequences of restrictions in the supply of money. Amity Shlaes's *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* is a recent contribution that echoes the classical interpretation.

class. Thus, Schlesinger in *The Crisis of the Old Order* is correct to point out that Hoover contributed only minimally to the artificial inflation of the economy; but the president's reaction to its collapse was disastrous: as Sean Dennis Cashman states, 'by his actions, a mixture of arrogance, insensitivity, and cowardice … Hoover committed a gross political blunder that was to cost him dear'.[15]

As Hoover's standing plummeted, the recession offered opportunities for the Democratic Party's leading politicians. However, a substantial proportion of the party's old guard – including Al Smith, and the party's leadership in Congress – supported Hoover's approach to political economy. Even as the severity of the Depression became apparent, the Democratic leadership believed that important political divisions within the party and in the nation would form around cultural issues, and especially prohibition, rather than a cleavage centred on the nation's best response to its economic plight. However, Roosevelt, who would seek re-election in the midst of this hardship, interpreted this political moment differently; and he positioned himself to use his forthcoming election campaign as an opportunity to carve an issue identity in economic affairs that diverged from that of the Democratic establishment in New York and Washington. He quickly established a state relief agency and sponsored a bill to introduce unemployment insurance. Roosevelt advocated an unprecedented federal activism in the economy, but establishment Democrats concurred with the *Washington Post*'s warnings about Roosevelt's new philosophy of intervention: 'millions of substantial Democratic voters would hesitate to cast their ballots for their party's candidate if he should be identified with Socialists who think the Depression can be cured by raiding the Federal Treasury'.[16]

### (III) NEW YORK GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION (NOVEMBER 4, 1930)

*By winning re-election with a record margin, Roosevelt became the leading prospect in the 1932 race. His victory was the result of the stands that he had taken in order to foster his reputation as a reform governor.*

Roosevelt's Republican rival, US Attorney Charles Tuttle concentrated his campaign attacks on the issues of corruption and prohibition. The death, in 1924, of long-standing Tammany leader Charles F. Murphy, initiated a contest for control of New York Democracy, and the patronage it controlled while Roosevelt was governor. The dispersion in power following Murphy's death led to the auctioning off of offices – a process that became increasingly lucrative as the economy shrunk. So Tuttle attacked Roosevelt for ignoring Tammany graft. However, Roosevelt countered effectively that the state's Republican Attorney General had not acted when he had been referred cases by the governor. In sum, there appeared to be little difference between the parties.

Tuttle also campaigned strongly for repeal of the prohibition amendment; more forcefully than Roosevelt who advocated the local option. Tuttle calculated that Roosevelt's public equivocation and the dryness of his household could be exploited for political gains. However, prominent wets, including John J. Raskob and Al

[15] Cashman, *America in the Twenties and Thirties*, 131.
[16] January 2, 1932.

Smith, endorsed Roosevelt's stand on prohibition. Moreover, the Republican candidate's emphasis on the issues caused a disastrous split within the Republican Party ranks. Led by the Anti-Saloon League, upstate drys fielded their own candidate – Syracuse Professor Robert P. Carroll – who ensured Tuttle's defeat by securing 200,000 votes. Roosevelt won an 'unprecedented plurality' of 725,001.[17]

A decisive step-change in Roosevelt's prospects occurred with his re-election as governor in 1930. Already a prominent figure in the Democratic Party by virtue of his famous surname, service in government, prominent appearances at Democratic national conventions since 1924, and two years at the Albany statehouse, Roosevelt's victory catapulted him to the front of the queue of presidential hopefuls. Roosevelt's win triggered a surge in optimism about his prospects amongst his associates.[18] 'The men and women who make politics their business started to cast their eyes toward Albany', Farley scrutinised.[19] As Roy V. Peel and Thomas C. Donnelly analysed, 'A man who could command such a vote in the most populous state of the Union could not be taken lightly in any quest for higher office'.[20] Similarly, Gosnell highlights that 'Throughout the United States the press proclaimed Governor Roosevelt as the most probable candidate for President in 1932'.[21] For the first time, Governor Roosevelt confided to close political associates that he believed that he could win the Democratic race for the presidential nomination and, with the severity of the Great Depression, the presidency.[22]

### (IV) MAYOR JAMES WALKER CORRUPTION SCANDAL (MARCH 23, 1931)

*The Walker corruption scandal caused a breach between Governor Roosevelt and Tammany Hall. In response, Tammany Democrats pressured Smith to enter. The investigation of Walker's activity as Mayor was due to structural factors: the resolution by the New York legislature to create a committee to investigate the allegations against Walker.*

On March 23, 1931, the Republican majority in the New York State legislature passed a resolution to authorise an inquiry into the municipal affairs of the state.[23] In investigations by Judge Samuel Seabury, counsel for the City Affairs committee, Walker admitted that he had misappropriated funds and could not explain – with any conviction – his personal acquisition of $500,000. When the Committee of legislators failed to charge Walker, Seabury sent his conclusions on Walker's testimony to Governor Roosevelt. For Roosevelt, this raised an acute political dilemma. On the one hand, Roosevelt knew that to ignore these important matters would risk him being viewed as inextricably linked with Tammany – a fact that would cost him the support of the progressive West. On the other hand, to punish Tammany too aggressively would

[17] Farley, *Behind the Ballots*, 61.
[18] Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 123.
[19] Farley, *Behind the Ballots*, 61.
[20] Peel and Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign, An Analysis*,18, 31.
[21] Gosnell, *Champion Campaigner*, 107.
[22] Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 123.
[23] Louis J. Gribetz and Joseph Kaye, *Jimmie Walker: The Story of a Personality*.

make it impossible for him to obtain the large bloc of votes (94) that New York would carry into the convention. Roosevelt decided that he would delay until the convention before deciding Walker's fate.[24]

The Tammany version of the dilemma was effectively resolved when Al Smith declared his availability for the presidential nomination. Remaining an active titular leader of his party, Smith held the largest personal following of any Democratic leaders since Bryan. Until February 1932, Smith had pointedly refused to endorse Roosevelt (or any other candidate) while suggesting that he no longer harboured presidential ambitions; for instance, by citing his large personal debts or asserting the impossibility of a Catholic president.[25] However, encouraged by enthusiastic support from a growing Stop-Roosevelt movement and the weakness of the Hoover administration, Smith was willing to try once again for the White House.[26] Since his nomination in 1928, Smith had become a closer ally of corporate New York.[27] And although he remained a favourite of the city's masses, he now served on the boards of banks and corporations and his political views had veered sharply to the right as he increasingly associated with millionaire conservatives.[28]

With Tammany certain to support a Smith candidacy, Roosevelt publicly distanced himself from the organisation. The *Washington Post* still expected Roosevelt to be too strong for his combined opponents: 'The anti-Roosevelt forces, while no longer leaderless, face a big handicap in the early lead piled up for the New York governor'.[29] However, the forces represented by Smith held complex motivations. Several newspapers echoed the earlier speculations of the *Newark Ledger* that Smith might not expect the nomination but was enthused by the prospect of obstructing Roosevelt 'who offended him by belittling the record of the once "happy warrior"'.[30] And Smith's backers had routinely demonstrated an unflinching tenacity as they pursued their aims. As the Chicago Defender presciently observed 'The powers behind Alfred E. Smith are not impatient. Steady, relentless purpose runs in their history. With them losing is to win, and winning is not necessarily the end of strife'.[31]

[24] Walker resigned on September 1 and set sail for Europe. He returned to New York in 1935 but not charges were ever brought against him. (Grossman, *Political Corruption in America*, 353-354).
[25] Smith was jealous of the rise of his former protégé and angered by his unwillingness to seek his counsel when making appointments and decisions as New York governor. Farley and Flynn agreed to work for Roosevelt only after Smith assured them that he would not run (Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 129).
[26] Anti-Roosevelt sentiment was actively encouraged by the Democratic National Committee Chairman, John J. Raskob and his Director, Jouett Shouse. Although they worked together for the nomination of Smith in 1928, Roosevelt and Raskob shared a deep and personal enmity.
[27] Indeed, in his *Men of Destiny*, published in 1928, Walter Lippman had presciently warned progressives of Smith's essential conservatism, but they refused to believe him, 'until their Messianic hope started donning full dress and attending Rockefeller weddings and Vanderbilt teas' (P+D, p. 28).
[28] Jeff Taylor claims that Smith's reputation for liberalism was a mistaken one. He finds that 'Smith compiled a conservative record as state legislator and governor.' After winning the Democratic nomination in 1928 Smith appointed John Raskob as his campaign manager and chair of the DNC. Raskob had been an executive at Du Point and General Motors. Taylor, *Where Did the Party Go?*, 66.
[29] February 11, 1932.
[30] February 8, 1932.
[31] February 13, 1932.

*(a) Roosevelt Plots his Path*

Although he was an energetic governor of the nation's most populous state, Roosevelt's polio threatened to hijack his candidacy.[32] A dramatic article by Earle Looker entitled 'Is Franklin D. Roosevelt Physically Fit to Be President' was published in the July 25, 1931 edition of *Liberty* magazine. This attempted to quash the elaborate illusion that Roosevelt had constructed regarding his paralysis. Roosevelt claimed that he *could* walk and that his legs were continually improving; neither of which was true. In response to the continual queries about his health, Roosevelt submitted himself to physical examination by a committee of prominent doctors. They concluded that his organs were 'sound in all respects' and that 'his health and powers of endurance are such as to allow him to meet any demands of private and public life'.[33]

By 1931, Roosevelt had crafted a political identity that was uniquely placed to undergird a presidential bid in 1932.[34] His identity combined moderation on controversial issues with his growing reputation as an economic reformer, a characterisation that became a weighty asset as America struggled to cope with depression. Burns writes that 'Part of Roosevelt's strength stemmed from the pains he took not to alienate any major faction of the party'.[35] He backed repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment, but was not a forceful advocate and headed a dry household; he had supported American entry into the League of Nations and adherence to the World Court, but backed away from public espousal of these positions.[36] On the economy Roosevelt's position was one of radical disjuncture from the policies of President Hoover's administration.[37] The severity of the Depression discredited completely the policies associated with Hoover's management of the economy; and thus Roosevelt's divergence from these solutions created the potential for substantial political gains. Hoover's fundamental governmental conviction led him to oppose collectivism: that 'there should be a recoil from governmentalism, and especially federal governmentalism'.[38] However, as Peel and Donnelly explain, this approach became a major political liability: 'individualism as a philosophy of government and as a system met its death blow with the crash of the stock market in October, 1929. The Depression called for leadership based on collectivist principles, and Hoover proved incapable and unwilling to supply it'.[39]

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[32] McAdoo believed that there was a real possibility of Roosevelt's death before the election. Ralph Martin gives details of a conversation between McAdoo and the Nebraskan delegation leader Arthur Mullen. McAdoo expressed his anxieties about Roosevelt's health: 'We don't want a dead man on the ticket, Arthur,' he commented. 'You won't have one', Mullen replied; *Ballots & Bandwagons*, 128.

[33] Evans, *The Hidden Campaign*, 27.

[34] Though he delayed until January 23, 1932 to declare officially.

[35] Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 126.

[36] 'The League of Nations today', Roosevelt opined, 'is not the League conceived by Woodrow Wilson … Too often through these years, its major function has been not the broad overwhelming purpose of world peace but rather a mere meeting place for the political discussion of strictly European political national difficulties. In these, the United States should have no part …'; Martin, *Ballots and Bandwagons*, 138.

[37] Unlike Treasury Secretary Mellon, Hoover was not an adherent of laissez-faire economic philosophy. He responded in a number of activist ways to the October 1929 market crash, including accelerating federal spending on construction and trying to secure pledges from mayors and governors to maintain spending levels. The consensus view among historians is that Hoover was a dire communicator. As Sloan explains: 'Hoover was hampered by his lack of political skills. He was a great engineer and administrator, but … he was facing crises caused by the Depression that required the political capabilities of a Lincoln … His speeches, which he insisted on writing himself, were fact-filled, ponderous, and dull'; *FDR and Reagan: Transformative Presidents with Clashing Visions*, 40.

[38] Peel and Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign*, 15.

[39] Peel and Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign*, 15.

In New York, Roosevelt had experimented with government programmes to alleviate unemployment; and though economic historians contest the degree to which Roosevelt's interventions improved New York's economy, its political effects were clear. The contrast with Hoover was striking; the Democratic Governor's activism and promotion of intervention contrasted with the faith of President Hoover in the resilience of the status quo economic system. In his famous 'Forgotten Man' speech, Roosevelt called for a reorientation of recovery policy away from its existing focus on large corporations, banks, and railroads to large-scale assistance for workers and farmers.[40] He demanded 'the building of plans that rest upon the forgotten, the unorganised but the indispensable units of economic power'.[41] As Skowronek makes clear, the Depression bankrupted the old order and permitted Roosevelt a rare degree of freedom: the depression provided 'political independence from the existing state of affairs and … an expansive warrant for discarding received political formulas'.[42]

Roosevelt's candidacy was aggressively identified with the liberal faction of the Democratic Party. However, Roosevelt's liberalism was more emotional than it was intellectual. Although he was a man with a deep social conscience, he remembered little of the small amount of economics he had encountered at Harvard, took little pleasure in reading the path-breaking contributions to liberal economic theory developed prior to and during the depression, and was cynical of those treatments that he read.[43] However, political instincts offered an easy solution: 'borrow' the ideas of others. Hence, the inception of the 'brain trust' in March 1932 composed of leading social scientists who met to construct policy solutions to be delivered with passion and poise by Roosevelt.[44] Soon the man described by his critics as 'impulsive and indecisive' was detailing a programme of purchasing power restoration, calling for the voter to remember the 'indispensable forgotten man', and demanding 'bold, persistent experimentation' in search of a solution to the nation's continuing crisis.[45]

Roosevelt's economic philosophy, as revealed in statements such as these, affirmed his belief that the orthodox principles used by the controllers of the nation's economy were outdated. Though his reform identity would lie at the heart of Roosevelt's popular appeal, the perceived radicalism of his economic ideas put him at odds with the leadership of the Democratic Party in Congress which, despite Hoover's problems, did not present a coherent alternative programme for recovery. Instead, it followed Hoover's lead by passing the Federal Home Loan Bank Act to stimulate the construction and purchase of new homes and the

[40] Ironically Roosevelt misapplied the 'forgotten man' phrase. Coined originally by libertarian philosopher William Graham Sumner, the 'forgotten man' referred to the neglected tax payer forced to paid for politicians' social and economic initiatives; Shlaes, *The Forgotten Man*, 12.
[41] The 'Forgotten Man' Speech, Radio Address, Albany, New York, April 7, 1932, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*.
[42] *The Politics Presidents Make*, 298.
[43] For instance, Roosevelt scrawled in his copy of Foster and Catchings's *The Road to Plenty* which predated Keynes's *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* in advocating public spending to boost employment and aggregate demand in response to economic recession – 'Too good to be true'; Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order: 1919-1933*, 140.
[44] Indeed, the very idea of a 'brain trust' was Sam Rosenman's.
[45] *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, speeches on April 17, April 18, and May 22, 1932. Martin, *Ballots and Bandwagons*, 111. Walter Lippman famously declared that 'Franklin D. Roosevelt is no crusader. He is no tribune of the people. He is no enemy of entrenched privilege. He is a pleasant man, who, with no important qualifications for the office, would very much like to be president'; *New York Herald Tribune*, January 8, 1932.

Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) to promote loans to support the fragile banking sector. Some Democrats acted to reduce the attention paid to economic divisions in the hope that this might improve the prospects for Al Smith and other stop-Roosevelt candidates. Because Roosevelt provided a popular alternative to voters preoccupied by executive concerns, leaders of the Stop-Roosevelt campaign – including John Raskob, Jouett Shouse, and Bernard Baruch – attempted to diminish the salience of issues relating to the economy. According to Donald A. Ritchie, 'Roosevelt stood alone among the potential Democratic candidates in staking an economic stance separate from the president's'.[46] Most Democratic and Republican leaders assumed that the cultural divisions that dominated political conflict in the 1920s would remain central to competition in 1932. Furthermore, anti-Roosevelt Democrats reasoned that dwindling support for prohibition would elevate this particular issue and aid the candidacies of wet candidates, and especially that of Al Smith.

By March, 1931 fifty Roosevelt-for-President clubs had sprung up – sometimes spontaneously, though usually with prompting and support – throughout the country to raise funds and nurture support for Roosevelt's candidacy. And a poll of delegates to the 1928 Democratic national convention taken at the end of March confirmed Roosevelt's firm lead in the 1932 race.[47] Over half of those who expressed a preference between candidates for the nomination supported Roosevelt. The other potential candidates considered – Alfred E. Smith, Owen D. Young, Albert Ritchie, Joseph T. Robinson, Newton D. Baker, James Reed, 'Alfalfa Bill' Murray, and James Cox – trailed by a significant margin. Roosevelt had nearly four times the support of his closest rival, Smith.

These polling results were marketed carefully by the Roosevelt campaign. To the Democratic leaders in the states with whom the Roosevelt organisation maintained close contacts, Louis Howe and James Farley emphasised and publicised the 'inevitability' of Roosevelt's victory, and claimed that his strength was increasing steadily.[48] Thus, Peel and Donnelly write that 'Mr. Roosevelt's band wagon secured a long lead over Mr. Smith's early in the race. Once this lead was obtained, the Roosevelt backers made it the keynote of their campaign and exploited it for all it was worth.'[49] Farley embarked on a nationwide tour to foster pro-Roosevelt sentiments and secure elite endorsements. The *New York Times* editorialised: 'Whether it is an advantage to lead the field a year in advance of the conventions, most political observers believe that Governor Roosevelt of New York holds this position at the present time'.[50] Similarly, Representative Howard of Nebraska echoed that 'Nine out of ten men in nine out of ten states are for Roosevelt, and he will be the Democratic choice'.[51]

[46] *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932*, 80.
[47] The poll was taken by Jesse Strauss's polling organisation.
[48] Farley, *Behind the Ballots*, 88.
[49] Peel and Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign*, 59, 60.
[50] Martin, *Ballots and Bandwagons*, 122..
[51] Peel and Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign*, 61.

*(b) The Early Primary Contests*

Roosevelt officially entered the race on January 23 by assenting to the presentation of his name as a candidate in the North Dakota primary on March 17. A lengthy list of potential candidates postured with an eye toward the nomination, but only Roosevelt campaigned actively throughout the nation.[52] The *Washington Post* opined in early January that Roosevelt had maintained his 'commanding position'. However, it cautioned that the silence of Smith in particular was 'ominous'.[53] Smith, the *New York Times* explained, was the only candidate that could stop Roosevelt before the convention.[54] And if Smith could activate a substantial proportion of the support that had backed him in the past there was a genuine possibility of a deadlock from which a larger number of candidates might emerge. However, in states throughout the union, Democratic leaders who had backed Smith now openly voiced their support for Roosevelt.[55] In a state-by-state synopsis compiled from information from the activists for the campaigns and independent observers, James A. Hagerty showed that Roosevelt held a towering lead over any of his rivals, and indeed his rivals' collectively.[56] Hagerty's report confirmed that 25 states were 'leaning toward' or 'probable' Roosevelt states, while Smith could count only three such states. A close contest between Roosevelt and Smith was expected in seven states, and between Roosevelt, Smith, and Garner in three.[57] In a sign that Roosevelt's strength was 'holding up remarkably well', the early primaries produced results that were consistent with the expectations of political observers.[58] Aided by his nationwide campaign operation, and benefiting from his opponents' passivity and disorganisation, Roosevelt won early contests in Alaska, Washington, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, and Wisconsin.

## (V) JEFFERSON DAY DINNER (APRIL 18, 1932)

*At this event, Smith distinguished his identity on economic affairs from Roosevelt's. And their different economic philosophies became key to their prospects. The causes of this critical juncture were agency factors: the competing issue identities of Smith and Roosevelt.*

Roosevelt's estrangement from his former mentor had been a growing fact of political life in New York since 1928. Roosevelt felt obliged to carve an identity independent of Smith, and Smith resented Roosevelt's boldness by doing so. The Jefferson Day dinner in St Paul, Minnesota marked a new stage in their volatile relationship. Before this event, Smith's influence in New York Democracy had been declining in rough proportion to Roosevelt's rise; but though their power in state politics had been linked in a zero-sum way, this had yet to produce zero-sum conflict. Smith's relegation had been gradual and uncontested. However, the Jefferson Day dinner marked a new attempt by Smith to challenge Roosevelt and reassert himself as an

[52] The field included President Wilson's former Secretary of War Newton Baker, Governor Harry Byrd of Virginia, Speaker John Nance Garner, Governor William H. Murray of Oklahoma, Governor Albert Ritchie of Maryland, and Governor George White of Ohio.
[53] *Washington Post*, January 2, 1932.
[54] *New York Times*, January 11, 1932.
[55] See for instance the backing of Roosevelt by New Hampshire Democratic leaders; *New York Times*, January 31, 1932.
[56] *New York Times*, February 23, 1932.
[57] There were 6 states where neither Roosevelt, Smith, nor Garner was expected to win.
[58] *Washington Post*, March 10, 1932.

opinion and movement leader in the Democratic Party. With Roosevelt's continued dominance of the Democratic race, Smith's aggressive turn would lead to confrontation between Smith and Roosevelt.

At the Jefferson Day dinner in April 1932, Smith was expected to advance his anti-prohibition views. However, he used the occasion to launch a new dimension of conflict with Roosevelt, in economic affairs: 'I will take off my coat and vest and fight to the end any candidate who persists in any demagogic appeal to the masses of the working people of this country to destroy themselves by setting class against class and rich against poor'.[59] By criticising Roosevelt in this way, Smith extended the issue divisions between himself and Roosevelt. Roosevelt replied discreetly to Smith's statements by reiterating his belief that the Hoover administration had neglected workers and farmers, yet Smith's charge had angered him – 'certainly it increased his enmity toward Smith', Guilfoyle remarked.[60] The publicity surrounding the dispute and growing estrangement of the former friends made it clear that reconciliation was impossible. Guilfoyle confirms that

> No serious attempt was made to get Smith and Roosevelt together after the controversy. It was of no use. Their differences had become too great. The party would simply have to choose between them when the convention met.[61]

### (VI) MASSACHUSETTS PRIMARY ELECTION (APRIL 26, 1932)

*This primary was a turning point because Smith's victory halted Roosevelt's steady progress in the nation's primary and caucus events. The result stemmed more from rivalries between factions in the Massachusetts Democratic Party (structural factors) than from the activities of the candidates.*

The Bay State primary was a key battleground state for both the Roosevelt and Smith forces. Roosevelt's appeal was broad and growing. He had scored important victories throughout the nation. Writing in the *Washington Post* on April 7, 1932, Edward D. Folliard summarised concisely the consistent strength that Roosevelt had demonstrated: 'Not only has Roosevelt not met a single defeat, but he has beaten the man who is out to 'stop' him, Alfred E. Smith, by an overwhelming vote every time the two have been rivals at the polls'. For Smith, Massachusetts offered the possibility of upsetting the growing Roosevelt momentum. With its heavy concentration of urban, foreign, and Catholic stock, Smith held an 'almost idolatrous' standing in the state.[62] Indeed, his ability to win the nomination outright, or at least to lead a viable 'stop-Roosevelt' movement turned on the state's primary contest. 'Massachusetts', writes Guilfoyle, 'was the axis on which the campaign seemed ever to revolve'.[63]

Superimposed on the importance of the Massachusetts primary to the national campaigns of Smith and Roosevelt was its centrality to the future control and direction of Democracy in the state. Mayor James M.

[59] Peel and Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign*, ???.
[60] Guilfoyle, *On the Trail of the Forgotten Man*, 64.
[61] Ibid, 64.
[62] Massey, 'The Democratic Laggard: Massachusetts in 1932', *New England Quarterly*, 44:4 (1971), 553.
[63] Guilfoyle, *On the Trail of the Forgotten Man*, 19.

Curley led the Roosevelt campaign in the state and the Chicago mayor was opposed by the majority of the state party elite, including Governor Joseph B. Ely and Senator David I. Walsh. Curley had campaigned for Smith in his presidential bids in 1924 and 1928, but now backed Roosevelt believing him to be a more viable candidate than Smith. Guilfoyle, for instance, comments that 'Mayor Curley and Governor Ely did not disagree in principle, they differed only in their estimates of the ability of men'.[64] Mayor Curley's backing of Roosevelt was the result of an accidental meeting with the New York Governor on a train to Boston from New York. After a lengthy discussion about the nation's public policy problems, 'Mayor Curley stepped from the train … thoroughly sold on Mr. Roosevelt'.[65]

Curley tied his political fate to Roosevelt's Massachusetts campaign as he believed that Roosevelt could help him to wrest the governorship from the state organisation controlled by his local rivals. The Bay State leadership acted party in response to the new attachment of Curley to Roosevelt, but also on the basis of the strong Smith sentiment in the State, and the belief that even if Smith could not be nominated, a better candidate than Roosevelt could be found if only the New Yorker's nomination could be obstructed. Having committed itself publicly to Smith, the Democratic Party organisation in Massachusetts knew that a defeat for their candidate would strengthen the Curley faction of the party to the detriment of the existing dominant elite. By running an entire slate to contest the Smith slate put forward by the Massachusetts party elite, 'Mayor Curley knew he was taking his political life in his hands'.[66] Indeed, the *New York Times* suggested that the Roosevelt-Smith conflict was little more than a silhouette in the face of competition between Curley and the Massachusetts Democracy. 'Mr Curley,' the *Times* wrote of the primary contest, is 'running for Governor against Governor Ely'.[67]

Roosevelt's Massachusetts operation made serious mistakes at a time when his opponents were taking charge of their campaign operations. Curley focused exclusively on urban areas, to the dismay of Louis Howe; and enmity toward Curley galvanized Smith's backers in the state.[68] In a late attempt to salvage their candidate's reputation from the brawl between Curley and the Massachusetts Democratic Party, Roosevelt's representatives arranged for a peace conference between them and Ely and Walsh representatives, and excluded Curley.[69] The meeting had been making progress toward a compromise deal by which the Massachusetts slate would commit to vote for Smith for a limited number of rounds; thus keeping open the possibility that Roosevelt could swing them into his column after the opening ballots. However, the meeting collapsed after its participants heard news that Curley had, earlier that afternoon, launched a public tirade

[64] Ibid, 49.
[65] Ibid, 22.
[66] Ibid, 88.
[67] March 19, 1932.
[68] Curley's aggressiveness in politics was legendary. In his political biography, Curley explains that he lived by the motto 'If you want to win an election, you must do unto others as they wish to do unto you, but you must do it first'. *I'd Do it Again: A Record of All My Uproarious Years*, 6.
[69] Robert Jackson, secretary of the Democratic National Committee, and LaRue Brown, a Boston lawyer and long-time Roosevelt friend (since their days at Harvard), represented Roosevelt.

against Smith and accused him of betrayal for launching his presidential campaign after denying that he maintained presidential ambitions.[70]

Ely and Walsh lined up the state's leading Democratic politicians for Smith's slate. Its twelve candidates included Ely, Walsh, Senator Marcus A. Coolidge, former Boston Mayor John F. Fitzgerald, and four congressmen. Roosevelt's slate, Robert K. Massey juxtaposes, 'was noteworthy only for its lack of distinction'.[71] In the primary election on April 26, the Smith slate comprehensively defeated Curley's Roosevelt slate in each of the state's congressional districts, and Smith captured the entire 36 votes of the Massachusetts delegation. News of the Smith victory spread and it had three significant effects. First, Smith, whose candidacy had seemed hopeless, was now touted as a viable possibility. Second, a number of states moved to send favourite sons or uninstructed delegations to the convention. Third, Roosevelt's candidacy faced its greatest challenge since its inception – his air of invincibility was shattered. Commenting on the sense that Roosevelt's momentum had been interrupted by his Massachusetts defeat, Burns writes that 'Late in April 1932 the Roosevelt machine seemed to stall'.[72]

### (VII) CALIFORNIA PRIMARY ELECTION (MAY 3, 1932)

*This primary was a critical juncture because it confirmed that Roosevelt would be unable to win the nomination on the first ballot at the convention. The cause of his defeat was the effective campaign activities of his principal rival in the state, Garner.*

Buoyed by Roosevelt's defeat in Massachusetts, California offered the disparate Stop-Roosevelt coalition a ripe opportunity to further frustrate the New York governor. A tokenistic Smith effort was run by some of his friends from his 1928 campaign, and it concentrated on mobilising 'old loyalties rather than new issues'.[73] Texan John Nance Garner, the newly-elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, who initially denied presidential aspirations by claiming that he needed more time to consolidate his new position, had the support of 100 Democratic Representatives in Congress and the newspaper giant William Randolph Hearst.[74] Hearst was attracted by Garner's opposition to US involvement in international affairs. For Hearst, 'internationalism' provided the key dimension for ranking candidates.[75] Garner's state campaign was carefully organised by William Gibbs McAdoo and his network of political associates.[76] While McAdoo oversaw the entire California operation, former Democratic state chairman Henry H. McPike was placed in charge of Garner's campaign in the north of the state and John B. Elliot campaign activities in the south. Hearst's five

[70] Upon hearing Curley's charges, Walsh declared that 'Everything is off'; Massey, 'The Democratic Laggard' (n 62), 560.
[71] Massey, 'The Democratic Laggard' (n 62), 560. On Roosevelt's slate only Curley had held a major political office. James H. Brennan, a governor's councillor from Boston was the only other elected officeholder on the slate.
[72] Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 131.
[73] *Time*, May 16, 1932.
[74] *New York Times*, February 11, 1932.
[75] While Hearst's Washington political analyst, George Rothwell Brown, found Garner to be a vehement isolationist, Newton Baker was strongly identified with support for the League of Nations and was therefore a figure of political hatred for Hearst. Hearst suspected that Roosevelt and Smith had internationalist tendencies.
[76] McAdoo formed a pact with Hearst. He agreed to endorse Garner; and, in return, Hearst promised the full backing of his newspapers if McAdoo should choose to run for the US Senate. McAdoo thought that he might be nominated in a deadlock, but the idea was completely rejected by Hearst.

California newspapers – two in Los Angeles and San Francisco and one in Oakland – provided continuous information in support of the Texan Speaker.

Initially, the Roosevelt forces were optimistic about California. However, their glowing predictions about Roosevelt's majority were proved wrong. Garner emerged as a clear victor over Roosevelt by 60,000 votes in a total voting population exceeding 600,000.[77] The *New York Times* reported that Roosevelt had been harmed by the mismanagement of expectations of his performance. Evidently his campaign underestimated the political strength of the Garner-McAdoo-Hearst alliance. This mistake reflected 'bad management or foolish publicity on the part of Mr Roosevelt's political agent's', the *Times* commented.[78]

The result was perceived to be pivotal. Although Roosevelt won 34 votes in Alabama and South Dakota on the same day as the California primary, the attentions of political observers – 'the mercurial Washington group' – were focused squarely on California.[79] A Roosevelt victory in California would have probably confirmed the accuracy of his campaign's predictions of a first-round ballot victory at the convention; and his surprising defeat jeopardized this prospect. The *Washington Post* analysed that Roosevelt's setback in California was 'decidedly more significant than the mere failure to add this [state's] support'.[80] For Garner, his victory in California was widely interpreted as lifting him out of the favourite son category and elevating him to the status of a bona fide contender. He now carried the ninety votes from the large California and Texas delegations, but his chances would still depend on deadlock at the convention. And Roosevelt remained determined to prevent such a situation, and to gain the support of delegates committed to other candidates in the event of a deadlock. Roosevelt increasingly saw Garner's votes as the potential makeweight to clinch his nomination. Expecting some point to arise in the convention where Garner's votes could be critical, Roosevelt asked his Texas and California representatives to maintain close and friendly ties with Garner's campaign operatives.

### (VIII) GARNER SHIFT FOR ROOSEVELT, FOURTH BALLOT (JULY 1, 1932)

*This vote shift triggered the convergence on Roosevelt that secured him the nomination. The vote change was the result of agency factors: an unconstrained choice by Garner.*

Even after Roosevelt's California defeat, his campaign team remained defiant, and affirmed their expectation that Governor Roosevelt would be nominated on the first ballot at Chicago. However, while this prediction had seemed credible and likely before Roosevelt's performance in the latter stages of race, it was now only one plausible scenario in a larger set of possibilities. In this fragile situation, commentators speculated that some other candidate might emerge if Roosevelt was blocked. And the efforts of the Roosevelt team to

[77] Roosevelt ran 30,000 votes ahead of Smith. (*Time*, May 16, 1932).
[78] *New York Times*, February 11, 1932.
[79] *New York Times*, February 11, 1932.
[80] *New York Times*, May 5, 1932.

abrogate the two-thirds rule in advance of the convention demonstrated their awareness of their candidate's precarious lead.[81]

Even before the first roll call it was apparent that Farley's prediction of a first ballot victory would be confounded unless a stampede occurred toward the end of the first round. Farley concentrated his efforts on three Midwestern states – Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. However, his efforts to pull these states into the Roosevelt column before the first round were met with failure as each continued to back their favourite sons. In the first round, Roosevelt tallied 666.25, a simple, but not two-thirds majority of the 1154 delegates assembled. However, Roosevelt remained 465 votes ahead of his closest rival, Smith (who posted 201.25). After the first ballot proved to be indecisive, pro-Smith forces expected Roosevelt's totals to dwindle quickly. However, to their surprise Roosevelt's delegations stayed firm. Despite this, Farley realised that without a breakthrough, Roosevelt's chances would rapidly and irreversibly falter. On the second ballot, Roosevelt gained 11.5 votes, an imperceptible increase. Burns claims that it was 'an increase so small that it dramatized the extent to which Farley had staked his hopes on the first ballot'.[82] Garner gained eleven votes on the third ballot. The third ballot revealed a slight improvement in Roosevelt's score, which now stood at 682.79, but pressure was building on the Roosevelt camp. It was clear their movement was fracturing. Important delegations – Mississippi, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Arkansas – considered bolting to the Baker camp. Indeed, only a sharp u-turn back to the convention hall by one of Mississippi's pro-Roosevelt delegates prevented the switch of Mississippi's votes to Baker and the probable collapse of the Roosevelt boom.[83]

Farley needed a breakthrough, and it came from the Hearst-McAdoo-Garner faction. Roosevelt's lieutenants had been offering the vice presidency to a number of favourite sons in their attempts to lure them to Roosevelt, and Farley made such an offer to Samuel Rayburn who led the Garner forces at the convention. Rayburn relayed the message to Garner who pondered the offer before accepting.[84] McAdoo confirmed Garner's switch ahead of the fourth ballot: 'California came here to nominate a President. When any man comes into this convention with a popular will to the extent of almost 700 votes … [interrupted by galleries] … California casts 44 votes for Franklin D. Roosevelt'.[85] Rayburn followed McAdoo and switched Texas's votes to Roosevelt.[86] By these actions Roosevelt's nomination was assured. Brown writes that 'state after state

[81] Before the convention opened on June 27, 1932, the Roosevelt forces tried to introduce a resolution abrogating the long-standing two-thirds rule. Roosevelt's opponents, however, reacted aggressively and coherently. Roosevelt was forced to publicly disavow the proposal: 'I believe and always have believed', he explained, 'that the two thirds rule should no longer be adopted. It is undemocratic. Nevertheless, it is true that the issue was not raised until after the delegates to the convention had been selected, and I decline to permit either myself or my friends to be open to the accusation of poor sportsmanship or to the use of methods which could be called, even falsely, those of a stem-roller. I am accordingly asking my friends in Chicago to cease their activities to secure the adoption of the majority nominating rule'; Peel and Donnelly, *The 1932 Campaign*, 92.

[82] Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 136.

[83] Steve Neal describes how Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi, advised by Roosevelt's floor managers that the convention would be adjourned after the 2nd ballot, returned to his hotel suite only to hear on his radio the beginning of the 3rd round of balloting. Harrison returned just in time to keep Mississippi for Roosevelt by one vote. *Happy Days Are Here Again*, 268-269.

[84] A desperate Farley even offered McAdoo the choice between the Ambassadorship to Britain and Secretary of the Treasury. But these proved unnecessary makeweights – the vice presidential nomination for Speaker Garner proved sufficient to secure McAdoo's support at this critical point in the convention.

[85] *Time*, July 11, 1932.

[86] Rayburn struggled to enforce this shift on his state's delegation who remained bitter about Roosevelt's aggressive campaigning in the Texas primary.

jumped on the bandwagon', and Burns claims, similarly, that 'Now the Roosevelt avalanche began'.[87] Roosevelt's total swelled to 942, sufficient for his nomination.

Speaker Garner offered little in the way of explanation of his critical move. Questioned by a *New York Times* reporter immediately after he accepted Roosevelt's offer, Garner replied, cryptically 'I'm a little older than you, son … and politics is funny'.[88] However, commentators have highlighted Garner's party loyalty as critical to understanding this unexpected move. Though he had committed himself before the convention to eschewing the vice-presidential nomination if he was offered it, he viewed party unity to be of overriding importance. To Garner this belief carried two implications. First, the party, in his opinion, could not afford a protracted and divisive nomination contest as in 1924. 'Garner', argues Brown, 'showed statesmanship'.[89] Second, the party could not mobilise effectively to fight the election if it nominated a compromise candidate. 'Compromise candidates don't win Presidential elections', he explained.[90]

[87] Brown, 'Garnering Votes for 'Cactus Jack': John Nance Garner, Franklin Roosevelt, and the 1932 Democratic Nomination for President', *Southwestern Historical Quarterly,* 104 (2000), 187; Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 137.
[88] Oulahan, *The Man Who …: The Story of the 1932 Democratic National Convention*, 123.
[89] Brown, 'Garnering Votes for 'Cactus Jack'' (n 87), 186.
[90] Ibid, 186.

# 7 THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1972

George McGovern's rise from obscure outsider to the helm of the Democratic Party depended on his campaign's mastery of a new political environment for nomination politics. The 1972 Democratic contest was the first to take place under the stipulations of the party's reformed rules for delegate selection. Though these reforms were precipitated by the calamitous circumstances of Vice President Hubert Humphrey's nomination in 1968, pressures to open the nomination process to a larger population had long been present. Indeed, in important respects, the post-1968 reforms of presidential selection were the culmination of a trend toward increased participation that had swept lower-level elected offices since the end of the nineteenth century.[1]

The background to the reforms is extensively chronicled.[2] Vice President Humphrey, a late entrant to the 1968 race, won his party nomination in spite of the overwhelming support of primary voters for alternative candidates – Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy. The Democratic Party leadership, struggling to control its violent national convention in the summer of 1968, left ajar an important door as it shut out the party's rank-and-file to select Humphrey. In its attempts to quell the tension at the convention, the party regulars ceded the passage of the minority report of the Rules Committee. The report demanded, in general terms, an improvement in the representative function of the national conventions. To this end, state Democratic parties were directed to ensure 'all Democratic voters… a full, meaningful, and timely opportunity to participate in the selection of delegates'.[3]

Theodore White reflects that '[f]ew of the delegates had understood what they were doing. But in their innocence or inattention they had voted for the most fundamental change in the party's long history'.[4] However, the impact of the resolution was neither certain nor automatic. The sweeping results that followed turned on the unexpected zeal of the chairman of the new Commission on Party Structure, George McGovern, and his staff; glaring apathy on the part of the party regulars on the commission; and the swift moves by most state Democratic organisations to introduce presidential primary legislation to fulfil the new requirements.[5]

By permitting a candidate to convert grassroots support into votes at the convention, the reforms limited the chances for the party's elite to block the choice of rank-and-file members as demonstrated in state primaries and (relatively open) caucuses. McGovern, an architect of the reformed process, was its most immediate

[1] See for instance Ware, *The American Direct Primary: Party Institutionalization and Transformation in the North.*
[2] See for instance Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party*; Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform*; and Shafer, *Bifurcated Politics* and *The Silent Revolution*.
[3] White, *The Making of the President, 1972*, 21.
[4] Ibid, 21.
[5] Harold Hughes of Iowa had been studying party reform since June 1968 when he chaired a rump commission on the subject, but as a strong McCarthy man Humphrey vetoed him.

beneficiary.[6] However, McGovern's rise was far from inevitable. As Miroff cautions, 'The McGovern-Fraser reforms were critical in 1972 because they made victory for McGovern's liberal insurgency *possible*. But they hardly made it *probable*'.[7]

Miroff instead emphasises the importance of the 'left-centrist' strategy developed by McGovern and his principal political strategists at a meeting at McGovern's Cedar Point farm in St Michael's, Maryland on July 25, 1970. This overarching strategy held that McGovern would seek the Democratic nomination by co-opting the left-wing of the party in order to forestall entry or success for the other liberal aspirants, but also strive to keep his campaign accessible and attractive to the party's regular elements.[8] As Gary Hart reminisced, 'in retrospect, [the left-centrist strategy] seems fairly elementary. But in 1970 and early 1971, it was creative analysis'.[9] In Miroff's assessment, McGovern devised a strategy that was perfectly suited to the nomination:

> if we examine McGovern's campaign for the nomination in light of the strategy established at Cedar Point, what is striking is how much it unfolded according to the original plan. Up to the Democratic convention, it might be said that the left-center strategy was the foundation for a brilliant success, carrying the apparently amateur McGovernites to victory over their more experienced and highly touted rivals.[10]

Miroff highlights accurately the potential in McGovern's left-centrist strategy. However, this plan also contained within it seeds of failure and the assumptions upon which it was based were more contestable than Miroff's assessment indicates. First, the plan assumed the absence of an active ideological centre in Democratic nomination politics. As Hart reasoned, 'The Democratic nomination results more from a struggle between the two ideological wings of the party, the liberals and conservatives, than it does from some amorphous consensus'.[11] However, McGovern's rivals presented alternative portrayals of the Democratic race. Governor George Wallace communicated the centrality of divisions on race and states' rights issues – a conceptualisation that led him to lump together his rivals. Senator Hubert Humphrey believed his party was divided between its safe, pragmatic centre – that he led – and the dangerous and radical fringes represented by McGovern and Wallace.

Second, McGovern and his strategists believed that they could leverage his opposition to the Vietnam War as an issue to propel his candidacy.[12] McGovern had marked publicly his moral distaste of the war since its

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[6] Eli Segal (chief counsel) and Ken Bode (director of research) – both McCarthyites – were especially influential staff members.
[7] *The Liberals' Moment*, 22.
[8] Commenting on the first part of this left-centrist strategy, McGovern reflected that from a 'wider perspective on the dynamics of the campaign' the national liberal movement was 'far and away the most important factor in the successful bid for the nomination'. (*Grassroots*, 252).
[9] *Right from the Start*, 55.
[10] *The Liberals' Moment*, 42.
[11] Quoted in May and Fraser (eds), *Campaign '72: The Managers Speak*, 54.
[12] In a campaign leaflet entitled 'The Truth About Vietnam', McGovern declared that '[t]he truth about Vietnam is that we are destroying the country we went to 'save' … The only way America can be sure of getting out of Vietnam is to get Richard Nixon out of the White House… I have pledged that within 90 days of my inauguration as President, I will withdraw all American might from Indochina and arrange release of all our Prisoners of War'. Other literature quotes Nixon on the campaign trail in 1968 (Oct 9): 'Let me make one thing clear. Those who have had a chance for 4 years and could not produce peace should not be given another chance'. McGovern Papers, Box 872. Seeley E. Mudd Library, Princeton University.

inception.[13] Nonetheless, his leadership on this issue did not guarantee pre-eminence. Eugene McCarthy, who led the anti-war wing of the party in 1968, would be ejected quickly from the race in 1972. Moreover, each of McGovern's rivals could lay claim to issue leadership in other areas. As Senator Edward Kennedy acknowledged, there were leading Democrats pushing for change across the spectrum of national politics: 'Call the role of leading issues and you find giants in the Democratic Party at the helm – men like Muskie on pollution, Humphrey on civil rights, McGovern on the war, Jackson on the Middle East, Bayh on the Supreme Court, Harris on popular reform, and now Lindsay on the cities'.[14] Admittedly, however, these issues were not as salient as the war in mass opinions about 'important' political issues.[15]

Third, the left-centrist strategy assumed that the Democratic Party elite would rally to back McGovern as soon as he became the leading the leading prospect in the race. In reality, the party establishment would prove to be more diverse than McGovern and his planners had assumed. Several elements doubted the integrity of McGovern's grassroots victory and his capacity to translate it into an election victory; and others were keener to maintain power in the Democratic Party than to support an outsider effort with destabilizing effects on the party's organizational hierarchy.[16]

Thus, the left-centrist strategy was a fragile one – and its durability hinged upon McGovern's effective implementation of the dimensions of the campaign that were under his control, and the failure of his competitors to actualise their paths to the nomination. The losses incurred by McGovern' rivals evidenced their identity, strategic, and management handicaps and made it difficult for these politicians to match the effectiveness of McGovern's campaign. Examining McGovern's fluctuating prospects at critical turning points in the 1972 brings these observations to the surface. Table 7.1 below summarizes these characteristics.

Table 7.1 Critical Junctures in Democratic Nomination, 1972

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE | AGENT | NATURE OF CAUSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Iowa Caucuses** | January 24, 1972 | McGovern emerges as Muskie's strongest rival. | A > A | McGovern; Muskie | A (McGovern): campaign activities (Tactics, Management, Identity)<br>A (Muskie) |
| **New Hampshire** | March 7, 1972 | McGovern displaces Muskie as campaign front-runner. | A > A | McGovern; Muskie | A: campaign entry, activities, and organisation (Tactics, |

[13] McGovern introduced the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment to end the war on April 30, 1970. McGovern voted for the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in 1964, but only after assurances from Senator J. William Fulbright that the resolution would not be used to escalate the war, and was necessary to support the new president in the forthcoming election. He almost immediately regretted this decision, and the following day expressed his fears for the Senate record: 'I do not wish my vote for the resolution to be interpreted as an endorsement for our longstanding and apparently growing military involvement in Vietnam. I have had serious misgiving about our entanglement in Vietnam since we were first committed to that course ten years ago'. Anson, *McGovern: a Biography*, 153.
[14] *Daily News*, October 11, 1971, Mankiewicz Papers, Box 20, Kennedy Presidential Library.
[15] *Gallup Polls*, November 19-22, 1971.
[16] Indeed, Clifford W. Brown blames McGovern's strategists for his problems in bridging his movement and the party establishment. Brown remarks that 'McGovern paid heavily for the political inexperience of strategic managers who could not understand the basis of the political loyalties that defined the relationships among the power centres of the Democratic party'; *Jaws of Victory*, 19. Richard Dougherty, a campaign insider, offers a similar evaluation of the McGovern 'army': 'What innocence the McGovern guerrillas were to display would be political and historical, an ignorance about the outer world beyond the guerrilla theatre in which they acted'. *Goodbye, Mr Christian*, 99.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Primary** | | | | | Management, Identity) |
| **Florida Primary** | March 14, 1972 | Wallace becomes a viable prospect | A > A | Wallace; McGovern; Muskie | A (Wallace): race issues (Identity) |
| **Wisconsin Primary** | April 4, 1972 | McGovern proves durability | A > A | McGovern; Humphrey | A (McGovern): campaign activities (Tactics, Management, Identity) |
| **Massachusetts Primary** | April 25, 1972 | McGovern scores decisive victory over Muskie who suspends campaign. | A > A | McGovern; Muskie | A (McGovern): campaign activities and issue emphasis (Tactics, Management, Identity) |
| **California Primary** | June 6, 1972 | McGovern defeats desperate challenge by Humphrey to spearhead a stop-McGovern boom. | A > A | McGovern; Humphrey | A (McGovern): campaign activities (Tactics, Management, Identity) |
| **Decision on California Challenge at Democratic National Convention** | July 11, 1972 | McGovern seals nomination after procedural challenge rejected by chairman. | S | N/A | S: decision of a non-agent (O'Brien) |

Key:

(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

## (I) IOWA CAUCUSES (JANUARY 24, 1972)

*At this critical juncture, McGovern emerged as an aspirant with the capacity to challenge front-runner Muskie. Agency factors, namely McGovern's identity, tactical and management choices, were the predominant cause of his better-than-expected performance.*

Prior to the Chappaquiddick incident, Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts was the leading prospect for the 1972 Democratic Party nomination.[17] With Kennedy ruling himself out of contention, observers agreed that the front-runner was Edmund S. Muskie, junior Senator and ex-Governor of Maine.[18] Muskie had been catapulted into this position by his speech on the eve of the 1970 mid-term elections. Alexander gauges that 'Muskie was an unannounced candidate for almost four years'.[19] Following immediately after Nixon's prime time broadcast lambasting drugs, violence, and the rebellious college youth,

[17] The 'Chappaquiddick incident' refers to the controversial circumstances surrounding the death of Mary Jo Kopechne on July 18, 1969. After a party at Martha's Vineyard honouring the efforts of Robert Kennedy's campaign team, Senator Kennedy drove his vehicle off a bridge into a channel. Kennedy swum free, but Kopechne was unable to and died. Kennedy consulted his lawyers before reporting the incident to the police.

[18] A notable exception here was the New Republic's Paul R. Wieck who believed that the race might favour McGovern more than most observers had realised. 'In the kind of multi-candidate situation which may arise in the early primaries, McGovern's hopes lie in the depth of commitment of his supporters and the strength of his organization. From what I've seen their commitment and energy match his own and bring to mind the warning of Wisconsin's Don Peterson, a campaign aide to McGovern in one of his early races in South Dakota: "Everybody always underestimates George. Don't make that mistake".' *New Republic*, October 30, 1971, McGovern Papers, Box 763.

[19] *Financing the 1972 Election*, 127.

Muskie contrasted effectively Nixon's 'politics of fear' based on a 'torrent of falsehood and insinuation' with the Democrats' 'politics of trust' which accepts that 'the world is a baffling and hazardous place' but holds that 'it can be shaped to the will of men'.[20] Well-financed, with a large and experienced campaign staff, and with the endorsement of the party's leading figures, Muskie's early prospects were extremely promising. In a January, 1972 Gallup Poll Muskie clearly led the other viable Democratic candidates. He ran 32, Kennedy 27, Humphrey 17 (and McGovern 3).

The Iowa caucuses represented an early test for the rival candidates; and, in particular, a chance for observers to assess the suitability of Muskie's status as the race's perceived front-runner. Muskie won a plurality of delegate votes but because his 34 per cent scoop was smaller than analysts had expected, his performance came to be widely criticised. Muskie's unwillingness to disclose the names of his contributors undermined his 'Trust Muskie' slogan.[21] Though his political advisers advised disclosure, his financial advisers feared betraying commitments of backers obtained with a promise of anonymity.[22] In the zero-sum setting of nomination politics, McGovern emerged as the principal beneficiary of Muskie's poor showing and his 28 per cent delegate haul was interpreted to be an impressive return for a candidate without Muskie's recognition and resource advantages.[23] McGovern's success revealed his campaign's growing capacity to organise and mobilise rank-and-file Democrats opposed to the war. Confirming the consensus view of political commentators, ABC's Bill Lawrence announced that 'The Muskie bandwagon slid off an icy road in Iowa last night'.[24] And as it became clear in future weeks that the Muskie campaign was unravelling and with Kennedy's entry seeming no more likely, McGovern's support grew so that by the national convention he held the support of 40 per cent of the 46-member Iowa delegation.

### (II) NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY (MARCH 7, 1972)

*This primary contest was a critical juncture because McGovern's victory caused observers to interpret him, rather than Muskie, as leading in the race. McGovern's campaign choices were the predominant cause of his victory.*

Muskie entered 1972 as the strong favourite in the New Hampshire primary election with local pollsters estimating his likely victory mark at 65 per cent. However, by February this lead had slipped as potential voters – frustrated by the deep clouds of uncertainty surrounding Muskie's political opinions – moved to support his rivals, especially McGovern. Kraft described the 'Muskie problem' as the difficulty in discerning Muskie's political identity: 'to get a feel for Muskie, a sense of who he is and how he thinks and where he stands … is a hard problem because the Senator seems remote and obscurely motivated, hardly caring about

[20] White, *The Making of the President*, 76.
[21] Although Nixon and Jackson also refused to disclose voluntarily, Muskie drew attention because of his campaign slogan, leading position in the Democratic race, and the fact that the press could do little to pressurise Nixon. Muskie eventually disclosed on March 27; Alexander, *Financing the 1972 Election*.
[22] Muskie received financial backing from Republicans keen to see the back of Nixon.
[23] 36 per cent remained 'uncommitted'.
[24] Hart, *Right from the Start: A Chronicle of the McGovern Campaign*, 115.

the burning issues of war and race and poverty.'[25] New Hampshire was a critical test of strength for both Muskie and McGovern. For Muskie, defeat would imply that his purported lead over his rivals had disappeared. Perceived success for McGovern would confirm the force of his candidacy.

A number of potential rivals to McGovern and Muskie – Hubert Humphrey, George Wallace, and John Lindsay – avoided New Hampshire in the belief that their presence on the wrong side of Muskie's expected triumph would harm their prospects. Moreover, their diffidence was warranted: unlike McGovern these candidates could not draw on networks of activists to organise the state on their behalf. Both Wallace and Lindsay would enter only when their strength was more assured – in Florida.[26] Humphrey's speculations were more complicated. He shared McGovern's conviction that Muskie could be defeated but calculated that his prospects were furthered most by a poor showing by Muskie; and McGovern was well-placed to occasion such a blow. Humphrey sought to remain aloof until Muskie's support had been eroded.[27] Humphrey's campaign manager Jack L. Chestnut explains his candidate's passive strategy: 'we felt that should Muskie slip to the point where it did not appear that he would be the consensus candidate of the Democratic Party, we should attempt to ensure that Humphrey would be in a position to fill that void'.[28]

For most New Hampshire residents, their first direct contact with the McGovern campaign was by post in a mass mailing by the South Dakota Senator. In his letter, he readily admitted his outsider position in the competition, but this letter is indicative of McGovern's efforts to overcome his disadvantages vis-à-vis his rivals. Most obviously, McGovern's willingness to compete aggressively in New Hampshire demonstrated his confidence in his ability to confound expectations by performing strongly. In the main body of the letter, McGovern bound his candidacy to the salient issues he believed to be in play in the campaign – and in particular Vietnam. Of his emphasis on the war, he wrote that 'I have been willing to risk the 'one issue' tag because I felt that Vietnam was so important to the life and soul of the nation'. He also developed ideas on defence spending, tax, employment, and social security for senior citizens.[29]

McGovern's statements on issues were followed by a description of his 'people's campaign' – it would rely on volunteer activists and a broad network of small donors.[30] 'It was in New Hampshire', claims Hart, 'that the

[25] 'The Muskie Problem', *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1971, box 763, McGovern Papers, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
[26] Indeed, McGovern supporters wrote to Muskie asking him to support McGovern instead of running. For a group of student body presidents from 13 universities and colleges, Muskie could not be nominated or elected because he had been a lifelong Republican until August, 1971. For this group, Muskie's best chance to effect positive change on course of American politics in 1972 would be achieved by endorsing McGovern. 'Senator McGovern', these students write, 'is a compassionate and principled leader whose positions on the issues with which you also have been identified will be supported by the overwhelming majority of students'. They identify these issues as war, poverty, racism, and inequality; and they Muskie to abstain from the contest 'because we believe that you are truly committed to the issues'. Mank Papers, JFK, Box 20.
[27] Humphrey confessed that 'I've been around so long, and so many people have analyzed and re-analyzed me, that there's very little left to look at that hasn't been exposed in its full nudity and at time ugliness'. Solberg, *Hubert Humphrey: A Biography*, 425-426.
[28] May and Fraser, *Campaign '72: The Managers Speak*, 36.
[29] To prevent wealthy tax payers using loopholes to avoid payments, McGovern proposed a minimum income tax that would apply to all those with incomes above $50,000. McGovern Papers, box 872, Mudd Library, Princeton.
[30] Small contributions from a mailing list of 240,000 supporters assured a guaranteed income of $50,000 per month. As Gordon Weil explains, this income lifeline served two vital goals: it closed off a source o f funding for other liberals and kept McGovern afloat 'until the big money could accept him as a possible winner'. *The Long Shot: George McGovern Runs for President*, 39.

McGovern army was born'.[31] By February, 1972, the extensive McGovern operation in the state was rooted and active. To foster *spirit de corps* and improve organising skills, the New Hampshire operation established training workshops for leaders of local McGovern groups.[32] Activist labours, McGovern's strategists rightly warned, would bear few early fruits but the silent progress from disciplined grassroots organising would produce substantial returns on polling day. 'What delivers votes', McGovern's leaders imparted, 'as opposed to Gallup percentages, is organization, commitment and hard work'.[33]

These basic tactical components were apparent in each primary and caucus state that McGovern contested. New Hampshire, however, was flagged by his campaign for extra resources and disproportionate effort. From the start of 1972, McGovern spent half of his days campaigning in the state. New Hampshire, Gordon Weil opined, offered McGovern his 'best chance' for a surprise showing.[34] Hart also explains his view that New Hampshire had the potential to become the first major turning point in McGovern's favour, because 'it provided the earliest opportunity to distinguish the Senator in the public mind from other candidates, particular those who might seem ideologically similar.'[35] This idea of targeting of resources on the states that could produce the greatest returns reflected the campaign's awareness of the binding constraints on it; but also its recognition that winning everywhere was unnecessary. Indeed, Hart, Weil, Mankiewicz, and Dougherty stressed that such an effort would only be counter-productive, and their warnings curbed McGovern's enthusiasm for comprehensive – rather than targeted – campaigning. By focusing on the most promising openings, the McGovern campaign was forced to contemplate the most efficient route to victory.[36] In Miroff's assessment, 'the prescience of McGovern strategists about the dynamics of the nomination contest remains impressive to behold'.[37]

New Hampshire, alongside Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and California, were allocated top-tier positions in the McGovern campaign resource distribution plan, including the number of days the candidate would campaign in the state and relative spending. In these 'movement states' McGovern's team anticipated that strong performances 'would give their candidate the credibility and visibility that could, in turn, create a popular upsurge for him and enable him to win further primaries in less friendly states'.[38]

As the leading prospect Muskie believed that his optimum strategy involved consolidating his national appeal. To this end he made three tactical decisions with first-order effects on the outcome in New Hampshire. First,

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[31] *Right from the Start*, 122.
[32] McGovern papers, box 140, Mudd Library, Princeton.
[33] 'News from McGovern for President', McGovern papers, box 140, Mudd Library, Princeton.
[34] Weil, *Long Shot*, 53. The McGovern campaign committed $160,000 for its New Hampshire operations. Dougherty, *Goodbye, Mr Christian*, 101.
[35] *Right from the Start*, 108.
[36] In his chronicles of the 1972 campaign, Hart emphasised the importance of the McGovern campaign's careful targeting of resources. He writes that '[i]f our analysis and consequent strategy had been wrong, or if we had failed to plan the careful allocation of our resources, I do not believe McGovern could have won the Democratic nomination'. By contrast, explains Hart, '[t]he winding, tortuous political road of 1971 and 1972 is littered with the wreckage of campaigns (and number of which had many advantages over us) which failed in both respects'. *Right from the Start*, 54.
[37] Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 52.
[38] Brown, *Jaws of Victory*, 122.

Muskie felt that as the front-runner, he needed to demonstrate his strength against all comers. Thus, rather than concentrating his resources – money and campaign time – on a limited number of contests, Muskie spread his assets relatively evenly between all of the primary states. He believed that he could sustain this broad-based effort by maintaining the superior stream of funding that he had established through large and consistent donations since the summer of 1971. This strategy, apparently well-conceived while Muskie remained the leading prospect and faced few binding constraints, handicapped his prospects as soon as he suffered setbacks. Second, Muskie's core organisational efforts involved seeking the endorsements of leading national and state politicians – an activity in which he excelled. Miroff juxtaposes Muskie's accumulation of endorsements with McGovern's dearth of elite support: 'the Democratic frontrunner, Edmund Muskie, corralled so many endorsements from leading party figures that his campaign began to look like a bandwagon leaving the McGovernites in the dust'.[39] Third, Muskie disavowed strong position on issues, and instead emphasised his calm temperament, leadership credentials, and the inevitability of his success in the nomination race.

These choices acted, in combination, to preclude Muskie's use of tactics that would confront directly those used by McGovern in the state. His national effort meant that he could spend only half the time that his principal rival in New Hampshire spent campaigning.[40] Muskie offered no clear issue agenda in opposition to McGovern. Consequently McGovern quickly became the 'issue-oriented candidate' in the state.[41] Without an identity base from which to recruit activists, and concentrating his organisation efforts at the elite level, Muskie left redundant the cadre of volunteer organisers and activists that McGovern exploited.

Under pressure from journalists to specify a primary result that would be acceptable to his campaign, Muskie and his operatives resisted the temptation to release their predicted winning margin. However, in the run-up to the primary, this discipline collapsed. One of Muskie's New Hampshire co-ordinators remarked that '[i]f [Muskie] doesn't get 50 per cent, I'll blow my brains out'.[42] 'From that moment on', observed Steward regarding media fixations, '50 per cent stuck… 50 per cent became the target which he was held accountable for'.[43]

On February 26, 1972, a week before the primary election, Muskie appeared on the steps of the Manchester *Union Leader* to denounce William Loeb, its conservative publisher as a 'liar' and a 'gutless crowd'. The paper had been spearheading a crusade against Muskie in the run-up to the contest, and on this occasion Muskie

[39] *The Liberals' Moment*, 48.
[40] Muskie campaigned 13 to McGovern's 24. Union Leader, November 1, 2004.
[41] Weil, *Long Shot*, 69.
[42] May and Fraser, *Campaign '72*, 113. *The Union Leader*, November 1, 2004 identifies Maria Carrier, Muskie's state co-ordinator as the person who blurted out these words.
[43] Carrier's remark placed the figure in a dramatic context yet the press already had been using it for months. In the July 24, 1971 edition of the *New York Times*, reporter R.W. Apple had assessed the prospects of the major Democratic contender's and Muskie was accorded the title of front-runner for three reasons: he was the best known, he was firmly in the ideological center of his party, and he projected 'an impression of integrity and calm.' Even before Muskie, Hubert Humphrey, Senator Henry Jackson or Governor George Wallace had revealed their political plans, Apple proclaimed, 'New Hampshire, where Mr. Muskie must get at least half the vote to look good, is obviously his first hurdle.'

responded to a front-page editorial commenting on a letter that the paper received alleging that Muskie had laughed at the use of the ethnic slur 'canuck' in a Florida motel.[44] Although Muskie's strategists had largely ignored Loeb's repeated attacks, this one hit the front-runner's polls immediately because of the presence of a large French-Canadian community in the mill-working towns in the north of the State. Muskie's strategists staged a media exclusive which proved to be nothing short of disastrous for their candidate. As seen on the CBS Evening News, following a piece on Nixon's historic trip to China, a distressed Muskie – voice breaking, choking on his own words, apparently crying – lambasted Loeb. Muskie's prospects took a sharp downward turn following his weepy attack on Loeb.[45] As White notes, 'the contrast between the President's management of great events in China and the Democratic candidate's disturbance over an unexplained slander in Manchester, New Hampshire, was sharp'.[46]

As Muskie admitted later, his campaign was wounded seriously by his perceived emotional instability: 'It changed people's minds about me … They were looking for a strong, steady man, and here I was weak'.[47] The Muskie campaign held momentum sufficient to cross the finishing line in first place in New Hampshire, but Muskie's margin of victory was considerably smaller than earlier polls had predicted. The Senator from Maine won only 46.4 per cent of the vote, compared with McGovern's 37.2. McGovern also gained a significant upswing in press attention as a viable presidential possibility. Newsweek observed that 'the [New Hampshire] results foreshadowed a much longer, tougher trail ahead for Ed Muskie'.[48] Weil recounted the ecstasy within the McGovern camp: 'we had delivered a telling blow to Muskie. The front-runner was not invincible. Muskie had seemed to regard McGovern as an annoying but minor nuisance. After all, everybody else who mattered had chosen to concede New Hampshire to the man from Maine'.[49]

Though Muskie's prospects received most attention, the candidacies of John Lindsay and Henry Jackson – which had yet to take off – remained embryonic. It would become clear that these candidates had been penalised heavily for their decision to abstain from the New Hampshire primary. As McGovern's campaign gathered pace, Weil observed that 'Powerful blows had also been dealt to Lindsay and Jackson who had chosen not to run in New Hampshire'.[50]

### (III) FLORIDA PRIMARY (MARCH 14, 1972)

*Wallace's victory in Florida established him as a viable prospect in the race. Wallace won in this multi-candidate competition because of the appeal of his identity on racial issues.*

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[44] The letter turned out to have been a White House plant. Brown, *Jaws of Victory*, 123.
[45] Muskie's support had been slipping before Loeb's attacks. McGovern's campaign first picked up this trend on February 18. McGovern Papers, box 1319, Mudd Library, Princeton University. Clifford W. Brown suggests that Muskie's emotional reaction was intended by his campaign. 'If so, this tactical blunder must rank very high in the long catalogue of mistakes that spotted the 1972 season', Brown states.
[46] *The Making of the President*, 82.
[47] White, *The Making of the President*, 82.
[48] March 20, 1972. McGovern Papers, box 1216, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
[49] Weil, *Long Shot*, 59.
[50] Ibid, 60.

Most candidates thought Florida a pivotal state because of the composition of the state's politics, its large delegate haul, and early timing in the primary calendar. The contest was a potential minefield for each contender. With its mottled social structure, Florida divided in ways that tempted each aspirant to pursue a niche strategy targeting particular social groups. Humphrey campaigned for votes from labour, blacks, and Jews. In his 'major strategic battleground', Jackson fought to split the labour and Jewish vote with Humphrey and garner support from white, middle-class voters.[51] McGovern aimed to win the votes of blacks and the youth. Muskie's team did not focus its efforts on particular groups and opted instead to maintain its mass marketing strategy. New York Mayor Lindsay pursued an avowedly liberal agenda, going beyond all of his rivals by staunchly supporting legalised abortion and busing. This made him the prime target of Alabama Governor, George Wallace, who campaigned – masterfully – against busing and as a result could count on the support of white Southern conservatives.[52]

The Muskie campaign, still reeling from their candidate's disappointing showings in Iowa and New Hampshire, needed to score a decisively positive response in Florida. Since New Hampshire, media analysts had been dissecting Muskie's overrated status and campaign errors; and if he could not halt this adverse publicity, his campaign might unravel under the dual pressures of internal feuds about strategic direction and the disaffection of key financial and political backers. Hart offered a precise measure of success for Muskie in Florida: 'If he ran worse than second it would signal the continuing weakness of his national effort'.[53]

The McGovern campaign debated the degree to which Florida was an important state to McGovern's effort, and considered especially the likelihood and effects of entry by Governor George Wallace. Eventually the campaign resolved to limit their effort in the state.[54] Because of its size and a relative absence of activist fervour in the state, Florida was poor ground for the McGovern campaign's intensive canvassing drives. Indeed, Weil assessed that McGovern's optimal campaigning technique in Florida would be to perform brightly in New Hampshire and thereby demonstrate his credibility.[55]

While the south of Florida attracted the attentions of the liberal Democratic candidates, the northern parts of the state resembled closely the Deep South. 'North Florida', Black and Black sum up, is 'a cultural and political extension of southern Alabama and Georgia'.[56] At play, therefore, in a contest pitting a number of liberals against Governor George Wallace was the southern debate on the future of race relations in the state. At its core this debate reflected tensions stimulated by the racial changes associated with the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programmes.

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[51] Alexander, *Financing the 1972 Election*, 177. He spent as much as $750,000 in the state.
[52] 'This senseless business of trifling with the health and safety of your child, regardless of his color, by busing him across state lines, and city lines and… into kingdom come – has to go'. Busing, he claimed, was 'social scheming' imposed by 'anthropologists, zoologists, and sociologists' White, *The Making of the President*, 94.
[53] *Right from the Start*, 130.
[54] McGovern limited his spending in the state to $50,000.
[55] Weil, *Long Shot*, 60.
[56] Black and Black, *The Vital South: How Presidents are Elected*, 172.

As Key explains, southern unity during the Civil War diluted the significant differences that had been present in the South, and created a strong regional identity based on preventing federal intrusion into the region's governance.[57] The region's politics took the form of selective opposition to federal initiatives.[58] To this end, southern politicians, fearful of the region's minority status, concentrated in the Democratic Party to maximise their leverage in national politics. The absence of partisan competition that followed acted to limit opportunities for politically profitable dissent on civil rights issues. As Carlson writes, '[w]hile Democratic primaries functioned somewhat as forums for the settlement of interest group differences, the main *raison d'être* of southern politics – to keep the Negro in his place – remained secure, whatever the political infighting might have been'.[59] By the mid-1960s, however, this status quo arrangement was under sustained challenge from the federal government for the first time since the Civil War. Johnson's initiatives aimed to spread economic and political power to blacks in the South, and penalised financially southern institutions, such as schooling systems, that resisted efforts at integration.[60] A recent Supreme Court ruling upholding the constitutionality of busing to end school desegregation increased the salience of the specific issue of forced busing and provided a distinct mould for the debate on race in the South in 1972.[61]

Wallace's segregation politics were well known to his supporters and opponents alike. And rather than focusing exclusively on this particular issue, Wallace also mounted an aggressive attack on Vietnam protestors and his campaign developed ideas on a range of social issues such as abortion and crime.[62] He won a thumping victory in the primary, gaining 42 per cent of the vote. Carlson examines exit polling data from this primary contest to analyse the attitudinal characteristics of Wallace's voters. She demonstrates that Wallace voters, when compared with the voters for the other Democratic candidates, were likelier to cite personality – rather than issues – as the basis of their voting. However, Carlson shows that this personality-issue divergence masked the deeper lying prejudice on the part of Wallace voters that the Alabama governor had consistently exploited through his political career.[63] Wallace's voters were more likely to provide racially charged answers in response to questions on busing and school integration, and were generally more disillusioned by the federal government. Carlson's analysis also reveals the salience of the social issues dimension exploited effectively by Wallace in 1972 – questions that capture diffuse levels of fear produced greater reactions amongst the Wallace voters in the sample of respondents than those of the other Democratic contenders.

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[57] *Southern Politics in State and Nation*.
[58] The expedient exceptions were agricultural subsidies, military bases, federal highways, and the Social Security Act.
[59] *George Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness*, 2.
[60] In a single-county study, Wirt examines the sweeping effects of Civil Rights legislation on voting rules, education reform, and economic opportunities in Mississippi-Panola County. *The Politics of Southern Equality: Law and Social Change in a Mississippi County*.
[61] Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education (1971). Forced bussing became an issue because the segregation of local housing meant that many public schools remained *de facto* segregated despite the Supreme Court's verdict in *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka*.
[62] Carter argues that Wallace's decision to branch out to campaign on these social issues constitutes an early example of the growing importance of social issues in American politics; *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994*.
[63] Issues (18.9 v. 22.1), personality (31.5 v. 29.8).

Humphrey came a poor second with 18 per cent. 'The six delegates he won hardly repaid the prodigious effort', assesses Humphrey's biographer.[64] Wallace's presence eroded potential support for Jackson and he finished third with 13 per cent. For Alexander, Jackson's setback was 'a blow from which his campaign never recovered: not quite bad enough to kill the campaign, but barely good enough to keep it alive'.[65] Muskie's fourth place (8.9 per cent) was interpreted as an especially weak showing. John Lindsay finished in fifth place with 7 per cent, and McGovern was sixth with 6.2 per cent.

*Unrealised Potential: The Flaws of the Wallace Campaign*

Assessing the Florida primary result, Hart explained that 'Wallace was obviously the big winner. He would now be a factor for the Democrats to reckon with in nominating a presidential candidate'.[66] Hart was only somewhat right. Whilst showing his adeptness in the identity politics in the South, Wallace's national prospects remained bleak; but only partly as a result of the political identities that he represented. A second, and perhaps more decisive, factor was that his national campaign lacked the organisational capacity to mount a sustained challenge in the primaries beyond the South. Wallace would have been the principal beneficiary of the crowded liberal field. However, the opportunities available in northern primaries contests were largely unexploited by Wallace's campaign team because they lacked a detailed knowledge of the new campaign procedures. The Wallace campaign delayed until after his Florida victory before launching campaign events beyond the South. Consequently, Wallace's name did not appear on the ballot slips in states with early registration deadlines, including large states such as California, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Indeed even as his campaign planned its expansion, Wallace was uneasy about taking these steps; he seemed angst-ridden about making the transition from his role as an obstructive spoiler to a candidate of genuine viability. His campaign's intuitive grasp of Southern political and cultural sentiments remained unmatched by tactical rigour. Charles Snider, the ex-building contractor that Wallace hired as campaign manager, admitted that 'We started out running [in] the primaries in 1972 and we didn't even know what the Democratic National Committee was' – a shocking statement, and one that indicates the absence of knowledge of the technical aspects of nomination politics in the Wallace campaign.[67] Explaining this crippling ignorance, Carter suggests the importance of Wallace's disdain for the Democratic Party establishment. For Wallace and his team, Carter thought that the new selection rules 'seemed cunningly contrived for manipulation by those slick lawyers and bureaucrats so despised by Wallace's followers'.[68]

## (IV) WISCONSIN PRIMARY (APRIL 4, 1972)

*McGovern's victory in Wisconsin proved that his boom was sustainable. The McGovern victory was caused by his campaign's effective decision-making.*

[64] Solberg, *Hubert Humphrey*, 403.
[65] *Financing the 1972 Election*, 174.
[66] *Right from the Start*, 131.
[67] Carlson, *George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness*, 185.
[68] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 427.

With Wallace handicapped by his campaign's narrow horizons, the lasting contribution of the critical Florida primary was its destabilizing effects: it became clear that the race was an open one, and this favoured McGovern's tightly organised campaign operation.[69] As Brown analyses, 'The confusions of Florida made possible the victory in Wisconsin'.[70]

In January, 1971, a representative sample of Wisconsin Democratic voters expressed a strong preference for Muskie over his rivals.[71] Furthermore, Muskie – unlike Humphrey or Kennedy – elicited few negative reactions. Synthesizing these preference rankings, Caddell concluded that 'Muskie is way out in front, suggesting that among potential Wisconsin Democratic primary voters he balances a high degree of awareness with a minimum of negative impression'. When confronted with a choice between McGovern and Muskie in a hypothetical head-to-head contest, a representative sample of Wisconsin voters preferred Muskie by a 5 to 1 margin. However, between this poll and the actual contest fifteen months later, McGovern worked to reduce this difference and, ultimately, to overtake Muskie.[72] In resource investments, Wisconsin marked the McGovern 'financial and political high' point.[73] The South Dakotan's campaign spent $440,000 in the state. By March, 1972 the state had been thoroughly organised by Eugene Pokorny, McGovern masterful grassroots captain. Each of Wisconsin's seventy-two counties had a cadre of volunteers and they were led by forty paid organisers.[74] In contrast, Muskie had been dislodged as the campaign's leading contender. An incredulous Muskie claimed that he felt relief at his new underdog status, but in fact his campaign entered Wisconsin under substantial strain from diminished expectations, dwindling campaign resources, and devoid of a clear strategy to reverse their candidate's fortunes.[75]

Humphrey appeared to be the greatest threat to McGovern. Humphrey was regarded highly in his neighbouring state and he was especially strong in Milwaukee and in the agricultural districts bordering Minnesota which read the *Minneapolis Tribune* as their major local newspaper. With two weeks until voters went to the polls, Pat Caddell's regular surveys began to pick up growing support for McGovern. McGovern had been trailing Humphrey by five points, but was now leading.

Wisconsin had been targeted by McGovern's campaign in its earliest strategy meetings. Weil explains that Wisconsin was McGovern's most promising opening for his first campaign victory.[76] McGovern had argued that victory in this state would eliminate Muskie, and would likely leave Humphrey as the campaign's

[69] Brown, *Jaws of Victory*, 124.
[70] Brown, *Jaws of Victory*, 124.
[71] Muskie scored 38, to Kennedy's 30 and Humphrey's 19. McGovern polled 3 per cent. McGovern Papers, box 876, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
[72] Hart had agreed to at least one three-day tour of Wisconsin by McGovern every ninety days. $200,000 had been committed to the campaign effort in the state Dougherty, 99, 101.
[73] Alexander, *Financing the 1972 Election*, 112.
[74] Dougherty, *Goodbye, Mr. Christian*, 99.
[75] Muskie remarked after the Florida primary that he felt 'a nice, clean feeling of being in a fight'. Interview with Time Dean Fischer, March 27, 1972, McGovern Papers, box 1219, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
[76] Weil, *Long Shot*, 53.

remaining opposition.[77] Hart reasoned that Wisconsin would become an elimination round for most candidates. It was placed precisely at the point in the calendar when intense winnowing would occur and exits would be forced. Hart wrote that 'It marked the end of the first series of primaries and would be a watershed for several candidates, determining in part which ones would continue and which would be forced to drop out due to poor showings.'[78]

McGovern ran strongly throughout the state and won 54 delegates to Humphrey's 13.[79] The Wisconsin victory marked a crucial shift in perceptions. Even after his New Hampshire performance, many in the media remained sceptical of McGovern's chances in the race – Wisconsin shattered this impression. Hart comments that 'Much of the press corps evidenced shock at the breadth of the McGovern sweep, expecting a more divided and confused primary. These results undeniably thrust McGovern right to the front of the pack … Wisconsin eliminated one of the last [misperceptions] – that McGovern can't win.'[80] According to Solberg, 'With Wisconsin, McGovern acquired a momentum that never abated'.[81]

### (V) MASSACHUSETTS PRIMARY (APRIL 25, 1972)

*In Massachusetts, former front-runner, Muskie, was eliminated as a viable prospect. McGovern's victory against determined opposition was due to the combination of agency factors that had helped him to achieve success at previous turning points – his identity, tactical and management choices.*

The Massachusetts primary had been highlighted as an early target for McGovern. Like Wisconsin, Massachusetts offered McGovern an excellent opportunity for victory, and his chances improved on the back of his Wisconsin performance. Furthermore two characteristics of the Massachusetts political landscape – its heavy concentration of academics and students, and widespread opposition to the Vietnam War – made Massachusetts a promising contest for the McGovern campaign. McGovern enjoyed concentrated support in the nation's universities, and he had consistently demonstrated higher levels of support in the universities than in the population at large.

McGovern polled relatively strongly with voters opposed to the war – and Massachusetts was probably the nation's most dovish state.[82] Additionally, Nixon's escalation of the war since April 1972 had raised the salience of the issue that most favored McGovern relative to his rivals. In polling by Pat Caddell's Cambridge Survey Research, respondents displayed a clear reaction to the latest Nixon initiatives in Vietnam. Immediately after the Wisconsin primary, the war was mentioned by 40 per cent of respondents as the most important issue facing the country, but on the eve of the Massachusetts primary this figure had risen to 62 per

[77] Ibid, 56.
[78] *Right from the Start*, 137-138.
[79] In the popular vote, McGovern won a comfortable plurality of 30 per cent with Wallace (22), Humphrey (21), Muskie (10), Jackson (8), Lindsay (7) trailing behind him.
[80] Hart, *Right from the Start*, 144.
[81] *Hubert Humphrey*, 431.
[82] Brown, *Jaws of Victory*, 122.

cent. Of the available Democratic contenders, McGovern was deemed easily the 'most qualified to end the war'.[83]

The Massachusetts primary represented a direct clash of the McGovern and Muskie strategies. Muskie had the support of the Massachusetts state Democratic organisation, including its pre-eminent officeholder House majority leader Tip O'Neill. His slate of delegates included Boston Mayor Kevin White, Senate President Kevin Harrington, House Speaker David Bartley, and the state's Attorney General (Robert Quinn), Secretary of State (John Davoren), and Secretary of Treasury (Robert Crane). With his diminishing prospects, Massachusetts provided a final litmus test for Muskie, and for his endorsement strategy.

By contrast, McGovern used a speech in Detroit to attack the political establishment for leading the country and the world awry. He criticised the defence, tax, and health policies of 'the establishment center'.[84] He argued that:

> The present center has drifted so far from our founding ideals that it bears little resemblance to the dependable values of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. I want America to come home from the alien world of power politics, militarism, deception, racism, and special privilege to the blunt truth that 'all men are created equal – that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights and among those are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.[85]

On primary day, McGovern won a stunning majority (51 per cent to Muskie's 21).[86] Under the state's winner-take-all system, the state's 102 delegates were committed to McGovern. After assessing the damage done to his candidacy in Massachusetts, Muskie suspended his campaign on April 27, though he neither withdrew nor released his delegates from their commitments to him.

### (VI) CALIFORNIA PRIMARY (JUNE 6, 1972)

*The California primary was a turning point because McGovern defeated his last remaining opponent – Humphrey. His victory against Humphrey was due to the identity, tactical and management choices that had fuelled McGovern's success in previous primaries.*

McGovern held a dominant lead as the Democratic campaigns moved to California.[87] With Muskie's demise in Massachusetts, only Humphrey stood between McGovern and *de facto* confirmation of his victory. However, a growing faction of anti-McGovern politicians rallied to back Humphrey's last ditch effort in California, and the event – dominated by a series of televised debates between McGovern and Humphrey –

[83] McGovern scored 31 per cent, ahead of Nixon (5), Muskie (4), and 'others' (2). (Box 30, Mankiewicz Papers. Kennedy Presidential Library).
[84] Hart, *Right from the Start*, 154.
[85] McGovern, *Grassroots: the Autobiography of George McGovern*, 183.
[86] Humphrey (8%), Wallace (8), Chisholm (4).
[87] As *Time* observed '[a]s the duel between the longtime friends from neighbouring Midwestern states turns personal, the man with all the momentum is McGovern.' 'The Big Showdown in California', June 5, 1972, McGovern Papers, box 1219, Mudd Library, Princeton University.

became an arena for a power struggle between the insurgent forces headed by McGovern and representatives of the party's established power elite.

In his earliest plans, a full twenty-two months before the event, McGovern expected that the California primary would be the likely scene for the decisive final contest. McGovern's team anticipated that either Muskie or Humphrey would remain in the competition and that the remaining opposition to McGovern would therefore coalesce on one of these two candidates. With the limited resources in the markets for media funds and volunteers funnelled increasingly towards McGovern, Humphrey was left to run his California operation under tight constraints and without the networks of activists that worked the state on McGovern's behalf.[88] There were specific aspects of the contest in California that created additional difficulties for Humphrey. Most pertinently, McGovern was confident that Humphrey's activities as vice-president to advance American involvement in Vietnam would be penalised heavily in California – a state with an active and popular anti-war movement.

While Humphrey's campaign operation in California was skeletal, he benefited from the increasing fervour of a new and enthusiastic stop-McGovern effort. In advance of the Nebraska primary, the stop-McGovern campaign that would form the amorphous centre of McGovern opposition began to take shape. It comprised the supporters of politicians threatened by McGovern's emergence, and its cohesion and zeal intensified to reach its climax in the run-up to the California primary. The anti-McGovern groups viewed McGovern's impending success as an aberration, reflecting the commitment of a radical left wing of the party, unrepresentative of the party more broadly conceived, and destined for defeat against President Nixon. Appropriating a toxic quote from Senator Hugh Scott, portraying McGovern as a radical for supporting 'abortion, amnesty, and acid', Humphrey's supporters spread word that McGovern was too extreme to be trusted.[89] Muskie, in a speech on June 9, was expected to withdraw as a candidate, accepted that McGovern's nomination was 'probable', but focused on what he perceived to be a lamentable gap between the South Dakotan's issue preferences and those of the mainstream of the Democratic Party.[90] 'I hope that Senator McGovern will use the time which remains before the convention to draw on the wisdom and experience of those elements of the party which are not yet prepared to support his candidacy; and to re-examine and refine his own positions with respect to critical issues', Muskie counselled. Evidently McGovern was paying the costs of offering precise positions on policy matters – a tactic developed to contrast with Muskie's nebulous identity on issues; and although his critics frequently mischaracterised his positions, their attacks affected

[88] Muskie's had been pledged large sums, but many remained unfulfilled. By August 1971 his pledges totalled $4 million, but his campaign found it difficult to raise £$3.5 million, and had to borrow $1.5 million; Alexander, *Financing the Election 1972*, 142.
[89] Back in April most respondents in a Gallup poll (April 21-24) thought of both Muskie and McGovern as 'fairly liberal', on a spectrum between very conservative and very liberal.
[90] Mankiewicz Papers, box 22, Kennedy Presidential Library.

McGovern's standing.[91] For his part, McGovern was unapologetic for pushing the debate in the Democratic Party beyond its traditional bounds, where he believed the electorate were calling to be taken.[92]

While perceptions and misperceptions of McGovern's issue positions were an important motivation for the movement, there were also strong suggestions of power-politics dimensions to their obstruction. Media reports emphasised the role of southern Democrats, especially Wilbur Mills from Arkansas, who sought the vice-presidential nomination on a national ticket without McGovern. Much to McGovern's surprise, organised labour also contributed heavily to the anti-McGovern movement, and for reasons centred on McGovern's support of its marginalisation in the party's selection procedures.

The new wave of attacks by these diverse elements, Hart assesses, began to corrode gradually McGovern's standing. 'For the first time, our campaign was forced on the defensive. The Senator was spending a great deal of his time responding to these erroneous allegations instead of concentrating aggressively, as he had done in every other state, on the vital issues of war, tax reform, cuts in defense spending, and re-ordering of national priorities'. California's impact extended far beyond the parameters of the 1972 Democratic nomination and election. As Hart explains, the events surrounding the California primary would bear heavily on the direction of the Democratic Party. 'California', Hart exaggerated, 'was Armageddon'.[93]

Without a robust campaign organisation to mobilise in the state and bereft of the financial resources necessary for a media-centred campaign against McGovern, Humphrey challenged McGovern to a series of three debates before the California primary. McGovern accepted.

Hart describes Humphrey's opening in the first debate as 'shrill, hoarse, and intemperate'.[94] Convinced that his candidate would now certainly appear to be more controlled and astute, Hart comments that Humphrey's debating style made him certain that McGovern would win this and the remaining debates. Humphrey vigorously attacked McGovern on his proposed defence cuts, claiming that they would dangerously compromise American national security and amounted to 'unilateral disarmament'.[95] In reply, McGovern turned to his impressive record of military service. However, his response dealt inadequately with Humphrey's charges. As Kathleen E. Kendall attests, 'What was needed, however, in the face of Humphrey's persistent and specific attacks, was a greater sense that McGovern knew something about the particular needs

[91] McGovern's opponents remained unconvinced by his claim that he 'would be a more reconciling candidate than Hubert'. Schlesinger et al, *Journals*, 350.
[92] The biggest mistake the Democratic Party would make in this election year would be to underestimate the deep sense of public disgust at government, which scarcely changes regardless of which party is in power … Instead of clutching at some mythical and soggy 'center' – a place which has meaning only to a few pundits anyway – we must offer change that is substantial enough to affect the lives of ordinary people. The primaries have given us some idea of where the people are. Instead of dragging them back to the status quo, we must stand with them in seeking a truly just and decent society. McGovern, 'Where I Stand', in *The Progressive*, July, 1972, McGovern Papers, box 872, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
[93] *Right from the Start*, 181.
[94] Hart, *Right from the Start*, 190.
[95] Kendall, *Communication in Presidential Primaries*, 78.

of the military. Humphrey raised serious doubts about his competence on this issue'.[96] This episode showed McGovern's difficulties in analysing the war beyond its moral standing. Humphrey also focused on McGovern's welfare proposals and argued persuasively that these did not cohere and were over-generous.

In the second debate, rather than a moderated confrontation between the two protagonists, they faced a panel of four journalists who pressed them for answers in response to sixty questions. Kendall thought that the new arrangement led to the persistence of the themes that Humphrey had flagged in the first debate as the journalists once against raised the questions that McGovern had handled feebly in the first debate. With five candidates present, the third debate lacked the pointed exchanges that had marked the previous two debates.[97]

Polls taken in late May showed McGovern with a twenty point lead over Humphrey. However, by June 2 it was clear that Humphrey's attacks were beginning to get through as McGovern's support slipped for the first time. In particular, Humphrey picked up the support of the undecided bloc of voters. McGovern held on to win, but only by a four percent margin, to capture California's 271 delegates.

### (VII) DECISION ON CALIFORNIA CHALLENGE (JULY 11, 1972)

*The decision on the California challenge at the Democratic National Convention was a critical juncture because its settlement in favour of McGovern guaranteed his victory. Its cause was structural: the unconstrained choice of Larry O'Brien, a non-candidate.*

Even with his large catch from California, and an additional 230 from New York, McGovern's strategists were aware that he would be unable to secure the nomination with his existing stock of delegate commitments.[98] But they also calculated that he would remain at least 200 votes ahead of a viable anti-McGovern coalition consisting of Humphrey, Muskie, and uncommitted delegates.[99]

On the second day of deliberations in the credentials committee, a motion was raised challenging the results of the California primary on the grounds that the state's winner-take-all contest violated the parties' reformed rules. The challengers argued that the state's 271 delegates should be split in proportion to the competing candidates' vote totals. This represented a change in position for Humphrey who denied that he would challenge California's rules if he ran second.[100] If successful, McGovern would lose 151 delegates. Despite McGovern's lead in the delegate count, a successful challenge could kill his candidacy, and encourage convergence on a compromise candidate. The problem for the McGovern supporters on the committee was

[96] Ibid, 79.
[97] The organizers of the debate had been forced, by court order, to include Representative Shirely Chisholm of New York, Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty, and General Hardin who represented Governor Wallace. (Wallace was gravely injured following an assassination attempt on May 15). Chisholm and Yorty had sued the networks under the equal time requirements issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Kendall, *Communication in Presidential Primaries*, 77.
[98] After California McGovern could count a certain 975 delegates out of the 1,509 needed for nomination.
[99] Hart, *Right from the Start*, 200.
[100] Solberg, *Hubert Humphrey*, 432.

the decision that followed by the chair that none of the California delegates could vote on this apportionment motion. A majority of five became a deficit of the same size as the ten McGovern California representatives were barred. The vote on June was 72-66 to overturn the California winner-take-all result.

McGovern cried foul. In a meeting in the Senate with reporters after he heard of the decision, McGovern labelled the ruling an 'incredible steal', and he warned that he would bolt the party and run as an independent if he was denied the nomination.[101] However, at the convention, Chairman Larry O'Brien decided that only those 150 delegates whose seats were under challenge would be ineligible to vote – a further 120 votes were available to McGovern, and that the majority relevant in the case of the California challenge was not an absolute majority of seats but a majority of those eligible to vote.

[101] Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 137.

# 8 THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1976

Gerald Ford became vice president and eventually president under chaotic circumstances. His ascent followed resignations by Spiro Agnew in October 1973 and Richard Nixon less than a year later. As observers came to terms with the new president, Ford's relationship to Nixon became fundamental to assessments of his administration – its policies, personnel, and legitimacy – and ultimately his efforts to gain the Republican nomination in 1976. Ford inherited policy challenges in domestic and foreign affairs and, by virtue of the scandals associated with the Nixon presidency, a weakened presidency at the centre of a discredited political system. However, Ford forged his political identity under these circumstances and became ever more aware of the fact that passive responses invited his opponents to control perceptions of his presidency.

Ford's inheritance was deeply challenging, but his political environment still afforded key decision-making opportunities, and his choices at these moments moulded important aspects of the 1976 Republican race. Ford's campaign planners displayed an acute awareness of these openings. In an early strategy paper, Richard Cheney developed the thesis that Ford's political fate remained largely within his control. 'The country has not reached the point where it is anti-Ford nor in a mood to reject his administration as a failure nor to vent its frustration out of the Vietnam collapse, inflation and the recession on the Ford Administration', wrote Cheney.[1] 'However', he warned, 'it could develop into this unless a positive program is undertaken to prevent it. Should this happen, not only would election be impossible, nomination could be.' Cheney recognised that Ford held critical, albeit not determinative, capacities to shape his course:

> The President has the where-with-all to influence these potentialities in a major way. It will take concerted planned and coordinated effort. Nomination and election can be achieved by positive effort – always with the caveat that further disastrous economic decline or foreign calamity could negate them.[2]

Two early sets of decisions taken by the new president dominated interpretations of Ford's identity in his first year as president. By pardoning Richard Nixon instead of allowing his impeachment, Ford reinforced perceptions of an alliance between his and his predecessor's administrations. Crucially, his action raised the question of whether a deal was made between Ford and Nixon before Nixon's resignation. By contrast, Ford's decisive actions during the Mayaguez crisis demonstrated his abilities as an independent leader. Together these very different events represented critical junctures in Ford's prospects and the Republican race. The collapse in Ford's popularity following his 'mysterious' pardon of Nixon provided the incentive necessary for Reagan to run.[3] Ford's adept handling of the Mayaguez foreign policy crisis instilled in him an assuredness that had been lacking since his pardon of Nixon; and he came increasingly to view his short first term as a series of unfinished projects for which he desired, and deserved, a mandate to complete.

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[1] *Campaign 1976 – Preliminary Analysis*, 4, May 8, 1975, Cheney Papers, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Schlesinger, Journals, 335.

The Nixon pardon and Mayaguez were critical events in the 1976 race, but primarily shaped the initial decisions by Ford and Reagan to contest the nomination. The tactical and management decisions by their campaign teams were of greater importance for understanding the fluctuating prospects of Ford and Reagan as the race developed. The interplay of these tactical and management factors were apparent at four crucial moments where the trajectory of the nomination contest shifted: the primary contests in New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Texas, and Reagan's selection of Richard Schweiker as his nominee for Vice President. (See Table 8.1 below).

Table 8.1 Critical Junctures in Republican Nomination, 1976

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE | AGENT | NATURE OF CAUSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The Nixon Pardon** | September 8, 1974 | Causes President's Ford's popularity to collapse; Reagan plans entry. | A | Ford | A (Ford): pardons Nixon (Identity, Tactics) |
| **Mayaguez Incident** | May 12, 1975 | Ford's confidence, sense of purpose, and ambitions return. | A, though contributory S | Ford | A: executive action (Identity)<br><br>S: exogenous event (seizure of ship) |
| **New Hampshire Primary** | February 24, 1976 | Reagan defeated after stunning Ford comeback. | A > A | Ford; Reagan | A (Ford): campaign organisation (Management, Tactics)<br><br>A (Reagan) (Management, Tactics) |
| **North Carolina Primary** | March 23, 1976 | Reagan interrupts Ford momentum with surprise victory; gains control of issue space by introducing foreign policy critique. | A > A | Reagan; Ford | A (Reagan): campaign organisation and issue focus (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Ford): (Identity, Tactics, Management) |
| **Texas Primary** | May 1, 1976 | Reagan uses Texas foothold to sweep South, and confirms renewed strength of candidacy. | A > A | Reagan; Ford | A (Reagan): campaign organisation and issue focus (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Ford): (Identity, Tactics, Management) |
| **Michigan Primary** | May 18, 1976 | Ford recovers to hold his home state. | A > A | Ford; Reagan | A (Ford): native son appeals (Identity, Tactics) |
| **Reagan Announces Choice of Vice-Presidential Nominee** | July 26, 1976 | Desperate game-changing attempt to usurp Ford by fracturing support. | A | Reagan | A (Reagan): choice of VP nominee (Tactics) |

Key:

(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

## (I) THE NIXON PARDON (SEPTEMBER 8, 1974)

*Ford's pardon of Nixon was a turning point because it caused a drastic slump in his standing and enticed Reagan to begin planning a campaign to replace the incumbent president as the Republican nominee. The pardon was caused by agency factors: an unconstrained choice by Ford.*

Within six months of taking the oath for the vice presidency, Ford was confronted with the uncertainties surrounding Nixon's future as president. On August 1, 1974, White House Chief of Staff General Alexander M. Haig, Jr. explained to Ford that the taped conversations that the Supreme Court had ruled that Nixon must hand over contained evidence that contradicted Nixon's account of the Watergate events. Ford, Haig emphasised, 'had to be prepared to assume the presidency within a very short time'.[4] Consequently, Haig surmised, a number of scenarios might unfold. Nixon could either resign or fight impeachment proceedings as they gathered momentum in Congress. However, as Ford noted, the latter would almost certainly lead to defeat for the President: 'If Nixon tried to 'ride it out', he would be impeached in the House, and the odds were overwhelming that he'd be convicted in the Senate'. Alternatively, Haig explained, Nixon could pardon himself and the others involved in Watergate and then resign. Haig also claimed to recount a conversation with a White House staffer who suggested the possibility of *President* Ford pardoning Nixon. Haig did not seek to advocate this or any other course. Rather, he sought to clarify the situation as he saw it to the vice president and, further, 'to know … whether or not [Ford's] overall assessment of the situation agreed with his'.[5]

Ford retained multiple connections to the disgraced Nixon Administration. Not only had Nixon appointed Ford vice president, but while in the Senate Ford had been an avowed defender of Nixon. Ford supported Nixon to defeat 'end the war' resolutions, and following prompting by Nixon he initiated impeachment against Justice William O. Douglas in response to the Senate's rejection of two Nixon nominees to the Supreme Court. As the Watergate crisis escalated, Ford obstructed the House Banking Committee investigations into the money trail in the wake of the break in. Pardoning Nixon, however, would dwarf these previous co-operative episodes, and entrench suspicion that Ford and Nixon had agreed to this outcome in exchange for Ford's promotion.

Despite this, on Sunday, September 8, only one month after taking his presidential oath, President Ford proclaimed that he was granting a 'full, free, and absolute pardon unto Richard Nixon for all offences against the United States which he … has committed or taken part in' during his five and a half years in the Office.[6] The pardon legally implied that Nixon was guilty of serious crimes. Writing for the majority in *United States v. Burdick* Justice Joseph McKenna clarified that a pardon 'carries an imputation of guilt; acceptance a

[4] Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 3.
[5] Ibid, 3-4.
[6] Barry Werth, *31 Days: Gerald Ford, the Nixon Pardon, and a Government in Crisis*, 321.

confession of it'.[7] However, in a public statement of contrition, Nixon admitted only to mistakes and judgments, and not illegalities:

> I know that many fair-minded people believe that my motivations and actions in the Watergate affair were intentionally self-serving and illegal. I now understand how my own mistakes and misjudgement have contributed to that belief and seemed to support it …'[8]

The Nixon pardon was a choice over which Ford had significant leverage: he alone would determine whether Nixon would be pardoned; he would decide when this decision would be made and the context in which it would be presented; and he was the dominant player in any attempt to use these advantages to extract payoffs from Nixon or his political rivals. Furthermore, not only was Ford's choice a relatively unconstrained one, it was critical to the discourse that would shape his re-election campaign. President Ford was aware of his unique capacities: 'In this situation, I am the final authority, he declared.[9] '… I make the final decision … I make no commitment one way or the other. But I do have the right as president of the United States to make that decision'.[10]

Ford's decision to pardon Nixon was a gradual one. During his Senate confirmation, Ford stated that he would allow Nixon to receive equal treatment under the law. Asked whether as president he might terminate investigations against Nixon, Ford replied 'I do not think the public would stand for it'.[11] As legal proceedings were initiated against Nixon, Ford remained on the sidelines. However, even at an early point in these proceedings it was apparent that Ford was actively considering his option to pardon Nixon. In a press conference on August 27, Ford made clear his belief that a pardon was a 'proper option', and one that he had the authority to take.[12] Ford received a memorandum from Henry Ruth, Leon Jaworski's deputy on the Special Prosecution Force that confirmed he was investigating ten possible criminal violations by Nixon and his aides, and outlining his belief that good arguments could be made for a pardon, especially if it was made early.[13] Stanley Kutler claims that soon after he received this information, probably by September 14, Ford had made a firm decision. However, Kutler adds, 'he carried out a bargaining charade with his predecessor'.[14] During this period, Ford should have put in place measures to make his controversial action more palatable. Most significantly, Ford should have achieved a full statement of contrition from the former president – 'he

[7] Ibid, 264.
[8] Ibid, 322.
[9] Ibid, 217.
[10] Ibid, 217.
[11] *Nomination of Gerald R. Ford to Be Vice President of the United States*, Committee on Rules and Administration, U.S. Senate, 93rd Cong., 1st Sess. (November 5, 1973). Quoted in Stanley I. Kutler, 'Clearing the Rubble: The Nixon Pardon', in Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford and the Politics of Post-Watergate America*.
[12] Rozell makes clear that Ford's pardon of Nixon did not violate the Impeachment Exception of Article 2, Section 2. This section makes clear that the president's pardoning power is restricted 'in Cases of Impeachment'. However, the impeachment proceedings, a process to remove a sitting president, were terminated by Nixon's resignation, not President Ford's pardon. ('In Defense of President Ford's Pardon of Richard M. Nixon', Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald R. Ford*, 46).
[13] Ford stressed the national pain that would have endured if Nixon had been dragged through court. Rozell argues further that Nixon could not have received a fair trial because his decisions had affected every citizen and that opinions of them would influence the legal process.
[14] Kutler, 'Clearing the Rubble', 29.

simply could have issued the pardon, pointing out that its acceptance acknowledged guilt and that he knew that Nixon deeply regretted his wrongdoing. How could Nixon deny that statement?'[15]

Stephen Ambrose speculates that by anticipating the conclusion to Ford's evolving thoughts, Nixon expected Ford to pardon him. Similarly, Bob Woodward believed that the pardon was 'inevitable'.[16] According to these writers, Nixon did not send Haig to achieve this guarantee, but merely to seek reassurance. Nixon foresaw the difficult situation that would face Ford after he assumed the presidency and expected that Ford would attempt to clear the Nixon nightmare from the national political discourse – so that he could concentrate on more substantive issues, and avoid embarrassment to the nation, his party, and himself (for Ford had made public speeches in support of Nixon).[17] As aide Robert Hartmann explained to President Ford, his discussion with Haig would not have taken place without Nixon's knowledge – evidence that Nixon needed to reassure himself that Ford would not be uncomfortable with the idea of a pardon. Furthermore, Nixon understood that he and Ford must be able to swear, under oath, that the pardon question was never raised.[18] Thus, Nixon and Haig would have calculated 'that by far the greater risk was to have Haig ask straight out for a pardon agreement'.[19] That Nixon knew the likely outcome of Ford's problems accounts for his stubbornness in his negotiations about the terms of the pardon.

Even if Ford's likely decision was unpopular its effects might have been mitigated by improved communication of the pardon and its complications. As Kutler argues 'Ford failed to prepare the country for what he must have known he would do'.[20] He consulted with no political leaders. He presented congressional leaders with a *fait accompli*; and he thereby forfeited opportunities to involve them in the presentation of the pardon to the public. Accordingly, Kutler assesses that 'The new president's cure had substantial merit; unfortunately, he fumbled its application, with costly short-run effects for him and for the nation'.[21]

Ford's pardon choices were critical to assessments of his presidency by journalists, political elites, and the mass public.[22] Ford had had an opportunity to affiliate himself with the Nixon regime; or to pursue an independent course, committed to restoring confidence in the presidency and equal treatment for 'presidents and plumbers'.[23] And Ford also held second-order options concerning the terms of the pardon and its public communication. However, Ford's choices fused to produce staggering consequences. Generally, assesses Rozzell, 'The pardon significantly harmed Ford's public standing, relations with Congress, and the

[15] Ibid, 29.
[16] Fireston and Ugrinsky, *Gerald R. Ford*, 74.
[17] Though also central to Ford's thinking was his genuine fear about the former president's deteriorating mental and physical health. (Werth, *31 Days*, 329).
[18] John Ehrlichman believed that before Nixon resigned, Ford had promised that he would grant a pardon. But no documentary evidence proves this and no first-hand observer has claimed this. (*Witness to Power*, 410).
[19] Ambrose, 'The Nixon-Ford Relationship', in Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald R. Ford*, 21.
[20] 'Clearing the Rubble', in Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 33.
[21] Ibid, 26.
[22] In a letter to the President, Ralph Nader wrote that 'Important questions are being asked by many concerned Americans about your decision …' and requested full access to documents which might help him to establish whether there were suspicious communications between Ford and Nixon representatives.(Nessen files. Letter from Ralph Nader, September 11, 1974. Ford Presidential Library)
[23] Mike Mansfield, in Kutler, 'Clearing the Rubble', 32.

Republican party's fortunes in the 1974 elections'.[24] It marked a clear turning point in his popularity. Prior to this decision, Ford was benefiting from 'the sheer power of not being Nixon'.[25] He had presided over a restoration in confidence in the American presidency and Washington politics.[26] On the day before Ford announced the Nixon pardon, the *Post* ran a page-one photograph of him 'jumping on a trampoline – soaring'.[27] A Gallup poll showed him leading Ted Kennedy almost two-to-one in a trial heat for the presidency. Following the pardon, however, '… Ford's popularity plunged from 70 percent to 48 percent'.[28] As Werth summarises 'With a penstroke, Gerald Ford spent away almost all that he had gained simply by not being Richard Nixon – the bipartisan goodwill, the trust and affection of a divided nation that didn't know him but was willing to extend him the benefit of doubt. His monthlong honeymoon, which he and the Republicans hoped would propel them through the fall election, crumpled overnight'.[29]

Ford's courage was praised by some observers.[30] Nonetheless, the scale of Ford's popularity collapse was potentially shocking – though apparently not to the president, who in his recollections indicates disappointment but not surprise. Two factors intensified Ford's loss of support. Firstly, his popularity was especially fickle because his accession without election meant that his support had not been cemented through an electoral contest against a national rival.[31] Secondly, the effects of Ford's incumbency were weakened by records levels of disillusionment with the Office and government in general.[32]

*Reagan: Planning for Entry*

Regan's comments on the Ford administration revealed his hope rather than confidence in Ford's abilities as a Republican president: 'I hope and pray that this administration is successful. And that would take care of '76 … Whatever may happen, I would like to feel that I can continue to be a voice in the Republican Party insuring that the party pursues the philosophy that I believe should be the Republican philosophy'.[33] Recognising Ford's vulnerability following his pardon of Nixon, Reagan's associates began to plot a route to the presidential nomination for their candidate. Senator Paul D. Laxalt of Nevada, who would become Reagan's campaign chairman, assessed that Ford would incur a significant electoral cost because of his pardon of Nixon: 'If Mr. Ford is nominated I think it [the pardon] is going to be an issue, and it could be a

[24] 'In Defense of President Ford's Pardon of Richard M. Nixon', 46.
[25] Werth, *31 Days*, 293.
[26] Senator Adlai Stevenson observed a change in atmosphere though many of Nixon's staff remained in place. He noticed a palpable shift in power back to the departments and a greater receptiveness in the White House to members of Congress (A. James Reichley Interviews, General Box 2, Ford Presidential Library). In his interview with Reichley, Schweiker echoes similar sentiments.
[27] Ibid, 308.
[28] Ibid, 331.
[29] Werth, *31 Days*,331.
[30] For instance, in a letter to the editor of the Boston Globe, Alan Keyes, a Junior Fellow in Government at Harvard University commended Ford for pardoning Nixon: 'in performing this action he risked his personal political future. He made the choice that was most consistent with the good of his fellow countrymen, sparing us the spectacle of our own vindictiveness'. (Nessen files, Ford Presidential Library).
[31] David Keene, in Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 28
[32] Explaining why the percentage of the electorate that believed that they could trust government to do what was right, almost always or most of the time had halved from 76 to 36 between 1964 and 1975, Richard B. Wirthlin cites the potent combination of Vietnam and Watergate (Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 23).
[33] Lou Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 399.

problem'.[34] Reflecting on Reagan's evolving thinking at the time, John Sears explains that 'When Richard Nixon left office [in August 1974], the governor's position was simple: it was best for all of us if President Ford could succeed in uniting the country … the governor's presidential program was put on ice. Then, about March 1975, we did a national survey that indicated that the president was not putting it together and that there was a difference of only thirteen points separating President Ford and Governor Reagan among Republicans in a hypothetical primary race …'[35] Sears' admission reveals that Reagan believed that Ford was not 'putting it together'.[36]

However, this conclusion could be drawn only after Ford's pardon of Nixon – Ford's popularity crumbled only after this event. Disillusioned by the liberal drift of the Republican Party under Nixon and Ford, Reagan initially pondered the chances for a third party effort, but was convinced by his financial backers to remain a Republican. And as a further motivation to mount a challenge within the party, Reagan's pollsters suggested that the damage to the party from a fractious nomination campaign was reparable – 73 per cent who voted for Ford over Reagan in a hypothetical primary would vote for Reagan in the presidential election.[37] Indeed, most of the respondents polled by Sears and his colleagues felt that the debate about the party's future occurring in elite circles should be expanded to rank-and-file members: 60 per cent of Republicans felt that a Reagan candidacy would be healthy for the party. [38]

### (II) THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT (MAY 12, 1975)

*The Mayaguez Incident was a turning point because it convinced Ford that he should seek a second term as president. The resolution of the crisis was due to Ford's executive choices, but this predominant cause relied on the existence of an exogenous event (the seizure of the American merchant ship Mayaguez).*

The Nixon pardon initiated Reagan's active planning for a presidential run. Ironically, his *de facto* commitment preceded Ford's, whose future plans in the immediate aftermath of his pardon decision were shrouded in uncertainty. Initially, Ford temporized concerning his longer term ambitions, for both political and personal reasons. In late September, 1974, Betty Ford underwent a serious mastectomy, and though the operation was declared a success, there were doubts about whether Ford would run again if her condition deteriorated. At work, Ford's pardon-induced popularity collapse was intensified by the growing disillusionment of conservative Republicans because of his modest amnesty offer to Vietnam draft evaders and resort to heavy deficit spending in the face of 'stagflation'. Mayaguez fundamentally altered Ford's decision to run – the episode improved his prospects of success and considerably emboldened him. Soon after, both Ford and

[34] Richard L. Stout, Christian Science Monitor, May 7, 1976.
[35] Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 22
[36] Reagan had been even closer in 1974. A Republican poll showed a difference of only 1 per cent in hypothetical Ford-Kennedy and Reagan-Kennedy races. (Ibid, 22)
[37] Ibid, 23.
[38] Ibid, 22.

Reagan engaged in campaign-building activities in preparation for their contest for the Republican nomination.

Khmer Rouge forces intercepted and seized the *Mayaguez*, an American merchant ship, and its crew in the port of Sihanoukville on May 12, 1975. Ford summoned the National Security Council and ordered the implementation of a Marine rescue plan and air strikes against Cambodian mainland targets. Although both ship and crew were recovered, the number of Americans killed in the operation exceeded the number saved. Ford was criticised internationally for his plan, but his domestic audience interpreted events differently. Ford was widely praised. California Attorney General Evelle Younger commented that 'in the Mayaguez incident we saw President Ford confront a crisis of the moment, not one inherited from the past. In this first 'Ford crisis' he acted quickly, decisively and effectively'.[39] Jules Witcover judged that by '[killing] a fly with a cannon …' Ford overnight was transformed into a man of guts and action.[40] His polls showed an eleven point rise.[41]

Mayaguez occurred in an environment where the intense reaction to Ford's pardon of Nixon was dissipating, the economy was improving, and Ford's strategic use of his presidential veto was exacting some concessions from Congress on a number of important issues. In this climate, and at this juncture, the polls reflected the fact that President Ford's 'chances to win a full presidential term in his own right [were] brightening'.[42] Coy about his ambitions until Mayaguez, Ford created a campaign planning group in May and formally announced his candidacy on July 8, 1975. And the initial shape of the Republican contest was determined by the structural and conceptual handicaps of the nascent Ford campaign. As Kolodny summarised, the 'struggle for the nomination reflects the simplistic and politically naïve assumptions made by the Ford campaign'.[43]

*(a) Ford Enters the Race*

The new President Ford Committee (PFC), formed on June 20, was tasked with orchestrating Ford's campaign. However, from its inception the effectiveness of the PFC was undermined by poor leadership and direction, inadequate coordination between this organisation and the White House, and important flaws in its strategic planning of Ford's nomination campaign. Michael Raoul-Duval surmised that 'the President Ford campaign, with its mistakes, correct strategic moves, high points and low points, was defined by President Ford's character'.[44] In respect of the leadership of the PFC and its relationship to the White House, President Ford's direct impact is clear. Ever-willing to solicit advice, Ford made leadership and organisational decisions contrary to the recommendations of his campaign planners. The strategic mistakes committed by the PFC can be attributed in part to these earlier choices, though Reagan's ability to purposefully create uncertainty concerning his motives and actions made it difficult for the Ford team to anticipate his future activities.

[39] President Ford Committee, Box A5. Ford Presidential Library.
[40] *Marathon*, 49.
[41] Chagall, 141.
[42] Witcover, *Marathon*, 49.
[43] 'The 1976 Republican Nomination: An Examination of the Organizational Dynamic', in Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 583.
[44] Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 604.

Upon formation of the PFC, Dean Burch, a former counsellor to the president, was installed as temporary head. However, President Ford soon chose Army Secretary Howard H. 'Bo' Callaway as permanent head.[45] In a thorough strategy paper, Cheney had recommended Rogers Morton as an excellent choice for Chairman of the PFC: 'experienced, knowledgeable, respected by most of the part, and devoted to the President'.[46] However, this suggestion was ignored by the president, and Ford's selection of Callaway was generally interpreted as a move to placate conservative opponents.[47] Immediately doubts arose about Callaway's suitability. Throughout his career he had frequently been undisciplined in his communications with the press and public, and soon after his appointment he courted controversy by describing vice president Rockefeller as a 'liability'.[48] Even more problematic was his lack of organisational experience – and the limits of his understanding of organisational problems became apparent almost immediately. As Kolodny observes 'Callaway had no prior experience running a national campaign … and this inexperience showed in his attitude toward organization and coordination. Callaway's lack of state-by-state contacts and his dismissal of a Reagan challenge by late 1975 is proof of this inexperience'.[49] Callaway quickly became embroiled in disputes with key PFC operatives, precipitating the resignations of Director of Organization Lee Nunn and Finance Director David Packard soon after the primary season started. Indeed, reflecting on the campaign, Callaway explained his surprise at his appointment. 'I didn't know him [Ford] very well. I was flattered when he asked me to be his campaign manager, but to this day, I don't know why he did it. None of his key staff people had been in a national campaign of any kind. We didn't have the communication channels that you develop over the years with key players …'[50]

Inadequate leadership compounded structural problems in the relations between the PFC and the White House. To avoid any parallels with Watergate, Ford intended the PFC to operate completely independent of the White House. Though this prevented Watergate-style collusion, it interrupted co-ordination between these two groups of Ford's staff. However, perceptions of Ford as candidate and as president were inextricably linked. As Cheney presaged, 'It is not possible to separate the President's performance in office from his efforts as a potential and actual candidate'.[51] Cheney explained further that 'it must be recognized that the President's efforts as President on the substantive issues facing the nation are the most important aspect of the campaign and his performance as President will be the principal determination of his image'.[52] Consequently, the strict divisions between the White House and the PFC limited opportunities for useful co-ordination between the staffs of these organisations. Kolodny concluded that 'Careful avoidance of collusion, while good for public relations, would prove to be devastating to the campaign – and a major roadblock to

[45] Other leading personnel included Lee Nunn, Director of Organisation, tasked with co-ordinating liaison between headquarters and state organisation; Judy Harbaugh, Director of Administration, who directed office management; and in-house Legal Counsel, Bob Visser.
[46] *Campaign 1976 – Preliminary Analysis*, p. 15. Cheney Papers. Ford Presidential Library.
[47] Though Arthur Hadley offers an alternative angle, claiming that Callaway was rich enough to pay his own way as campaign manager. (*Invisible Primary*, 173). Callaway was also Rumsfeld's preferred choice.
[48] National Journal, September 6, 1975.
[49] Kolodny, 'The 1976 Republican Nomination', in Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 591.
[50] Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 600.
[51] *Campaign 1976 – Preliminary Analysis*, p. 8. Cheney Papers. Ford Presidential Library.
[52] *Campaign 1976 – Preliminary Analysis*, p. 16. Cheney Papers. Ford Presidential Library.

the nomination'.[53] Commenting on the performance of Ford's White House staff, Republican senators lamented that 'the White House people just don't think political'.[54] Indeed Cheney recommended the formation of a group of political strategists to oversee 'grand strategy' at the intersection of the activities of the White House and the PFC:

> This top level group would be outside the White House, but report to and be available to the President and the campaign chairman. This should be a 'brain trust' and not have a formal or official place in the Republican campaign structure as such. This group would be expected to devise strategy, advise on its implementation and monitor it …

Though Cheney referred to this group as the 'brain trust', it differed from Roosevelt's collection of academic experts – this group would comprise political rather than policy experts, who thought about problems in political terms, assessing how the president's interests would be affected by his actions and the actions of others.[55] Cheney's suggestion was insightful. This institutional innovation could have helped to fill the rifts in communication between the White House and the PFC and facilitate the construction and maintenance of coherent strategies for Ford's campaign and administration. However, there is no evidence to suggest that these proposals were acted on.[56]

Ford had never run in a statewide race, and probably the last seriously contested race he had run in was the Republican primary in 1948.[57] He was uncertain about how best to use political issues to help him – especially in a potential contest against a conservative Republican. Furthermore, Ford's mottled staff – combining Nixon holdovers and Ford staffers from his previous offices – were equally unsure about how to interweave their candidate with salient political issues. Because issues constitute a central reason for individual and group support of a candidate, an important corollary followed from the PFC's neglect of issues: an absence of precise thinking to identify the constituency groups that Ford's campaign should target. Bob Teeter, PFC Director of Research, candidly admitted that 'No one in the White House, including the president, really had developed any kind of idea of who his constituency was and who it ought to be in either the general election or the primaries. Who were the 51 percent of the people who were going to get him elected?'[58]

*(b) Ford's Evolving Strategy*

The absence of an identity core through which to distil and organise issues activities provided fertile ground for multiple, competing strategies for Ford's campaign. The most convenient argument, and the one that avoided deep contemplation of complex problems, posited that Reagan could be deterred. It is clear that the PFC focused on this deterrence strategy in its early plans, and in their correspondence Ford's planners belied

[53] Kolodny, 'The 1976 Republican Nomination', Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 589.
[54] Box A1, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.
[55] In future references, Cheney describes this collection of experts as the 'Strategy Group of Five'.
[56] In February, 1976 Morton identified similar problems, though he proposed a less radical solution: the appointment of a senior counsellor to the president with cabinet rank who would liaise between senior White House and Cabinet officers and the staff of the PFC. He recommended George Bush for this role. Ford rejected Morton's personnel suggestion, but made Morton his new counsellor with the duties outlined in the correspondence between him and Morton. Kolodny p. 593
[57] Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 38.
[58] Ibid, 38.

their belief that this simple tactic would suffice because of Reagan's slight chances of success. Indeed, much of the planning at this stage essentially involved justifications for dismissing the viability of a Reagan challenge:

> So far as the Republican nomination is concerned, barring any catastrophe, Ford has the nomination if he wants it and really goes after it. Ronald Reagan really cannot fight an incumbent, if the President uses the power and influence available to him for re-nomination.[59]

Similarly, Callaway conceded that he was too quick to dismiss the Reagan challenge:

> I was so sure that he [Ford] was the right man that it hardly occurred to me we could not win our party's nomination. A lot of us felt the same way. For that reason … we did not take Ronald Reagan seriously for a long time. We believed he might run, and we spent more time trying to talk him out of running than we did in running against him.'[60]

The active part of the deterrence strategy involved 'talk' to dissuade Reagan. The Ford team encouraged voices in Reagan's inner circle who suggested to the California governor that a presidential run would be unwise. They also attempted to use the vice-presidency as bait by suggesting that Ford might replace Vice President Rockefeller with Reagan in his next administration.[61] To party workers contemplating support for Reagan, the PFC hinted that 'if we're concerned about Rockefeller, who do you think the President is going to listen to when he comes to decide about the Vice Presidency – the people for him or the people against him'.[62]

Deterrence was deemed to be possible, and even probable, by Ford's campaign long after Reagan's entry was imminent. There were two reasons for this disjuncture between their planning and the reality that they would soon confront. First, Reagan's campaign masked its intentions and thereby led Ford and the PFC to believe that effective deterrence was possible when it was not. Second, the PFC failed to monitor Reagan closely enough – only in January 1976 was a staff member assigned to research Reagan's activities and issue positions full-time. Indeed Kolodny contends that this complacence damaged Ford further by indicating the weakness of his campaign organisation. Commenting on this early stage, she states that 'The early inactivity of the Ford campaign made an outside challenge for the nomination not only possible but also inevitable in 1976'.[63]

The end of the deterrence strategy, and its failure, is marked by a statement released November 20, 1978 by the PFC following Reagan's entry announcement. The Ford campaign initiated a strategic shift; and entered a phase where it contrasted Reagan's unelectability with Ford's broad appeal in the party and nation. The statement explains that

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[59] *Campaign 1976 – Preliminary Analysis*, p. 4. Cheney Papers. Ford Presidential Library.
[60] Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 601. Stu Spencer, a late arrival to the Ford campaign expressed shock that 'none of those guys around the President expected Ronald Reagan to run'. He continued that 'Considering this was an incumbent President, they were miles behind where they should have been in their thinking and planning'. (Chagall, *The Kingmakers*, 78).
[61] Despite Rockefeller's attempts since the 1970s to appease the conservative wing of his party, he remained an enemy to conservatives because of a lengthy association with liberal causes.
[62] Box A4, PFC Records.
[63] Kolodny, 'The 1976 Republican Nomination Contest', in Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 597.

> Despite how well Ronald Reagan does or does not do in the early primaries, the simple political fact is that he cannot defeat any candidate the Democrats put up. Reagan's constituency is much too narrow, even within the Republican Party.
>
> Now that he has finally ended his indecision and declared his candidacy, it does nothing to change our plans to run an aggressive, grassroots campaign for President Ford.
>
> The President Ford Committee is a broad-based group working for President Ford's nomination. We want a unified party going into the General Election. Any motion against unity is counter-productive and damaging to our prospects next November.[64]

While Ford's team stoked fears that Reagan's appeal was too narrow, the President worked to expand the breadth of his support. Having failed to deter Reagan, Ford resolved that his best chance lay in wooing Republican conservatives. Ford had shifted radically from underestimating Reagan to believing that his nomination could only be achieved by competing for Reagan's base. His appointment of Bo Callaway to manage his campaign should be understood in these terms. In an interview with Trevor Armbrister, Rockefeller criticised the staffers, aligned with Callaway, who supported this strategy:

> despite the fact that some of these political geniuses thought that they were going to get [the nomination] for him from the South and the conservative element, I knew the only place he could get it was from the progressive element of the Republican Party which is where I had my strength.[65]

Explaining Ford's request for him to remove himself from the ticket, Rockefeller also interprets this decision in these terms. On November 3, 1975, Rockefeller confirmed in writing what he and the president had agreed in conversation on October 28. He wrote to Ford that 'I do not wish my name to enter into your consideration for the upcoming Republican vice presidential nomination'.[66] In *A Time to Heal*, Ford admitted his regret of this decision. Grateful for Rockefeller's 'willingness to do what was in the best interests of the party and the country – and me', Ford admitted 'At the same time, I was angry with myself for showing cowardice in not saying to the ultraconservatives, "It's going to be Ford and Rockefeller, whatever the consequences"'.[67] Rockefeller's resignation was surrounded in speculation, both at the time and in historical treatments of this episode. Some observers suggested that Rockefeller voluntarily left the ticket because of his frustrations with the Ford White House (and Donald Rumsfeld in particular); or because Rockefeller's associates persuaded him that he could mount a successful presidential bid of his own by leaving Ford and Reagan to veto each other and emerge late in the day as a heavyweight compromise.[68] However, in an interview with Trevor Armbrister in October 1977, Rockefeller sought to end this speculation: '… if you want to get the record straight and he may not want to say this … he asked me to'.[69] When challenged by Armbrister to explain himself further and more clearly, Rockefeller concisely confirms that President Ford asked him 'To withdraw as Vice President'.

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[64] Box A4, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.
[65] James Cannon Papers. Ford Presidential Library.
[66] Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 328.
[67] Ibid
[68] Robert M. Teeter, Ford's Director of Research, opined that '… more of that decision came from Rockefeller than is generally accepted'. (Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 29).
[69] James Cannon Papers. Ford Presidential Library.

Rockefeller's claims are plausible. Rockefeller held significant support among liberals and a liberal-centrist coalition could provide a foundation for a Ford victory. However, Ford took the decision regarding Rockefeller when his campaign was making its transition between two broad strategies: deterrence and its appeal-based moves. By asking Rockefeller to step down, Ford was responding to this tension – abandoning Rockefeller could expand Ford's constituency and in so doing dissuade Ronald Reagan from running. Indeed, Ronald Reagan might be tempted to join the ticket, further reinforcing Ford's appeal among the conservative wing of the party. Rockefeller evaluated Ford's selection of Callaway as 'absurd' and Callaway's southern strategy as 'totally unrealistic'.[70] Rockefeller reflects that he should have told Ford that 'when Mr. Callaway delivers to you the Southern delegates, at that point I am off your ticket'.[71]

While Ford's made moves that reflected his embrace of conservative issue politics, the PFC recommended a different strategy – one that downplayed issues and accentuated President Ford's leadership credentials. Their idea was to transform Ford's image 'from that of a nice but ineffectual neighbour to a capable, tough, president.'[72] The PFC Campaign Plan of August 29, 1975 accepted that 'the American people will acquire a perception of the President and his ability to lead from the manner in which his campaign is conducted'.[73] In the 'Issues' section, the PFC selected President Ford, as a competent leader and honest man, as the central theme to promote. The paper details that 'In 1976, we find a public which is politically turned off by Watergate and related activities. It seeks a President who is honest, has a high level of integrity and who deals with the American people in a straight-forward manner'. The PFC extrapolated from the effects of Mayaguez by recommending this leadership strategy to the President. In correspondence to the President, the Committee emphasised the political importance of Ford's demonstration of initiative, command, and control at this moment:

> …some opportunities will probably occur during the next 14 months which will allow the President to take strong, positive positions on foreign policy matters. When those occasions arise, he should announce his policy and implement it in a crisp, precise manner which is demonstrative of great competence in this area … His handling of the Mayaguez incident was clearly a turning point in both the perception of his ability to handle his job as President and his ability to deal with foreign policy problems. Successful handling of issues dealing with war and peace clearly result in significant gains in public approval.[74]

It is also apparent that the campaign *decided* to keep substantive issues, including the foreign policy matters that were seized by Reagan later in the campaign, to the margins of Ford's nomination bid. Indeed, later in this document, Ford's political advisors instructed that 'every effort should be made to keep the campaign from becoming an ideological debate'.[75] The idea of downplaying issues was consistent with the Ford administration's 'no new programmes' policy, enunciated when inflation appeared to his administration's weightiest problem. Their dominant assumption was that '… as a candidate [Ford's] quality transcends

[70] Ibid
[71] Ibid
[72] John Robert Greene, 'A Nice Person Who Worked at the Job: The Dilemma of the Ford Image', in Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 641.
[73] Box A1, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.
[74] Box A1, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.
[75] Box A1, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.

ideological considerations'. [76] Their rationale was their belief that a valence strategy maximised the president's chances against his Democratic rival in the presidential election; and it would also improve the chances of the Republican Party uniting resolutely behind President Ford after he defeated Reagan's challenge.

These assumptions were only partially valid. Polling data consistently demonstrated that self-identified Republicans were outnumbered by Democrats, but these polls also evidenced a greater number of self-identified conservatives than liberals.[77] Ideological appeals could therefore help a Republican candidate to reverse the Democrats' structural advantage. As a mainstream conservative and a Republican, President Ford stood to gain less from an ideological contest than a liberal Democratic opponent, but not a Democrat perceived to be conservative.[78] In 1976, the latter scenario seemed the more likely. Since World War II, the Democrats had nominated a string of conservative leaning nominees in their attempts to hold together their fragile coalition of North-Eastern liberals and southern conservatives. Moreover, even when this policy was formulated, Ford's staff flagged a basic limitation: it 'stands in the way of the President's identification with the needs and aspirations of the American people'.[79]

More pressingly, Ford's nomination was far from guaranteed; and the effectiveness of the PFC's valence strategy in warding off a challenge was questionable because the president was widely perceived to lack independent strength and purpose. The PFC recognised that 'The President is considered a "decent human being"; an honest, straightforward person; a well-meaning, well-intentioned man who wants to do the right thing'. However, 'the public view of the Ford Administration is not yet one of positive strength. The image has too much of a defensive aspect and does not reflect the President's own deep concerns and purposes. This stereotype must be dissipated and a true Ford leadership image established.'[80] The PFC accurately identified Ford's image problems but the persistence of uncertainty regarding Ford's competence reflected more than the president's caricature as a bumbler. Its origins, and the reasons for its persistence, lay in the linkages between the Ford and Nixon Administrations, and in evaluations of Ford's judgment in pardoning his predecessor.

*(c) Reagan's Campaign Planning*

While the Ford team focused their efforts on deterring Reagan's challenge, Reagan readied himself for entry. Five months before the New Hampshire primary, and more than a month before his official declaration,

[76] Only two substantive issue areas were flagged by the PFC for a concentrated effort by the President. The first was 'bigness': public fears resulting from the combination of 'big business, big government, big labor'. The second issue, energy, became a key priority for the Ford Administration. Ford inherited Nixon's institutional drive for energy self-sufficiency – Project Independence. In his State of the Union Address in 1975, Ford established three national energy goals: a reduction in oil imports, greater energy market stability, and development of domestic energy sources. His proposals included a plan to exploit the resources of the US Outer Continental Shelf, improve energy efficiency in homes and businesses, and the creation of a strategic oil reserve. (Vito A.Stagliano, *A Policy of Discontent: The Making of a National Energy Strategy*).

[77] For instance, in a Gallup poll taken early in 1976, forty-five per cent of respondents described the political positions that they held as 'right of centre' (to varying degrees), while only twenty six per cent of respondents positioned themselves 'left of centre' (to varying degrees). In terms of party identification, however, the Democratic Party held a substantial lead over its rival. One quarter of respondents identified themselves 'Republicans' and forty four percent 'Democrats'. (Gallup Poll, February 27 – March 1).

[78] Gallup Poll, February 27 – March 1.

[79] *Campaign 1976 – Preliminary Analysis*, p. 3. Cheney Papers. Ford Presidential Library.

[80] Ibid, 4.

Reagan's campaign was in full swing. However, the Reagan team continued to present a public façade of indecision even when they were committed and preparing to contest President Ford's nomination; and Ford's advisers seemed to be taken in.[81]

Citizens for Reagan, the populist name chosen by Reagan's campaigners, combined former Nixon aides with operatives from conservative civic groups, including the American Conservative Union and Young Americans for Freedom. It recognised fully, and worked to exploit, the weakness of Ford's presidential authority without an electoral mandate.[82] Reagan's campaign concentrated on emphasising the Governor's ability to lead more competently than Ford. In their advertising strategy they stressed 'the aura of leadership, decisiveness and confidence which Governor Reagan already enjoys'. Substantiating further these leadership capacities, the advertising strategy referred to 'the Governor's thoughtful, far sighted and effective approach to problem-solving', and his record having 'handled successfully (via his 8 years as Governor of California) many of the problems we are now facing nationally'.

Beyond his experience and seriousness of purpose, Citizens for Reagan stressed that their candidate was a leader driven by values. For instance, invited to comment on past presidents he admired, Reagan espoused his perspective that 'A leader must have the ability to improve, to change, to adapt to new circumstances. But, that ability must be tempered by a deeply-rooted understanding of the need for continuity in basic principles and a dedication to fundamental values'.[83] Portraying his leadership philosophy as subtle yet purposeful, Reagan hoped to rebut criticisms of him as unsophisticated.[84]

Given their focus on the disparity between Reagan and Ford's leadership potentials, the dismissive reaction of Reagan's team to Ford's overtures regarding the vice presidency were unsurprising. Presenting the perspective of the Reagan team on Ford's decision to ask Rockefeller to withdraw from the ticket, Sears explained that 'the White House and the Ford campaign perceived the Reagan challenge as almost a purely ideological challenge to the President. But if the challenge was not purely ideological, and we [Reagan people] did not think it was, then getting rid of Nelson Rockefeller would not have appreciably added to the president's support in spite of Callaway's feelings to the contrary. In my view the Reagan challenge was a challenge to the

[81] Reagan delayed his announcement until November 20, 1975, four months after Ford's official entry. Reagan also had financial reasons for delaying his announcement. An early announcement would force him to renege on lucrative newspaper column and radio contracts as these would conflict with 'equal access' laws. (Kolodny, 'The 1976 Republican Nomination', 590). However, Sears offers a different explanation, arguing that their delayed official entry was to ensure that they could live off the publicity from entry to boost their prospects in New Hampshire (Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 27).

[82] David A. Keene, Reagan's Southern coordinator, explained that 'A couple of things happened during that period that convinced me that a Reagan candidacy could be viable. One was the criticism of Ford during various meetings of conservative members of the Senate … Gerald Ford at his most popular was subject to more criticism from members of the Senate than Richard Nixon had been even when he was in trouble. I think this illustrates the fact that one of the advantages of incumbency in any office is that once you've run and people have supported you, they perceive an attack on you as an attack on them, on their judgment. Mr. Ford had the disadvantage of never having asked people to make any kind of real psychological commitment to him, and I think that seriously undermined the strength of his incumbency'. (Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 38).

[83]'Leadership and the Presidency', Reagan for President, NEWS, July 1, 1980. Box 9, Deaver & Hannaford Papers. Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

[84] Reagan's team admitted the popularity of the caricature of their candidate as 'a programmatic conservative to whom all conclusions are pre-ordained by standard solutions'.( Deaver & Hannaford, Box 6. The Reagan Candidacy Advertising Strategy for 1980.)

president's ability to represent the party, to present an image of leadership, to present himself as the kind of candidate the party wanted.'[85] Indeed, Ford's actions created more problems than they solved:

> Far from solving anything for them, the Rockefeller change … served only to give people the idea that maybe there was something wrong with Mr. Ford's leadership, because he kept reacting to the challenger at the same time [that] he kept trying to ignore him. Many of the moves that the president was making helped us a great deal by improving the credibility of what we were up to.[86]

While the Ford campaign was exceptional in its degree of early disorganisation, Reagan's campaign also suffered organisational limitations. The campaign experienced 'growing pains' complicated by its two power bases – Michael Deaver and Peter Hannaford in LA, and John Sears and associates in DC. Press aide Lyn Nofziger 'like the man without a country, [is] caught in the middle. Nofziger was never close to Deaver and Hannaford; his style differs markedly from the low key Sears'.[87] In a related problem, the campaign had problems with their press relations. *The Political Animal* observed that Reagan 'has been insufficiently briefed, in general or on a daily basis'. Sears, the paper reports, 'does not run a tight ship, and one result is that practically everyone in the campaign except the receptionist and mailroom staff, is talking to the press. This not only undercuts Nofziger, the presumed spokesman, but the campaign itself'. More generally, 'Sears has credibility and integrity [but] is considered an increasingly weak administrator'. The result: 'staff infighting is already public, reminiscent of the disastrous McGovern '72 campaign'. Tellingly, even as New Hampshire loomed the organisation lacked a comprehensive fundraising operation.

### (III) NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY (FEBRUARY 24, 1976)

*By defeating Reagan at this critical juncture, Ford established himself as the leading candidate in the Republican race. This result was due to agency factors: the superior tactics used by Ford's New Hampshire campaign organisation and crucial mistakes by Reagan's.*

Both campaigns were fully aware of the stability effects associated with candidates' performance in early events, especially New Hampshire. Ford's strategists believed that if he lost New Hampshire, it would be unlikely that he would be able to win the nomination. Consequently, their 'Early Primary Strategy' demanded a concentrated effort in the state. For President Ford, recovery from defeat would be complex and arduous, but a strong performance would likely usher in a series of strong victories and a swift exit by Reagan.[88] Winning the early contests was therefore fundamental to the PFC's plans for rupturing Reagan's path to the nomination. Achieving this goal would also release resources – money, campaign planners, and field workers – for preparation for the Ford general election campaign. They allocated a disproportionate amount of financing to supporting Ford's effort in this state. Their budget of $130,000 for the state's 21 delegates

[85] Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 30.
[86] Ibid, 30.
[87] The Political Animal, Issue no. 131, January 23, 1976. Ford Presidential Library.
[88] The PFC delegate strategy also allowed for the possibility of a strong Reagan performance in New Hampshire, requiring the President to make a difficult rebound to eliminate him. Campaign resources – funds, time, and volunteer – were to be concentrated in the following states, highlighted because of their delegation sizes, ideological characteristics, and timing: Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Texas. (Box A1, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library).

amounted to $6190 per delegate, twice as much as allocated to the remaining 16 'priority one primary states' that consumed over 78 per cent of the PFC budget allocated to campaigning in state primaries and caucuses.[89]

Reagan's advisers also highlighted the importance of New Hampshire. Like Ford, they allocated to it a relatively large proportion of campaign resources.[90] For Reagan, New Hampshire provided special opportunities. With his amicable campaigning style this small state was fertile ground. Additionally, there were a number of Reagan-leaning states following New Hampshire, especially Florida and Illinois, where Reagan could reinforce the impression that he could defeat Ford. In short, at New Hampshire Reagan could deliver a serious, and possibly fatal, blow to Ford.

Reagan announced his New Hampshire entry late in November 1975 and benefited from the support of leading New Hampshire politicians, including Governor Meldrim Thomson and former Governor Hugh Gregg, and the assistance of their supporter networks.[91] William Loeb publisher of the Manchester Union Leader, the best known and largest of the New Hampshire newspapers, also backed Reagan.[92] On the stump Reagan spoke of the need to cleanse Washington politics of 'a buddy system that functions for its own benefit'.[93] Though he did not mention Ford, his intention was clear: Ford had spent decades in Washington politics. It appeared that Reagan's message, complemented by his effectiveness on the stump, was getting through. The Gallup polls showed that Reagan had moved from trailing Ford by 23 points in mid-October, 1975 to an 8 point lead in late November. The *Washington Post* commented that 'Challenger Ronald Reagan has surged ahead of President Ford as the choice of Republican voters and independents'.[94] Similarly, in its assessment of the situation, *Time* observed that 'There is little question that Reagan had outorganized and outdazzled Ford.'[95]

The Ford campaign tried to minimise the impact of Reagan's strong polling. Bo Callaway dismissed it as a temporary bounce following Reagan's entry announcement. William I. Greener, deputy White House press secretary explained that 'In any campaign there are ups and downs in the polls … As the President has said many times, he will continue to deal with the nation's problems, and, by doing his job, he will win both the nomination and the election'.[96] New Hampshire coincided with a noticeable upturn in a number of economic performance indicators, providing opportunities that Ford's advisers aimed to capitalise upon. His campaign

[89] Box A1, PFC Records.
[90] The Reagan campaign was more organised in allocating resources than accumulating them. Citizens for Reagan categorised primary and caucus states in order to facilitate an efficient allocation of resources – financial resources, the campaign committee's time, volunteer efforts, trips by the president. They generally allocated advertising dollars according to the number of convention delegates, percentage of contribution from the Nixon '68 vote (supported by 1970, 1972, and 1974 primary voting data).
[91] Meldrim Thompson was a popular governor with 55-31 approval ratings in January, 1976. Wanda M. Phelan Papers, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.
[92] Note however that the other eight daily newspapers in New Hampshire had a combined circulation 50 per cent larger than the Union Leader and were generally supportive of Ford. (Box 19, Cheney Papers. Ford Presidential Library).
[93] Witcover, *Marathon*, 92.
[94] December 12, 1975.
[95] March 8, 1976.
[96] *Washington Post*, December 12, 1975

analysed that 'Prosperity, in a political context, is a psychological issue which is difficult to measure in real terms … one fact seems clear … the level of economic activity is of less importance than the direction in which the economy is moving. All but the most pessimistic economists concede that the economy is now heading up and, barring the effect of increased inflation, is likely to continue in that direction for at least the next 18 months'.[97] However, their generalised campaign efforts highlighting improvements in economic prospects proved to be relatively ineffective.

Polling well below his expectations, and with his prospects of a safe nomination turning on New Hampshire success, Ford made radical changes in his ground operation in the state. Most significantly, Ford shifted the day-to-day running of the campaign away from Bo Callaway, who had failed to mobilise a sufficient number of volunteer workers, and did not know how best to employ their enthusiasm – he was relegated to the background as a coordinator. To organise activities, Ford recruited Stuart Spencer – described by *Time* as a 'savvy professional campaign organizer … [who] saved the situation' in New Hampshire.[98] In two weeks, Spencer supervised volunteers who contacted 60,000 Republican households and managed to identify 27,000 indifferent voters who were lobbied aggressively in the days preceding the vote. Much of Spencer's attention was focused on urban areas, which were generally neglected by Reagan's campaign. For instance, 'At Spencer's urging, Ford visited Dover, Keene, and Portsmouth the week before the election and sharpened his criticism of Reagan to attract the cities' many moderate Republicans. Ford portrayed him as an extremist and predicted that Reagan, if nominated, would lead the party to defeat in November'.[99]

With an effective and organised campaign team on the ground in New Hampshire, Ford was able to close the gap, almost imperceptibly. Though polls showed that there was little to separate the candidates on the eve of the primary, a lingering perception remained that Reagan would achieve a comfortable victory. Following the advice of his campaign staff, and in particular his New Hampshire Campaign Manager Hugh Gregg, Reagan decided to move his campaign to Illinois in the days before the primary.[100] Polls showed that the contest was evenly balanced, with only one percentage point separating Reagan and Ford in a January Market Opinion Research poll. Furthermore, a majority of people believed that the race would be close – 62 per cent of those who believed that Reagan would win anticipated that the race would be close.[101] However, Gregg believed the myth of a strong Reagan lead, rather than the up-to-date polling data.[102] This was a significant, and costly, error.

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[97] Box A1, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.
[98] Time, Monday March 8, 1976. How Ford Won and Reagan Lost. Spencer was instrumental to Reagan's gubernatorial success in 1966. Cannon alludes that Spencer resented Reagan's lack of gratitude for Spencer's services in this campaign. More generally, Cannon writes, 'The truth was that Reagan often took his best aides for granted, especially in the political arena'. (*Governor Reagan*, 409).
[99] Time, Monday March 8, 1976.
[100] Gregg believed that the key to Reagan's victory lay in this election-day mobilization, and that Reagan's presence would interrupt these efforts. (Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 413).
[101] PFC Records, Box C2. Ford Presidential Library.
[102] Richard Wirthlin's most recent polling, in the month before the primary, showed the large impact of campaigning by both candidates. Sears, who supported Gregg's contention, did not share Wirthlin's findings with others in the campaign. (Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 413).

Ford won the primary by a slender 1 per cent margin.[103] When the results were announced, Ford's narrow victory overturned prevailing expectations. Ford's campaign benefited from greatly exceeding these expectations, to the detriment of Reagan's prospects. Dick Cheney, Ford's chief of staff, explained later that 'We were deeply concerned when we went into it that fifty-one per cent wasn't going to be enough for us. But in the end we were perceived as the underdog, and that bailed us out'.[104] Similarly, Yang declared that 'The loss of New Hampshire was itself a devastating blow because it gave the initial momentum to Ford, but it also damaged Reagan's image as a strong contender.'[105]

Reagan's disappointing performance harmed his chances in the contests that followed New Hampshire. And evidently New Hampshire had legacy effects. *Time* stated that 'Callaway reported that because of the New Hampshire results, volunteer work was … up in Florida', and explained that because of this 'increase in the momentum of his campaign … the president had erased most of Reagan's 2-to-1 initial lead in the polls'.[106] In Florida, a state that had looked promising for Reagan, the president achieved an important victory, 53 per cent to 47. In Illinois Ford was again the victor, this time by a more comfortable margin, 59-40 per cent. 'The results' writes Witcover, 'barely kept [Reagan] alive' politically, and 'Talk of Reagan throwing in the towel was heard everywhere'.[107] John Sears offered his reflections on the impact of New Hampshire, and confirmed that the effects identified by independent observers were shared by Reagan's leading campaign operatives:

> 'We very quickly came to the belief that if we were going to run a campaign, we really had little alternative but to focus very directly on New Hampshire… Many people looked at Reagan as a presidential candidate and thought his support was limited … If we had won in New Hampshire, I think we would have won in Florida [March 9] and then in Illinois [March 16]. The week before the New Hampshire primary, our polling showed us ahead in Florida, then on the Saturday after the New Hampshire primary, the poll showed us eighteen points down, which gives you some idea of what momentum – or lack of it – can do… what happens matters less than the perception about what happens.'[108]

*Reagan's Foreign Policy Turn*

The Reagan campaign, though still alive, was lacking the momentum crucial to a challenger's strategy. The campaign was now $2m in debt.[109] Hannaford conveys the sense of desperation in the Reagan camp as the race moved to North Carolina:

> We were staring another defeat in the face, and if it came true, the perception of the news media would probably be that the campaign had lost its credibility and to continue would be futile. In

[103] David Chagall, Farley Yang and a number of journalists attribute Reagan's loss to his flawed proposal to reduce federal taxes by $90 billion by transferring federal social programmes to the states. Jeff Bell, a former political operative with the American Conservative Union who began working for Reagan near the end of his administration, constructed the federal tax cut idea and it was widely circulated before the New Hampshire primary. However, polling data demonstrates that its effects were in fact nearly neutral. Of the 77 per cent of respondents who had heard about Reagan's proposal, nearly equal numbers approved (33%) and disapproved (36%) of the approval. (Market Opinion research Polls, 1/76, Focus Group Report: Haverhill. PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library).
[104] Witcover, *Marathon*, 394.
[105] Farley Yang, 'Turning a Runaway into a Race: The Role of Foreign Policy Issues in the 1976 Republican Primaries'. Michigan Journal of Political Science, 7: 108-28 (1986).
[106] Time, Monday March 8, 1976.
[107] *Marathon*, 408.
[108] Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 33.
[109] Sears met secretly with Morton to discuss the possibility that Ford might pay back Reagan's debt if he withdrew after defeat in North Carolina.

> presidential politics, such abstractions can be as important as vote tallies. To make matters worse, we were running out of money.[110]

Responding to claims that Reagan's campaign strategy 'appeared erratic', Richard B. Wirthlin, Ronald Reagan's lead pollster, explained that 'it was really two-tiered … The first tier was heavily based upon developing momentum out of New Hampshire … The second tier of the strategy was to make a strong showing in Florida [March 9], North Carolina [March 23], and Texas [May 1]'.[111] Reagan's failure to implement the first tier implied that his hopes now turned exclusively on the second. Thus, Reagan's team refined its strategy in an attempt to regain viability for its candidate. The shift occurred as Reagan campaigned in Florida but the fruits of these efforts were realised in North Carolina, which marked a revival of Reagan's challenge. lever

Until the Florida primary, the Reagan campaign had sought to lever the uniqueness of Ford's political situation: that the president was an extraordinary incumbent, and one who had in the recent past demonstrated neither the appetite nor abilities to handle the rigors of the nation's highest executive office. Reagan, they argued, could lead better than Ford. Reagan's narrow defeat in New Hampshire was followed by greater defeats as Ford's successes buoyed his campaign and the perception that, despite his peculiar path to the presidency, he could attract broad support in a national campaign. In response to the straitened circumstances facing their candidate, the Reagan team made an important strategic shift in their preparations for the Florida primary campaign. While maintaining their original themes stressing Reagan's suitability for presidential leadership, they super-imposed a new foreign policy dimension to their strategy.

Reagan focused on unpopular Nixon-Ford foreign policy issues, and especially the state of American national defence, the administration's détente policies, and the Panama Canal. For instance, Reagan equated the legal status of the Canal Zone and Alaska. The Canal Zone 'is sovereign United States territory just the same as Alaska is and as the part of Texas that came out of the Gadsen Purchase and the states that were carved out of the Louisiana Purchase'. [112] Contrasting the positions of the Ford Administration and Reagan, the Christian Science Monitor 13 April, 1976 surmises that Ford and Kissinger 'indicate that the time has come at least to share control of this key waterway with the Panama of General Torrijos'. By contrast, Reagan's campaign mantra stressed that 'We bought it, we paid for it. It's ours and we should tell Torrijos that we are going to keep it'. Reagan, claims Bonafede, 'aroused the jingoisitic emotions of many voters' by claiming that the Administration was prepared to give up the Canal.[113]

However, as Bonafede explains in another piece, Reagan's creative issue manipulation occurred in a fragile issue context, ripe for the inventive approach pursued by his strategists.[114] The Republican contest had been

[110] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 106.
[111] Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 38.
[112] Dom Bonafede, National Journal, 8 No. 19, p. 640.
[113] Dom Bonafede, National Journal, 8 No. 19, p. 640.
[114] Dom Bonafede, National Journal, 8 No. 18.

dominated by 'tissue issues' which 'possess identical characteristics – they serve to inject life into an essentially dull campaign, they are irrelevant to the critical choices facing the nation and they are temporary in nature'.[115] Until New Hampshire, these issues included Ford's clumsiness, Reagan's $90 billion remark, and Rockefeller's accusation that communists had infiltrated the staff of Senator Henry M. Jackson, D-Washington.[116] However, Reagan had begun to crowd this unstable issue agenda with Ford's foreign policy problems:

> After falling behind in the early primaries, [Reagan] has hammered away at the relative strength of the U.S. military compared with the Russians, the personal role of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger in the formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy, and the Administration's stance on the Panama Canal.

Bonafede continues, and indeed goes too far, by arguing that the only issues of pressing concern were domestic problems such as health, busing, abortion, education, and the economy. Foreign policy problems, and defence in particular, often cannot be solved without significant anticipation and preparation for potential crisis situations and slowly evolving relations between states. However, Bonafede usefully flagged the peculiar malleability of the issue space in 1976 and Reagan's purposive efforts to control its development from March. Ford, by contrast, was forced to react to Reagan's exaggerated claims. Bonafede explains, for instance, that 'In contending that the United States has dropped behind the Soviet Union as a military power, Reagan has raised a question that requires a qualitative answer involving highly complex assessments. Hence, Ford is put on the defensive to prove what is almost impossible to prove …' Concurrently, Reagan left little doubt about his priorities in this realm. In an article entitled *What He'd Be Like as President*, Donald D. Holt explained that 'Foreign policy in a Reagan Administration can be summed up in one word – strength. He believes we've lost it, and he wants it back …'[117]

Reagan had found a Ford weak spot and his sharpened attacks damaged the President. At a lunch meeting with Bo Callaway in July, 1975, Barry Goldwater had warned, presciently, that 'the subject of détente is becoming extremely serious … Reagan will use détente as a major issue in the months ahead … the American people generally feel that we are getting nothing in return for our cooperation with the Soviet Union … we need to get something tangible in return or back off from détente'.[118] This opinion was echoed within the Ford campaign team, with Fred Slight advising before the Florida primary that 'The President must get tougher on the USSR and détente with the Communists'.[119] Some argued that the roots of Ford's problems were deeper and lay in the essence of détente. Shulziner argues that 'The process of détente was flawed from the beginning, for Richard M. Nixon and Henry Kissinger raised public expectations beyond what the actual

[115] Dom Bonafede, National Journal, 8 No. 18.
[116] Rockefeller's accusation prompted Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, D-Montana, to demand that the Vice President verify or refute them, Rockefeller subsequently apologised, but his words had already embarrassed the Ford campaign.
[117] Fortune, May 19, 1980. Box 10, Fred C. Ickle Papers. Hoover Institution, Stanford University.
[118] Box A4, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.
[119] Box A4, PFC Records. Ford Presidential Library.

new relationship with the Soviet Union would bear…. The deterioration continued in the Ford administration'.[120]

On the defensive, Ford made a TV broadcast on 13 April, 1976 in which he confronted Reagan's assertions about national defence under his administration[121]:

> All of us should welcome informed discussion on the vitally important question of national defense. But instead of informed discussion, we hear election-year oratory substituted for the facts about defense.
>
> Irresponsible critics talk about our defense, but never discuss our defense policy. That is naïve – or worse, an intentional oversight. To compare the military strength of the United States with that of the Soviet Union, purely on a number basis, is shallow thinking – or worse, deliberately misleading …
>
> The fact is, our needs are different from those of the Soviets. The Soviet Union is nearly three times the size of the United States. It is largely surrounded by unfriendly countries. The USSR must maintain a huge standing army just to patrol its land borders, which are by far the longest in the world.
>
> America has no such need. We have friends to the north and south, vast oceans on the east and west, and strong allies across those oceans.
>
> The Soviet strength is in numbers. Our strength is in highly sophisticated and technically superior strategic weapons, offensive and defensive.
>
> The question is not, 'Who has more of what?' The real question is, 'Does the United States of America have the capability to deter aggression, to maintain the peace, and to protect our national security?'
>
> The answer is, 'Yes, we do'. The truth is, the United States is absolutely unsurpassed by any other nation in military capability.

Ford attacked Reagan for compromising US national security by pursuing the course which he has chosen:

> Let no one foster erroneous ideas about our strength. Miscalculations could have terrible consequences, when the capability exists to destroy the world many times over. All it might take to unleash our power is the wrong man in this office. All it might take, in Moscow, would be the mistaken impression that our desire for peace conceals weakness.

However, Ford remained on a defensive stance, responding in tone and action to Reagan's charges. His administration was forced to take harder positions against Castro and Cuba during his campaigning in Florida, repudiating (valid) suggestions that his administration was considering cultural exchanges with Cuba to test the possibility of full diplomatic ties; and delayed negotiations with the Soviets on nuclear arms limitations.[122] Dennis Farley, writing in the Wall Street Journal on April 29 claimed that 'examination indicates that, directly, and indirectly, Mr. Reagan has influenced a number of Ford administration policies, forcing the President to modify some decisions and to postpone others'.

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[120] Firestone and Ugrinsky, *Gerald Ford*, 407.
[121] Box C2, Political Office: Stuart Spencer State Files. Ford Presidential Library.
[122] Wall Street Journal, April 29, 1976.

## (IV) NORTH CAROLINA PRIMARY (MARCH 23, 1976)

*The North Carolina primary was a critical juncture because Reagan's victory in this state resurrected his campaign. Reagan won because of agency factors: Reagan's tactical shift to exploit perceptions of Ford's weakness in foreign policy, and the decision by Ford's campaign to limit its activities to North Carolina.*

Reagan entered the North Carolina primary against a backdrop of disappointing results and important defeats. His prospects appeared bleak, and rumours abounded that Reagan's exit from the race was imminent. And thus his victory in this state became critical to the resurrection of his candidacy.

Reagan benefited from the support of Senator Jesse Helms, though Helms promised the Ford campaign that he 'will not run damaging opposition and will join in supporting the President after the convention …' Even with these assurances from Helms, Ford's team on the ground in North Carolina was more fearful of the broad conservative grassroots support for Reagan. 'If the primary was tomorrow, North Carolina would go for Reagan …', Stan Paris noted in correspondence to Callaway. He added that 'Reagan is considered to be more conservative than Ford', and that this was especially important to grassroots supporters.[123]

Responding to the changing competitive environment, Ford's team campaigned less aggressively in North Carolina. They hoped to avoid alienating further Reagan's support base and to give the Californian space for a dignified tactical withdrawal. Dick Cheney, reminiscing on this decision, laments that '… it was our most serious mistake, easing off in North Carolina'.[124] The logic behind this tactical decision by Ford's team was sound. However, it assumed that Reagan held the preferences and perceptions of many of those around him: that his time was up, and that a negotiated exit could offer him more than forced defeat. Yet, in spite of his diminishing chances, Reagan remained stubborn. Furthermore, and unbeknown to all of the key players in the contest, and even the most prescient observers, Reagan's critique of Ford's foreign policy – initiated while campaigning in Florida – was damaging the President.

Reagan's 52-46 victory on March 23 came as a shock. This sharp reversal against Ford confounded expectations and gave Reagan's campaign new life when it appeared doomed. 'The critical importance of Reagan's victory in the North Carolina primary … cannot be overstated', writes Kolodny.[125] Commenting on the 'changed complexity of the race' in the closing primaries, Teeter explained that 'North Carolina changed it immensely, and then things began to snowball. Many of the primaries followed exactly the same pattern … After North Carolina we got into a series of losses in Texas, Indiana, Alabama, Nebraska, and a couple of other Southern primaries, and then it was more of a contest than it had been even right before New Hampshire.'[126]

[123] Memo, December 5, 1975, to Bo Callaway from Stan Paris. Political Office, Box 10. Ford Presidential Library.
[124] Witcover, *Marathon*, 411.
[125] 'The 1976 Republican Nomination', 594.
[126] Moore and Fraser, *Campaign for President*, 44.

Dom Bonafede also emphasised the path-changing potential of Reagan's North Carolina victory. He commented that 'the North Carolina primary has had a decisive impact on the Republican campaign ... North Carolina was to Reagan what New Hampshire was to Ford. It was the former California governor's first taste of victory, and occurred at a time when his campaign needed a psychological liftoff. It further exposed the weakness in his opponent and proved that Reagan was indeed a viable candidate, who could put together a viable campaign'.[127] Following immediately this victory, the Reagan campaign cobbled together an appeal for funds to be televised on March 31 – it raised $1.5m.[128]

### (V) TEXAS PRIMARY (MAY 1, 1976)

*The Texas primary was a critical juncture because Reagan's victory triggered his sweep of the South's primaries. Reagan defeated Ford in this state because of agency factors, and especially his campaign's increasing foreign policy focus.*

Texas's primary followed immediately after Reagan's shock victory in North Carolina. The political terrain suited Reagan and the contest – in a large, conservative state – offered him the possibility of demonstrating that his support in North Carolina was not anomalous. For Ford, Texas offered the chance to halt Reagan's resurgence. Furthermore, the state was holding its first ever presidential primary, making the outcome less predictable than in other primary states. Spending in excess of $1 million in the state, and with phone banks in the counties with heavy concentrations of registered Republicans, Ford held an organisational edge over Reagan.[129] However, on election-day a flood of cross-over Democrats voted in the open primary for Reagan who won a sweeping victory winning all ninety-six delegates at stake.

Reagan benefited from the faltering Wallace effort. Fred Slight observed the efforts by Reagan's team in Texas to court independents and Democrats: 'Democrats and independents are being reminded that they may vote in the GOP primary, since there is no partisan registration … As the Wallace campaign sputters, Reagan appears to be moving to fill the void …'[130] Slight attached Reagan campaign literature, 'Reasons for Reagan', in which Reagan continues his foreign policy emphasis. On détente Reagan states that 'too often we act as if a concession on our side – with none by them – is automatically helpful to the process as a whole'. On defence generally, Reagan lamented that 'Today, we are in danger of being surpassed by a nation that has never made any effort to hide its hostility to everything we stand for … To be second is to be last'.

Ford's team had analysed that 'Texas is less of a foreign policy and national defense oriented state than the previous primary states. Economic and agricultural problems are of greater concern'.[131] And with Ford's high 72-17 approval rating and 14 per cent preference margin over Reagan, they expected the President to perform

[127] National Journal, 14, April 3, 1976, p. 448.
[128] Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 426.
[129] Alexander, *Financing the 1976 Election*, 310.
[130] Box C2: Political Office, Stuart Spencer, Florida (1), Memo from Fred Slight, Subject Reagan Texas.
[131] MOR Texas Primary Survey (Preliminary Survey). PFC Committee Records, C11, Political Office: Primary Campaign Coordinators' File S. Carolina.

strongly. However, even their polling revealed that foreign policy held greater importance than they seemed to realise. 41 per cent of their sample believed that US military strength was inferior to the USSR's, and only 14 per cent thought it to be stronger.[132] Texans felt that on this critical issue the US was in a precarious position – a fear that weakened Ford's standing and strengthened his rival's. And high profile events undermined President Ford's foreign policy credentials. Testimony from Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker made the national news when he contradicted recent assurances by the president to admit that he had received instructions directing him to give up US control of the canal over a reasonable period of time.[133]

After further victories in Indiana, Alabama, and Georgia, three nights later, it was clear that Reagan held the momentum in the contest and the pressure mounted on the viability of Ford's candidacy. It is often suggested that Reagan won in the South because he was more conservative than Ford. However, polling evidence suggests a pervasive role for foreign policy. A Gallup poll of April 27 recorded that the South gave the president a 51 per cent approval rating, compared with 44 per cent in the East and 48 per cent in the Midwest. By contrast, consider opinions concerning Kissinger. 61 per cent of Reagan's supporters believed that Kissinger made too many concessions in his negotiations with the Soviets. Clearly, therefore, as the campaign progressed, Reagan convinced his supporters that a radical change in foreign policy was imperative to the country's future. After Reagan's North Carolina victory, the American Conservative Union, a conservative lobbying group, declared that 'Reagan's victory was not only over Ford, but also Kissinger, détente, and a new treaty with Panama'.[134]

### (VI) MICHIGAN PRIMARY (MAY 18, 1976)

*The Michigan primary election was a critical juncture because Ford's victory enabled him to halt Reagan's late surge in the race. The predominant cause of this result was Ford's native son appeals (agency factors).*

On the back of a number of defeats, it was imperative – though not certain – that Ford win in his home state. As Hannaford opined 'Ford was seen as having to win his home state or he would be finished'.[135] Reagan entered Michigan with optimism from his extraordinary comeback. Furthermore, Michigan, like Texas, was an open primary permitting cross-over Democrats to vote for Reagan. Indeed, in Michigan, primary voters didn't even have to declare publicly their allegiance, and could choose the primary contest – Republican or Democratic – that they wished to vote in once they were inside the polling booth. With the Democratic race seemingly decided, there was a real possibility that the large pro-Wallace support in the state could cross-over to the benefit of Reagan. With these factors in mind, Witcover declared that 'the Michigan primary on May 18 loomed as a potential disaster for President Ford'.[136]

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[132] MOR Texas Primary Survey (Preliminary Survey). PFC Committee Records, C11, Political Office: Primary Campaign Coordinators' File S. Carolina.
[133] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 114.
[134] Yang, 'Turning a Runaway into a Race', 21.
[135] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 116.
[136] Witcover, *Marathon*, 422.

Reagan appealed directly to Wallace's core supporters, criticizing school busing as a 'failed social experiment' and advocated re-instating school prayers: 'I've told people that if we got government out of the classroom, we might get God back in'.[137] His campaign in the state, chaired by state senator John Welborn, compiled profiles of each district, including recent election results.[138] He also continued to emphasise his interpretation of Ford's foreign policy. In a direct attempt to woo Wallace Democrats, Reagan, at a cocktail reception in Kalamazoo, explained that because the nation's key problems 'cross party lines … [he expected] the people will cross party lines'.[139]

Ford's leaders in the state initially attempted to discredit Reagan's cross-over strategy, arguing that encouraging cross-over voting diluted the purity of the Republican Party nomination contest. According to William McLaughlin, Michigan state party chairman, 'By encouraging Democrats to create mischief in our primary [Governor Reagan] severely damages our vital two-party system. It is and must remain the prerogative of a political party to choose its own candidates … [The cross-over] tactic makes a mockery out of our party's nominating process and seriously threatens the destruction of the Republican Party'.[140] However, Republicans had secured majorities in Michigan state elections for decades by downplaying partisan divisions in a state dominated by blue-collar workers employed by the state's significant automobile industry. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Ford's strategists soon began to appeal directly to Democrats and independents. 'I want every person registered in this state', Ford pleaded, 'to vote for me, whether they call themselves Democrats, Republicans, or independents'.[141] Ford's native son appeals and this change of tactic were sufficient for the President to carry his home state by a weighty margin of 65 per cent to Reagan's 34 per cent, gaining 55 of the state's delegates to Reagan's 29.

## (VII) REAGAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE (JULY 26, 1976)

*Reagan's choice of his vice-presidential nominee was a critical juncture because it represented his last attempt to fracture support for Ford. The decision was an unconstrained choice by a candidate.*

Ford entered the national convention with a plurality of delegate votes, but without enough for a guaranteed first round majority. The *Washington Post* put Ford at 1,099 delegates and Reagan at 1,038 with 122 uncommitted. The *New York Times* judged the contest to be even closer – 1,102 to 1,063.[142] However, it was clear from both accounts that either candidate held a chance of winning – though Ford's was distinctly stronger than Reagan's because of the lead he established early in the primary season.

[137] Witcover, *Marathon*, 422.
[138] Ronald Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 357. Reagan Presidential Library.
[139] Witcover, *Marathon*, 422.
[140] Witcover, *Marathon*, 423-424.
[141] Witcover, *Marathon*, 424.
[142] Craig Shirley, *Reagan's Revolution*.

Within striking distance, but acutely aware that the status quo favoured President Ford, Reagan made a potential game-changing manoeuvre.[143] In contrast to most candidates aspiring for the presidency, Reagan wanted to decide on his choice of vice-presidential candidate before the start of convention proceedings. By doing so he hoped to avoid the risks associated with a rushed choice, and – with the close rivalry of both candidates in 1976 – gain advantages by either reinforcing or expanding his constituency with his vice-presidential choice. Furthermore, by making public his choice for vice president, Reagan would put pressure on Ford to do the same, and the President's choice could be controversial as Ford straddled ground between Republican conservatives and moderates. By contrast, Reagan had made it known that he believed a national ticket was only credible, and would be most effective, if both president and vice-president shared similar political philosophies: 'I do not believe you choose someone of an opposite philosophy in hopes he'll get you some votes you can't get yourself, because that's being false with the people who vote for you and your philosophy'.[144]

Reagan assigned Sears and Laxalt, two men more concerned with nomination and election victory than ideological congruence, to the task of researching potential candidates. Restricting their analysis to governors and senators – they agreed that there were no Republican representatives of sufficient stature – they decided that Richard Schweiker was the best possible candidate. Schweiker, a senator from Pennsylvania with a moderate voting record, reasoned Sears and Laxalt, could expand Reagan's appeal beyond its conservative base, and in particular improve Reagan's chances of gaining support from North-Eastern states. They hoped that the choice of Schweiker might also have the immediate effect of fracturing the Pennsylvania delegation, bringing twenty or so delegates into the Reagan column. Reagan was open to their bold idea, even if it forced him to renege on an earlier promise to choose an ideologically congruent running mate; and after a lengthy meeting with Schweiker on July 24, he offered him the job.

However, Pennsylvania did not break ranks, as Reagan's campaign leaders had hoped. Immediately after Reagan's press conference announcing his choice for the Republican vice presidential nomination, Drew Lewis, Schweiker's former campaign manager and leader of the Pennsylvania delegation, telephoned President Ford to confirm that his delegation remained firmly behind the president. Furthermore, some of Reagan's conservative support felt uneasy about his announcement of Schweiker as his running mate. In particular, the Mississippi delegation, headed by Clarke Reed, which had been previously uncommitted, now pledged its votes for Ford following Reagan's 'betrayal'. Governor Meldrim Thompson of New Hampshire, who had campaigned energetically for Reagan in his state's primary election, declared that 'It is a sad day in American history when a public leader of Reagan's stature would abandon all that he has stood for'.[145]

[143] Cannon suggests that Sears forced Reagan's hand after he learned that CBS News was planning to announce that Ford would win the nomination. (*Governor Reagan*, 429).
[144] Witcover, *Marathon*, 456.
[145] The Muskegon Chronicle, no date. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

The Schweiker move, admitted Sears, was a desperate one. He claims however that Reagan had little choice – only by forcing Ford into a position where he would lose support would it be possible for Reagan to seize victory. Unable to force the president to commit to a controversial choice, Reagan went down to a narrow defeat by 1187 to 1070 votes.

## 9 THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1976

While the Republican Party decided between two leading contenders, the Democratic Party hosted the aspirations of a dozen. In a January 1976 editorial, the *New York Times* outlined a rough comparative standing, grouping as 'likely' nominees Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington, Senator Bayh of Indiana, Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia, and Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. A number of other politicians held a 'conceivable chance', including Ambassador Sargent Shriver, Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma, and Representative Morris K. Udall of Arizona, while other contenders – most notably George Wallace – were deemed 'unlikely' by the paper.[1] This multitude of viable candidates made the nomination unpredictable. The Times explained that 'each of the candidates considered "likely" nominees believes that he has a strategy that will carry him through the initial skirmishing and the final competition for the nomination in the concluding primaries'. As they pursued these strategies and sought to rupture their rivals', clashes between the candidates were inevitable, and the results from these encounters were uncertain.

This indeterminacy was exacerbated by additional factors, including Wallace's presence, that affected individual candidates' planning and prospects. A notable absence in this setting was a dominant issue – one that could eliminate candidates who held few attachments to it, and structure competition between the remainders. Unemployment and inflation, though salient, did little to differentiate any candidate from his rivals.

With the contest likely to be open and fluid, several commentators predicted a closely fought campaign. Indeed, a brokered convention was a widespread expectation. Samuel Huntington anticipated that because a clear route to nomination by simple majority would quickly become impossible for any candidate, the bargaining would take place even before the delegates convened in New York on July 12.[2] Based on identical reasoning, Robert Strauss, Democratic Party Chairman, before the primary season began, mooted the idea of appointing a committee of party leaders to conduct structured brokering sessions.[3] The expected beneficiaries from a deadlock, according to most observers, would be Hubert Humphrey or Edward Kennedy.

[1] *New York Times*, January 12, 1976.
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid

Humphrey, who President Ford expected to emerge as his Democratic rival, had recently staged a Washington renaissance after losses to Nixon in 1968 and McGovern in 1972. His chairmanship of the Joint Economic Committee – where he promoted housing subsidies, national health insurance, and long-term energy planning – marked Humphrey's re-emergence as a leading liberal spokesman.[4] Though he admitted that he would accept a draft by the party, he was unwilling to thrust himself into the arduous primaries circuit for delegates' commitments. A brokered convention was his route to the nomination, and with the dynamics of the contest as they were, Humphrey's supporters thought his chances to be good.

Throughout 1975 Senator Kennedy remained adamant that he was unwilling to seek or accept his party's presidential nomination. His denials owed to a combination of personal circumstances that were publicly known: his family's fears about a presidential run by another Kennedy son, his wife's emotional problems, and the adjustment of Teddy, Jr. to the amputation of his lower right leg in 1973 to arrest bone cancer. Moreover, public scrutiny of his actions at Chappaquiddick would intensify if he declared his candidacy. However, a number prominent Democrats believed that Kennedy would accept a genuine draft at an appropriate time in advance of, or during, the convention. Indeed, as Time observed, a last-minute Kennedy draft could help to contain the political fallout from Chappaquiddick by limiting the time for probing the incident.[5] James MacGregor Burns, a Kennedy biographer, interpreted support for Kennedy's rivals to be fickle. While a number of candidates had been branded stalking horses for Humphrey, Burns believed Humphrey himself to be a stalking horse for Kennedy.[6]

Carter's successful run for the nomination was, in at least two respects, exceptional. Firstly, Carter eliminated his rivals relatively early, and thereby precluded the possibility of a brokered convention and the candidacies – Humphrey's and Kennedy's – premised on it. As Time opined, 'the conventional wisdom [was that] the process was going to be a marathon shambles, producing nearly five months of furious activity but probably settling nothing ... Suddenly, only a third of the way through the obstacle course, the race was all but over'.[7] Secondly, Carter's coalition of supporters was exceptionally diverse. Eschewing the liberalism of the Democratic Party's political and intellectual elite, Carter's constituency was an amalgam of small-town and rural voters, blue-collar white ethnics, fiscally conservative Democrats who had deserted their party to vote for Nixon in 1972, Wallace sympathisers, and urban blacks. Without an overarching philosophy to connect these groups, Carter's was an assorted coalition, even by the historical standards of the Democratic Party.[8] As startling as these facts were to seasoned observers and commentators, for Carter, these outcomes were the intentional culmination of four years of careful planning and disciplined execution. With his rivals attempting to discredit his effort while it was nascent and intensifying their efforts as he gathered momentum, Carter's activities anticipated, and responded to, his opponents' attacks. His success relative to theirs was a result of

[4] Time, p. 3, May 10, 1976.
[5] Time, April 7, 1975.
[6] *New York Times*, April 12, 1976.
[7] Time, p. 10, May 10, 1976.
[8] Traditionally, the Democratic Party has been an 'outsiders' party, but one with a liberal core. See for instance Jo Freeman 'The Political Culture of the Democratic and Republican Parties', Political Science Quarterly, 101: 3 (1986).

better overall planning on the part of the candidate and his campaign, and in particular greater accuracy in the assumptions underpinning his campaign activity and a highly refined sensitivity to the importance of timing in determining candidates' divergent prospects. In combination, these capacities enabled Carter to maximise the benefits from his unique identity characteristics – his Southern roots, Christian evangelicalism, and lack of Washington experience. These features of his political identity were not unambiguous qualities, but by planning early to weave these elements into a narrative that broadened, rather than diminished, his political appeal, Carter converted them largely into assets. By concentrating his deployment of these identity resources at important junctures, and combining them effectively with traditional campaigning activities, Carter forced – systematically – the exit of his opponents and guaranteed his nomination at the national convention in July. (See Table 9.1 below).

Carter's was a three-staged rise. Firstly, Carter needed to establish credibility – and his victory in the 1970 gubernatorial election in Georgia was a crucial platform in this effort. In his campaign and as governor, Carter navigated the racial issues that dominated Southern politics in ways that appeased both blacks and conservative whites; an achievement that eluded most Southern politicians, and one that cast Carter into a small subset of Southern politicians seriously considered as a potential national leader by Democratic politicians beyond the region. However, even after a term as governor, Carter remained a marginal figure in the national Democratic Party, and credibility as a presidential candidate followed only after early successes in Iowa and New Hampshire, in accordance with his rigorous campaign plan. Only after he trumped generally held expectations at these junctures did media observers and his political rivals devote sustained attention to Carter's candidacy. For Carter's rivals, the rush was on to emerge from the residual crowd to compete against the new front-runner, and to attack Carter to slow his progress. This marked a second phase – a competitive response to Carter's emergence, marked by concentrated efforts by his rivals to pull back the competition's leading performer. In combination, their efforts relegated Carter to a poor fourth in the critical Massachusetts primary, on the eve of the Florida primary. With Carter's advance interrupted, the South loomed large; and Carter's struggle for the South against George Wallace could either kill his candidacy or provide him with a significant proportion of the votes he needed for victory. The South therefore became a crucial pivot, and Carter's victories in Florida and North Carolina established him firmly as Wallace's successor as the South's representative in presidential politics. His accumulation of Southern delegates, added to his existing number, left him clear of his rivals, and the competition entered a final phase where Carter cracked a blocking coalition by existing and new liberal contenders.

Table 9.1 Critical Junctures in Democratic Nomination, 1976

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE | AGENT | NATURE OF CAUSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Georgia Gubernatorial Election** | November 3, 1970 | Carter wins a position from which he can aspire realistically for presidency. | A, though contributory S | Carter | A (Carter): issue positioning and campaign activities (Identity, Tactics); |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | S: actions of a non-agent (Sanders) |
| **Iowa Caucuses** | January 19, 1976 | Carter pulls away from large, chasing pack, most of whom do not enter. | A > A | Carter; Bayh; Harris; Udall; Jackson | A (Carter): issue positioning and campaign organisation (Identity, Tactics, Management);<br><br>A (others): (Tactics, Management) |
| **New Hampshire Primary** | February 24, 1976 | Carter scores significant victory in bellwether state. | A > A | Carter; Bayh; Udall | A (Carter): issue positioning and campaign organisation (Identity, Tactics, Management);<br><br>A (others) |
| **Massachusetts Primary** | March 2, 1976 | Carter's opponents frustrate his rise by attacking his 'fuzziness'. | A > A | Carter; Jackson; Wallace; Udall | A (Jackson): campaign tactics (Tactics, Management);<br><br>A (Carter and others): (Identity, Tactics, Management) |
| **Florida Primary** | March 9, 1976 | Carter defeats Wallace, and establishes himself as South's presidential hopeful. | A > A | Carter; Jackson; Wallace | A (Carter): issue positioning and campaign activity (Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (others): (Tactics, Identity, Management) |
| **North Carolina Primary** | March 23 | Carter eliminates Wallace. | A > A | Carter; Wallace | A (Carter): campaign activity (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Wallace): (Identity, Tactics) |
| **Wisconsin and New York Primaries** | April 6 | Carter defeats Udall in Wisconsin and Udall exits; narrow victory for Jackson in New York. | A > A | Carter; Jackson; Udall | A (Carter): campaign activities (Identity, Management, Tactics)<br><br>A (Udall): (Identity, Tactics) |
| **Pennsylvania Primary** | April 27 | Carter eliminates Jackson. | A > A | Carter; Jackson | A (Carter): campaign activities (Identity, Management, Tactics)<br><br>A (Jackson): (Identity, Tactics) |

Key:

(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

*Establishing Credibility*

Like all presidential aspirants, Carter struggled with a recognition handicap – in order to compete effectively he needed to become a public figure, a leader of national stature. Gaining a high political office would help, but alone was insufficient. Even in 1975, having served a full term as Governor of Georgia, Carter remained a minor figure in national politics. His national prestige increased drastically in response to his aggressive campaigning activities in preparation for the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire. However, the challenge to

a Southern politician aspiring to the presidency was particularly steep, and involved passing a demanding test on race. Did the candidate's stands on racial questions align him with his deviant region, or the more liberal tendencies of the Democratic Party beyond the South? Since the Civil War, only one Southerner – Lyndon Johnson – won nomination and election to the presidency, and Johnson's success occurred despite his Southern roots: he inherited his first term by the assassination of his predecessor, and purposefully accentuated his Western traits – and downplayed his Southern identities – during a 1964 campaign that presaged sweeping civil rights reform. This strategy was a plausible one for Johnson, a long-standing Washingtonian whose roots were Texan and towards the Western periphery of that state. For Carter, however, there simply was no possibility of masking his multifaceted Southern identity: his birth in Plains, Georgia – the Deep South, in a community scarred by the legacies of segregation; his occupation as a peanut farmer – a business and crop with heavy racial connotations; his rise through local and state legislative and executive offices – in a politics infused with race. To win nationally, Carter would have to persuade potential supporters outside the South that he could be trusted on racial questions. And, as veteran *Washington Post* journalist Michael Novak explained, Northern elites were sceptical. Indeed, those that knew of Carter tended to be baffled: 'The source of discomfort is that they do not know at first hand the pressures that shaped him, his inner demons and his inner angels. They can't confidently imagine scenarios of various pressures upon him and predict how he will act'.[9]

## (I) GEORGIA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION (NOVEMBER 3, 1970)

*The Georgia gubernatorial election in 1970 was a critical juncture in the Democratic race of 1976 because it launched Carter's career as a high-profile political figure. Its result was due primarily to agency factors: Carter's decision to campaign as more conservative than his rival (Carl Sanders). However, Sanders's identity choices were a contributing, though complementary, factor to Carter's win.*

In 1962, Carter was elected to the Georgia Senate, and in 1966 at the end of his second term, Carter made plans to run for Congress. However, after the leading Democratic candidate for governor, Ernest Vandiver, was forced to withdraw from the contest following a heart attack, Carter entered, supported mainly by young Democratic politicians in the state. In the primary election, Carter came third by a narrow margin and failed to progress to the run-off between the first and second placed candidates.[10] At a meeting with his campaign team immediately after his defeat, they reached an implicit agreement that he would run again in 1970. This time Carter resolved to prepare full-time:

> From 1966 through 1970, I worked with more concentration and commitment than ever before in my life. I tried to expand my interests in as many different directions as possible, to develop my own seed business into a profitable and stable enterprise, and to evolve a carefully-considered political strategy to win the governor's race in 1970.[11]

[9] Time, p. 4, May 10, 1976.
[10] Lester Maddox finished first, ahead of former governor Ellis Arnall.
[11] Carter, *Why Not The Best?*, 115

The RNC report on Carter's activities between 1967 and 1970 'reveals that Jimmy Carter had only one goal in mind: to win the governor's office in November 1970'.[12] Carter's entrenchment in Georgian community life – through his farm work, membership of local chambers of commerce, and church activity, provided him with a broad base for extending his social connections.[13] By 1969 he had hired key strategists Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell; and William Hamilton, a professional pollster based in Washington, to map political opinions in the state. Additionally, Carter persuaded his cousin Hugh to join his campaign as chairman. Hugh Carter was 'an old-style politician with solid conservative credentials', who had remained detached from Carter's 1966 bid, and his recruitment expanded Carter's appeal to conservative voters.[14]

The strong favourite for the 1970 gubernatorial election was former Democratic Governor Carl E. Sanders, who benefited from widespread endorsements from the state's political elite. He had served as governor between 1963 and 1967, but was ineligible to run for re-election because of the term limit law then in effect. Sanders was a 'New South' moderate who had worked to improve education, the environment, and co-operated with the federal government in the de-segregation of Georgian political and social institutions. In September, 1969 Carter trailed Sanders 53-21 but he continued to campaign intensively.[15] During four years of campaigning Carter made 1800 speeches and estimated that that he and wife Rosalynn shook hands with more than 600,000 – more than half of the state's eligible voting population.[16]

As the election neared, Carter launched a multi-pronged attack on Sanders, and made charges against his opponent's wealth and connections with Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, and other national Democratic leaders. Most significantly, however, Hamilton urged Carter to move to occupy the conservative issue space and 'thus put himself between Sanders and the electorate'.[17] Both Carter and Sanders were perceived to be 'a little more liberal than the bulk of the electorate' but whereas Sanders was well known, Carter was not. Based on this research, Carter played to the anti-segregation sentiments of the state. With his rival clearly associated with desegregation, Carter – who was not himself a segregationist – made statements that appealed to this audience.[18] Sanders outspent his opponent, Glad confirms, but Carter 'had the more powerful theme'.[19]

In a powerfully symbolic gesture, Carter was photographed with George Wallace and Lester Maddox. To emphasise by contrast, Carter's campaign aides handed out photographs of Sanders casually associating with black basketball players. Carter feared that Sanders would sweep Georgia's black votes; and as his duel with Sanders intensified, new radio advertisements promoting the candidacy of black lawyer C.B. King were broadcast throughout the state – but they were not paid for by King. Carter and his staff denied responsibility

[12] 'Jimmy Carter's Career, 1967-1970', RNC Research Division. (Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 876. Reagan Presidential Library).
[13] Betty Glad, *Jimmy Carter, In Search of the Great White House*, 123.
[14] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 125-126.
[15] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 126.
[16] Carter, *Why Not The Best?*, 118.
[17] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 48.
[18] Black and Black, *The Vital South*, 252.
[19] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 128.

for the Sanders pictures and the King radio advertisement, but staff at Rafshoon's advertising agency confided their involvement to Betty Glad, and their instructions from Rafshoon and Bill Pope, Carter's press secretary.[20] Glad argues that Carter may not have personally directed these activities, but set the tone for them with a strategy designed to exploit the explosive issue of race. Leading after the first round but without the majority necessary to win outright, Carter comfortably defeated Sanders in the primary run-off by 18 points (59-41). He easily emerged victorious over his Republican rival, Harold Columbus Suit.

Despite his campaign promises, Carter urged racial integration in his inaugural speech:

> At the end of a long campaign, I believe I know the people of this state as well as anyone. Based on this knowledge of Georgians north and south, I say to you quite frankly that the time for racial discrimination is over. Our people have already made this major and difficult decision, but we cannot underestimate the challenge of hundreds of minor decisions yet to be made …[21]

He also moved quickly to appease – by actions – the black population that he had exploited to obtain political office. He promised to investigate thoroughly episodes of racial discrimination, and approved the hanging of a portrait of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the State Capitol. Carter was also driven by the goal of making government more efficient – a theme that he would maintain during his presidential bid. However, Glad's analysis find that Carter exaggerated his achievements in reducing the size of the Georgia bureaucracy because most of the agencies that he eliminated were non-budgeted. Many of the budgeted functions remained even when agencies were amalgamated; and independent boards and commissions were re-positioned within the departments. Glad measures the reduction in important state agencies, and claims that these were reduced from around 68 (and not 200 as Carter claimed) to 22.[22]

*Planning Carter's Purposeful Rise*

As governor, Carter began almost immediately to train his sights on higher office. He admitted that meeting national officeholders and aspirants removed the feeling of awe that had previously dominated his reactions to political figures like President Nixon, Vice President Agnew, and presidential aspirant and Senator George McGovern.[23] However, it became apparent to him that, even as Governor of Georgia, he remained a regional figure without national appeal. Carter, whose range of political skills included an exceptional ability to make and implement long-term plans, began to think of ways to boost his national recognition.[24]

The most immediate opportunity for Governor Carter came with George McGovern's primary successes in 1972. As McGovern stormed to victory, Carter resolved that McGovern needed to choose a Southern politician as his vice presidential running mate to balance the perception of his candidacy as a movement to elect a radical liberal. Carter thought that he was well-placed among the eligible contenders. Although he

[20] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 134
[21] Carter, *Why Not The Best?*, 122.
[22] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 177.
[23] Schram, *Running for President, 1976: the Carter Campaign*, 58.
[24] Chagall sources Carter's 'mania for planning' in his previous career as a Navy engineer. 'He always makes detailed plans and follows them rigidly'. This 'Carter style', which 'blended professed piety and ruthless singlemindedness' was inherited by the team of Georgian strategists that he recruited to run his campaign. (*The New Kingmakers*, 44, 48).

predicted McGovern's defeat, even with a balanced ticket, Carter believed that the publicity from a national campaign would outweigh the losses from association with a losing effort. Furthermore, by acting as a political balance to a liberal ticket, Carter would enhance his reputation as a centrist who could bridge the Democratic Party's ideological spread. However, McGovern's team rejected the lobbying efforts by Jordan and Rafshoon, on Carter's behalf, at the national convention.

Rafshoon and Jordan remained convinced that Carter could win nationally, and both penned memos outlining plans for Carter success in the presidential race of 1976. Jordan's memo stressed the tactical importance to Carter's campaign of performing strongly in the New Hampshire and Florida primaries – these contests, reasoned Jordan, could provide Carter with 'a unique opportunity … to demonstrate [his] ability and strengths as a candidate at an early stage in the campaign'.[25] Carter's strategists held a firm belief in the winnowing forces of the reformed nomination system – 'regardless of the size of the field, the nomination could be won by primaries, and not back-room struggles'; and these dynamics rewarded strong early showings.[26]

The Rafshoon memo focused squarely on Carter's identity challenges, and sought to specify steps to address Carter's lack of knowledge of and association with national issues. Carter, Rafshoon explained, 'is not known for the heavyweight ideas and programs that he is capable of articulating. Getting this across should be the No. 1 priority right now'.[27] However, this was a problem for most aspiring governors, who struggled to compete with national security and foreign policy experts in Washington politics. And, by joining the Trilateral Commission, Carter enhanced his reputation as a foreign policy expert and became the *de facto* spokesman on foreign affairs for the National Governors Association.[28] Rafshoon's memo envisaged Carter building his credentials in these national policy areas without acquiring the perception of distance from real Americans that frequently handicapped the candidacies of Washington insiders. As Rafshoon explained, 'The first phase of any Carter campaign should be to formulate a heavyweight program and project a heavyweight image, all at the same time, [while] trying to infect other Southern states and other regions with the Jimmy Carter 'good guy' brand of populism…. This is still his greatest asset and it must be projected but he will also have to convince the press, public, and politicians that he knows how to run a government.'[29]

The other dimensions of Carter's identity, and especially his outsider status and centrist pragmatism, were in tune with the political times. Jordan circulated to Carter, Powell, and Rafshoon the transcript of an important speech by pollster Louis Harris detailing the collapse of partisanship in America in the 1970s, and Harris's call for a new mould of leadership that transcended partisan goals and constraints. 'Make no mistake about it',

[25] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 62.
[26] *New York Times*, June 10, 1976.
[27] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 59.
[28] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 218.
[29] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 59.

Harris warned, 'the public is finished with the old politics'.[30] Carter could also offer a unique set of appeals to Northerners and Southerners. For Northerners and liberals, Carter could defeat Wallace in the South, and relegate Wallace from the national political scene. For Southern Wallace sympathisers, Carter offered the chance to fix some of Washington ills. And if Carter could defeat Wallace, he would likely sweep the South, which because of rapid population growth and Democratic loyalty would provide more than half (782) of the 1505 delegates needed for nomination.[31]

### (II) IOWA CAUCUSES (JANUARY 19, 1976)

*The Iowa Caucuses were a turning point because Carter's victory at this event launched him ahead of the pack of other Democratic aspirants. Carter won ahead of his rivals because of agency factors: his identity and superior campaign organisation in the state.*

Even with meticulous planning and significant effort, Carter remained a distant prospect at the start of 1976, and his campaign was kept alive by contributions from Georgian supporters.[32] A Gallup poll in October 1975 showed the chasm between Carter and the clique of established party figures who most assumed would emerge as the leading candidates. Kennedy led on 35 per cent followed by Wallace (14), Humphrey (13), Jackson (8), and Muskie (5), while Carter was grouped with the 'others' who, in total, secured only 9 per cent of respondents' votes.[33] Time assessed that 'Carter is a long shot for the nomination, though he has become a strong candidate for the vice-presidential slot'.[34] Early successes, Carter and his team realised, could be pivotal. Jordan explained that 'We were going to have to prove ourselves early, and the early primaries and even the caucuses were going to have a disproportionate influence in the media'[35] As Carter tells it 'Nobody thought I should be taken seriously. And we couldn't take any shortcuts to resolving it except to do better than we were expected to do in two or three of the states'.[36]

Following McGovern's 1972 example, the major candidates for the Democratic nomination in 1976 targeted New Hampshire as their first important contest. By contrast, Carter pre-empted their convergence on this stratagem, and went even earlier, targeting an early breakthrough in the Iowa caucuses. This was an afterthought: 'We decided early on New Hampshire and Florida; later, we saw that Iowa was a good chance. There are only about 35,000 Democrats there who participated in the 1972 caucuses. We just saw a good chance to build that up with a major media event'.[37]

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[30] Remarks of Louis Harris to National Conference of State Legislators, October 7, 1975, Philadelphia. (Carter Pre-Presidential Papers, Box 121).
[31] The 11 states of the Confederacy plus the four Border states. These states held 32 per cent of the national population. (RW Apple, *The Nation*, *New York Times*, May 30, 1976).
[32] Herbert E. Alexander. *Financing the 1976 Election*, 236. In 1975, nearly half of Carter's individual contributions came from Georgians.
[33] Time, December 1, 1975.
[34] Ibid
[35] Witcover, *Marathon*, 196.
[36] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 8.
[37] Ibid

Though the state chose only 47 of 3008 delegates to the Democratic National Convention, its political significance greatly outweighed this. In the year before the primary, Carter visited the state seven times, calling on a moralistic crusade to correct the ills of Washington politics: 'I want a government that is as good, and honest, and decent, and truthful, and fair, and competent, and idealistic, and compassionate, and as filled with love as are the American people', he continually recited.[38] In an important campaign position paper, Carter confirmed in writing his assertions about the unique role and capacities of the president in the realm of moral leadership:

> There is only one person in this nation who can speak with a clear voice, who can set a standard of morals, decency and openness, who can spell out comprehensive policies and coordinate the efforts of different departments of government, who can call on the American people for sacrifices and explain the purpose of that sacrifice and the consequences of it. *That person is the President.*[39]

Carter's manager in the state, Tim Kraft, left few precincts of the state untouched; and upon their arrivals in Iowa months after Carter, his opponents found it to be comprehensively organised for the former Georgia governor. Kraft constructed an organisation with the aim of broadening Carter's appeal. Its core was its 20-member steering committee comprising well-known activists with varying political associations. Without a chairman, Carter – who remained virtually unknown in the state – would not be handicapped by the identity of his leading campaigner. The *New York Times'* Johnny Apple commented on Carter's swelling support: 'what is evident is that Mr. Carter, working form Atlanta rather than Washington, has made dramatic progress while attention [among Udall, Bayh, Harris, and Shriver] was focused on the scramble for liberal primacy'.[40]

However, just as important as these management efforts was a tactical sleight of hand that surprised Carter's rivals and turned the race against them. The *Des Moines Register* conducted straw polls at several statewide events, and Carter's New Hampshire operatives anticipated that, as in past years, the paper was going to conduct straw polls at Republican Lincoln Day dinners and Democratic Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners. In a presidential year, it was likely that a question would be posed to respondents asking them to compare the presidential possibilities. 'The Carter camp', writes Schram, 'had anticipated the logic' of this situation.[41] Kraft contacted each member of the Carter steering committee and urged them to encourage pro-Carter volunteers to attend the Des Moines dinner. By stuffing this event with Carter partisans, Carter's strategists maximised their chances of winning this straw poll. Carter won, with 23 per cent of the total. Hubert Humphrey, who was not even on the ballot, was second with 12, and Bayh came third (10). Assessing the impact of the straw poll, Schram claims that 'the Carter machine pulled off what all camps now concede was the major strategic move in the Iowa fight'.[42] Witcover summarizes the collective judgment of reporters on the ground in Iowa:

[38] Witcover, *Marathon*, 198.
[39] The Presidential Campaign 1976, 92.
[40] Witcover, *Marathon*, 202.
[41] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 19.
[42] Ibid

'Going into the caucuses, Carter had already moved from being a surprisingly strong prospect to the odds-on favorite who had to win or be judged to have peaked and slipped.'[43]

While Carter's rivals were quick to dismiss the representativeness of this poll, such a verdict overlooked the fact that the poll episode demonstrated Carter's superior organisation in a state that would allocate delegates by caucuses. Carter's eventual organisational advantage proved to exceed that displayed in advance of the Jefferson dinner. He won 27 per cent of the state's votes to Bayh's 13 per cent.[44]

### (III) NEW HAMPSHIRE (FEBRUARY 24, 1976)

*The New Hampshire primary was a turning point because it established Carter as the firm race leader. His victory ahead of his competitors was due to agency factors: Carter's superior tactics and organisation.*

Carter entered the New Hampshire primary as the leading contender, against a cluster of liberal rivals. New Hampshire was a key state in most of their plans and thus success for Carter at this juncture would necessarily be at his rivals' expense. Under these zero-sum pressures, Carter's rivals sought to disrupt his progress by downplaying his Iowa success. Chris Spirou, Birch Bayh's campaign manager, warned of the fragility of support built on sincerity rather than policy, and predicted a collapse in Carter's support at New Hampshire.[45] Spirou's observation was partially correct: a reputational strategy such as the one pursued by Carter implied that damage to Carter's image could leave deep and lasting effects, but in New Hampshire Carter's opponents found no effective way to leverage this potential weakness.

With his rivals clearly identifying themselves with liberal positions, Carter positioned himself more vaguely. Witcover described him as 'a man conspicuously difficult to corner on the issues … both unpredictable and inconsistent in terms of ideological orthodoxy'.[46] Carter was conservative on economic issues. For instance, he believed that the public sector held no obligation to provide employment, a position that contrasted with that of other Democrats who claimed that the federal government should create jobs for workers disadvantaged in private markets. However, in most matters of civil rights, Carter was liberal, especially for a Southern Democrat. On a number of issues, his position absorbed liberal and conservative elements. For instance, he was opposed to a constitutional amendment banning abortion though he was personally opposed to it and supported the use of other measures to reduce its use. Carter's centre-right political identity was rivalled by a flock of liberals but Jackson's late decision to skip New Hampshire left Carter as the only non-liberal candidate in the field.[47]

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[43] Witcover, *Marathon*, 203. Jordan had warned Carter that expectations of his campaign performance in Iowa had risen too quickly, and that this might make it more difficult for him to post an astonishing 'over-performance'. (Box 199, 1976 Presidential Campaign).
[44] The uncommitted slate gathered 37 per cent of the vote, Harris 10, Udall 5, Jackson 4, and Shriver 3.
[45] *New York Times*, February 24, 1976.
[46] Witcover, *Marathon*, 225.
[47] Jackson's decision was a controversial one, and at least one of his key advisers opposed it on the grounds that abandoning New Hampshire to Carter would give the Georgian a significant headstart. However, Jackson inferred from his failed candidacy in 1972 that becoming labelled a 'loser' so early in the contest was a greater risk. (Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 24).

Many of the staffers working the state were graduates of the McCarthy-McGovern school, including Chris Brown who organized the Carter effort and David Evans who ran the Udall organisation. Despite the commonality of knowledge about the importance of field organisation, Carter's campaign maintained an organisational advantage. Once again Carter's rivals entered a state that had been thoroughly organised, and their organisational responses were inadequate. Mo Udall lamented that his campaign started to work its New Hampshire contacts too late to close the gap with the Georgia Governor: 'It was all so close. If I had gone into New Hampshire [by ignoring Iowa] I would have won New Hampshire'.[48] This was an especially painful observation for Udall who had been declaring, since summer 1975, that he would win New Hampshire.[49] Birch Bayh expressed more desperate sentiments concerning his campaign's chronic lack of organisation. The candidate was aghast when he realised that his New Hampshire operation had no campaign plan in the week proceeding election day. By contrast, the Carter machine worked the state early and comprehensively. By election-day, the candidate's representatives had contacted 95 per cent of the Democratic homes in the state. The foot-soldiers in this operation were a group of 100 Georgians brought from their home state to canvass New Hampshire residents with personal stories of Carter's decency and competence. After each day of campaigning, Carter's activists would converge on the Sheraton Wayfarer to map their progress and identify future target areas and groups. The Georgians-to-New Hampshire 'gave Jimmy a lead in New Hampshire that was never lost', explained Hamilton Jordan who first suggested this idea to the candidate.[50] Carter scored a decisive victory. He secured nearly 30 per cent of the vote and thirteen convention delegates, to 24 per cent and four delegates for Udall. And now only non-entrant Kennedy polled higher than Carter.[51]

### (IV) MASSACHUSETTS PRIMARY (MARCH 2, 1976)

*The Massachusetts primary was a critical juncture because Jackson's defeat of Carter halted the momentum that the front-runner had garnered by winning in earlier important primary elections. The cause of this result was agency factors, and especially the fuzziness charge levelled against Carter by Jackson.*

After Carter's New Hampshire triumph, his campaign expanded its efforts. The combination of themes and media that it had employed since 1975 had borne substantial political returns and the campaign began to work more actively in states where it had expected to perform relatively weakly. Preparing for the final week of campaigning for the Massachusetts primary, the next competition after New Hampshire, Carter's team extended to the entire state media spots that were initially showed only in Boston. While this intensification reflected Carter's growing confidence and increasing resource base following New Hampshire, victory in Massachusetts might prove to be pyrrhic. Success for Carter would unify his rivals and encourage them to act cohesively in future primaries and at the convention. Any co-ordination by Carter's diverse opponents would

[48] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 23.
[49] Udall continually cited one straw poll showing him with a 2-1 lead over his closest rival. (Box 199, 1976 Presidential Campaign, Carter Library).
[50] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 27.
[51] Gallup poll, February 27-March 1.

likely be unstable, but it remained possible that the group of liberal aspirants might be willing to coalesce to nominate Hubert Humphrey. Thus, Schram posits that 'if Carter effectively decimated his opposition so early, an effective Stop Carter movement might then be organized – with plenty of time in which to operate'.[52] By implication, defeat would make Carter's long-run path to the nomination less troublesome: 'If Carter lost Massachusetts, the liberals said the [Stop Carter] movement would be made more difficult because it would then lack urgency'.[53]

As Jordan anticipated as early as 1975, Carter's campaign struggled to invest heavily in Massachusetts while trying to ensure that Florida, which remained the linchpin in their strategy, received the bulk of the campaign's most skilful organisers and the candidate's time.[54] Additionally, some of the seeds of the Massachusetts result were sown in the New Hampshire contest. On the one hand, Carter benefited from his surprisingly large victory: 'The Carter people remained convinced that their candidate would be able to sail through on the strength of his momentum'.[55] However, Carter had made a rare slip in a nationally televised interview on the day before the New Hampshire primary. In a candidate forum hosted by the League of Women Voters and televised on PBS, Carter made a purposefully vague response to a question concerning his tax plans. Asked whether his tax reforms would include eliminating income tax deductions for home mortgages, Carter replied that this stipulation 'would be among those I would like to do away with', an answer that Schram describes as 'uncharacteristic' because 'it was not carefully thought out and structured'.[56] Jackson attacked stating that Carter had 'better do some homework before he comes up with fuzzy ideas' – and thereby made explicit his charge that Crater's political positions were worryingly uncertain. As the Massachusetts primary approached, Carter's opponents repeatedly assailed his 'fuzziness'.

Additionally, Carter faced a higher level of political competition in Massachusetts. With Jackson and Wallace on the ballot for the first time in the nomination race, Carter would compete for votes with other non-liberal candidates – each aware of Massachusetts's reputation as the nation's most liberal state. Thus, compared to the previous primaries, the non-liberal base was both smaller and more contested. Scoop Jackson won the state, with 23 per cent of the vote ahead of Udall with 18, followed by Wallace with 17, and then Carter with 14 per cent. An important factor that distinguished Carter's supporters from his rivals' was their weak commitment to their candidate; and the heavy snowfall on election-day hurt Carter more than his rivals.[57]

### (V) FLORIDA PRIMARY (MARCH 9, 1976)

*Carter's defeat of Wallace at this juncture secured for him the support of Southern Democrats. The identities and campaign activities of the leading contenders in the race (agency factors) were the predominant cause of Carter's victory.*

[52] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 34.
[53] Ibid, 34.
[54] Box 199, Presidential Campaign 1976. Carter Library.
[55] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 37.
[56] Ibid, 35.
[57] Ibid, 36.

As the focus of the campaign turned to Florida, Carter's campaign continued to struggle with his growing reputation for vagueness. Jackson, buoyed by his victory in Massachusetts earlier in the week, concentrated his attacks on Carter's vacillation concerning a proposed $300m federal solar energy research centre. At a campaign news conference, he displayed a copy of a Boston Globe article (February 22) in which Carter was reported to have declared that the Boston area had the strongest claim of any potential site. However, Carter, Jackson retorted, had contradicted himself during his campaigning in Florida by claiming a neutral position in the debate about the research centre's location: he maintained that he wouldn't support the claims of one site ahead of any others.[58] To support his intensified attacks on Carter, Jackson increased his media spending – his spotty grassroots networks proved too unreliable as a vehicle for accelerating his campaign in the state.[59]

For the Carter camp, the Florida primary was the most important potential turning point in the race. As a testing ground for Carter, 'Florida made good sense'.[60] It would produce a significant delegate haul (81) and, because of high expectations regarding Wallace's strength in the state, a demanding competitive setting. Hamilton Jordan gambled that Wallace could be beaten well – and his delegate catch 'reduced to a nearly irrelevant minimum'.[61] Chagall calculates that Florida's importance exceeded even New Hampshire's: 'If Carter couldn't beat Wallace in the most liberal state in Dixie, his hopes for a Solid South backing were down the drain along with his candidacy'.[62] Black and Black echo these sentiments. They assert that 'Florida was Carter's make-or-break primary in the South. There he needed to defeat Wallace, still the reigning symbol the South'.[63]

Carter reasoned that Wallace was handicapped by physical disability, overexposure, and his reputation as an 'accomplished vulgarian'.[64] With its close proximity facilitating regular stops in the state by Carter and his supporters, Florida was a promising state for the Georgian. Carter's media blitz and regular stumping in the state since December 1975 produced significant gains.[65] Trailing Wallace by 13 points in December, 1975, Carter took a slender lead over Wallace after increasing steadily his support in southern Florida, the most liberal part of the state. 'All [Carter's team] had to do was hold the lead', Chagall analysed.[66] However, they had not anticipated Jackson's resurgence. Rather their campaign plans rigidly assumed that Wallace would remain the major threat. Jackson's attacks on Carter's issue positions were beginning to get through.

Polls showed Carter's support in Florida to be slipping, and his campaign reported a sharp increase in the number of calls they received from voters querying and seeking clarification of Carter's issue positions. The

[58] *New York Times*, March 5, 1976.
[59] His total, concentrated in advertisements in newspapers and television, totalled $180,000. (*New York Times*, March 8, 1976).
[60] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 231.
[61] *New York Times*, June 10, 1976.
[62] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 80.
[63] Black and Black, *Vital South*, 250.
[64] Kenneth A. Briggs, *New York Times*, April 11, 1976.
[65] Carter made 35 separate visits to the state between December 1975 and March 1976 (Chagall p. 80).
[66] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 81.

Carter team reconfigured its campaigning efforts to negate Jackson's growing influence. Building on the idea that Carter was the only genuine and viable 'stop-Wallace' candidate, Carter created associations between Wallace and Jackson. Most notably, Carter repeatedly accused Jackson of pandering to the racist sentiments of anti-busing suburbanites in his Massachusetts campaign.[67] However, unlike in Massachusetts, the structure of competition in Florida favoured Carter. Not only was the state more conservative, but the liberal aspirants decided against contesting the Florida primary election, believing a comfortable Wallace victory to be inevitable.[68] And by tethering Jackson to Wallace, Carter was able to dominate the voting preferences of Florida blacks and liberal whites.

Carter won victory over Wallace and Jackson. Carter gained 34.3 per cent to Wallace's 30.6, and Jackson's 23.9. Benefiting from a sweep of black urban support, Carter had won 10 out of the 15 largest counties in the state.[69] Wallace gained only 72 per cent of his 1972 vote, and many respondents to an NBC election poll conceded that they had gravitated to Carter because of fears about Wallace's health.[70]

In his analysis of the impact of this victory, Chagall assesses that 'Carter was now the clear favorite to win the nomination'.[71] Skowronek, in his account of the Democrat race, also presents Florida as a point of inflection:

> [Carter's] Florida victory gained him a respectability within the ranks that the late-breaking 'anybody but Carter' drive simply count not counter. With this key state added to his earlier victories in Iowa and New Hampshire, Carter stood out as the only Democratic candidate who had proven his appeal in all sections of the country. After Florida, Cater would wine some and lose some, but no single alternative would emerge. Slowly but steadily, the Democratic party capitulated to his carefully crafted siege.[72]

After Florida, Carter's campaign enjoyed a release of the financial strictures that had limited their efforts – he would consistently outspend his rivals because of a rise in his income stream to $2 million a month.[73] Richard Scammon highlighted the strategic importance of Carter's Florida victory for his prospects in Northern contests. He claimed that his high levels of black support in Florida could provide Carter with a 'passport to legitimacy with white Northern liberals, who were reluctant to oppose a candidate with broad appeal in African-American communities'.[74] Thus, a crucial element in Carter's ability to reconcile conservative and liberal Democrats was the committed support he enjoyed from black Southern voters. Carter followed his Florida victory with success in Illinois where, despite a strong effort from Wallace, Carter won 48 per cent of preference votes in the presidential primary, and was apportioned 55 delegates to Wallace's 3.[75]

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[67] Ibid, 85.
[68] Furthermore, in the event that Carter was given a free run against Wallace, he might reduce the Alabaman's viability beyond the South which for these campaigns was a genuine fear in a year of mass disillusionment with mainstream politicians.
[69] *New York Times*, March 8, 1976.
[70] 50 per cent of respondents expressed agreement with Wallace's philosophy but only 30.6 per cent voted for him. Glad, 245.
[71] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 86.
[72] Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 375.
[73] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 263.
[74] *New York Times*, April 27, 1976.
[75] Favourite son Stevenson controlled 85 delegates.

## (VI) NORTH CAROLINA PRIMARY (MARCH 23, 1976)

*The North Carolina primary was a critical juncture because Wallace was eliminated at this event. The identities and campaign activities of Carter and Wallace (agency factors) were the cause of the result.*

Carter's campaign flagged North Carolina as the primary that would eliminate Wallace.[76] Smarting from his defeat in Florida, Wallace considered quitting. However he was urged by a number of leading Democratic politicians, for various reasons, to keep going. This group included Hubert Humphrey, Scoop Jackson, and Bob Strauss (chairman of the DNC). Despite his renewed efforts, the state's primary voters chose overwhelmingly to 'send a president' to Washington rather than a mere 'message', and North Carolina went the way of Florida.[77] Indeed, Carter defeated Wallace by a greater margin in this state: 53.6-34.7. Wallace, assesses Schram, 'never again would be a factor in the primaries'; Carter had succeeded in replacing the Alabaman as the South's popular choice for president.[78] With Southern primaries in Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Tennesee, Arkansas, and Kentucky concentrated in May, 'a Carter romp to the finishing line seemed imminent'.[79] Only in Wallace's home state could Carter be expected to face serious challenge.

*Carter's Finishing Efforts*

Carter's opponents reflected, increasingly, their bafflement at his strategy and success. Udall criticized Carter for his duplicity, but was more scathing about the Georgian's rejection of the liberal dogma of the party's Washington elite.[80] Most notably, Udall was disappointed by Carter's decision not to endorse the Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill. However, as Charles Mohr, writing in the *New York Times* pointed out, Udall was attempting to hold Carter to standards that the Georgian had never embraced. Mohr opines that 'Mr Udall … has been basing his campaign on an accusation that Mr Carter has failed to do and say things that Mr Carter apparently never had any intention of doing or saying'.[81] By contrast, Mohr accurately observed, 'Carter has purposefully stayed to the right of the liberal pack'. Bayh made a similar set of criticisms against Carter, and declared his belief that Carter's nebulous identity would be exposed, and his intention to do so. 'As the issues are defined – and if he won't define them, I will – I think you are going to find that people more and more will support other candidates, and thus the Carter candidacy will diminish in strength'.[82]

Meanwhile, Udall's comments coincided with renewed suggestions that his campaign had become little more than a stalking horse effort for Humphrey or Kennedy. However, Udall denied these claims, and made public a conversation he had had with Kennedy where the Massachusetts Senator reiterated his decision not to run. The situation with Humphrey, Udall accepted, was different, with Humphrey making increasingly public

[76] 1976 Presidential Campaign, Box 199. Carter Presidential Library.
[77] Black and Black, *The Vital South*, 253.
[78] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 172.
[79] Glad, *Jimmy Carter*, 253.
[80] Schlesinger's private assessment of Carter's political identity was scathing: 'I tend to regard Carter as an intelligent, ambitious opportunist, who will move to any position that he thinks would help him in his upward course'. (Schlesinger, *Journals*, 406).
[81] *New York Times*, April 5, 1976.
[82] *New York Times*, February 28, 1976.

overtures regarding his availability. However, Udall explained his belief that Humphrey's decision to stay out of several key primary contests had ended the prospects of a Hubert Humphrey nomination.[83]

## (VII) WISCONSIN AND NEW YORK PRIMARIES (APRIL 6, 1976)

*The Wisconsin and New York primary elections were turning points because their combined effects caused Udall to exist. The campaign decisions of the rival candidates caused this result.*

After securing their initial tactical goals, Carter's team focused on the New York and Wisconsin primaries as 'must win' events. These formed the cornerstones of a finishing effort aimed at winning a first-ballot victory at the convention. As Caddell explained in a memorandum to the candidate and his leading strategists, Democratic leaders would be keen to block the nomination of Carter if they sensed a possibility to do so – 'Popular with the elites we are not', Caddell surmised.[84] Victory in Wisconsin and New York, suggested Caddell would lay solid foundations for contests in Pennsylvania and Indiana which together with Carter's earlier accruals would be sufficient for a first-ballot majority.

However, for the first time in their campaign, Carter's team dealt with the unanticipated problem of overstretch. Even after storming to an impressive victory in Florida, Carter's team considered the consequences of scattering their resources over the remaining primary contest. Johnny Apple reported that Carter's strategists had conceded that they would be unable to contest fully the two large primaries in New York and Wisconsin on April 6.[85] According to Hamilton Jordan, Carter was tailing his rivals in candidate time and staff resources committed to these primaries. 'Their evaluation was the first sign that Mr Carter's plan to contest every primary, which has brought him from obscurity to the head of the Democratic pack, was overtaxing his campaign'.[86]

### *(a) Wisconsin Primary*

Carter's team took Wisconsin to be an opportunity to occasion a knock-out strike against Udall, leaving a series of head-to-head contests between Carter and Jackson.[87] In his memorandum to Carter, Caddell acknowledged that their campaign was well placed – indeed Carter probably led his rivals – but added that the estimated 7 point lead over Udall was fragile because it depended on turnout.[88] Carter's support was generally less committed than that of his rivals', and Caddell estimated that if turnout at the polls fell from an expected level of 40 per cent to 25, Udall would defeat Carter comfortably – 28-22 (with 18 for Jackson).

[83] *New York Times*, May 24, 1976.
[84] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 113.
[85] *New York Times*, March 11, 1976.
[86] Ibid
[87] *New York Times*, March 27, 1976.
[88] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 113.

The Wisconsin primary was also flagged as critical by the Udall camp. Their belief that Carter's vote was soft implied that a significant reversal could cause a collapse in Carter's support. For this scenario to actualise, Udall would have to score a significant victory. The Wisconsin primary was identified as this potential turning point. The Udall campaign budgeted $350,000 for the state; but this sum was a provisional one, based on their assessment of the requirements for a successful campaign in the state and the assurances of the campaign fundraiser, David Thorne, that this total could be raised. However, with only two weeks remaining before the vote, only $100,000 had been found. Consequently, the campaign's leaders searched for economies. Stu Udall identified the $25,000 allocated for television advertisements as a potential cost saving, and a heated debate ensued between Stu Udall and John Marttila, who was in charge of Udall's media and wanted to keep the advertisements on air. Mo Udall eventually sided with Marttila, but not before the most immediate block of television time was sold out. The ads were taken off air for 2.5 days.

On primary day, Udall lost 37-36 to Carter, less than 5,000 of the 670,000 cast. Mo Udall and Hamilton Jordan attributed this important result to the indecision about advertising in the Udall camp. However, as Schram makes clear, this particular mistake typified the budgeting confusion in the Udall campaign. Even though the campaign made an early decision to concentrate its efforts on Wisconsin, they spent a scarce $140,000 campaigning in New York and $180,000 in Pennsylvania (April 27) – in neither state was Udall likely to be a contender. Thus, Schram observes that 'the Udall campaign was staffed by bad planning and bad budgeting … In retrospect, it is easy to see that Udall money was misspent'.[89] Of significant importance to the Wisconsin result was also the presence on the ballot of two liberals, Harris and Shriver, who squeezed the liberal base supporting Udall. Both Harris and Shriver secured about 1 per cent of the vote.

*(b) New York Primary*

In New York, Carter was head-to-head with Jackson, who was backed by the state's Democratic establishment. Jackson's strategy had involved targeting the nation's large industrial states where he was assured of strong backing from labour unions. New York was the biggest of these states, and an impressive victory at this juncture had become vital to Jackson if he was to survive to fight in further primaries. Jackson repeatedly claimed that he expected a two-to-one margin of victory.[90] As with Wisconsin, Caddell feared a low-vote election would harm Carter disproportionately. And because of this possibility, Carter's strategists accepted, at least privately, his underdog standing in New York.[91]

Even with their tightly organised campaign, Carter's aides accepted that they would struggle to improve the turnout of their supporters. Instead, the campaign turned to criticisms of Carter's policy positions. Caddell wrote that 'we have passed the point where we can simply avoid at least the semblance of substance. This does not mean the need to outline minute, exact details. We all agree that such a course could be disastrous… It requires a few broad, specific examples that support a point and it requires a better definition of these

[89] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 128.
[90] Ibid, 123.
[91] *New York Times*, March 11, 1976.

priorities…'[92] The ballots for the New York primaries carried the names of the delegates, but not the candidates, and Carter also aimed to exploit the characteristics of this ballot structure to undermine Jackson's candidacy. Carter charged that the system was antiquated – a relic of the old boss-dominated system and incongruous with open primary elections. However, Carter's charges were soon negated – the system was changed three weeks before the election.

As most independent observers anticipated, Jackson won the New York contest, though he secured 38 per cent (and 103 of the 274 delegates), significantly less than the 'landslide' that he had publicly predicated. Udall performed stronger than expected with 25.2 per cent. Carter was a poor fourth, with 12.8 per cent, behind an uncommitted slate (23.7). As Hamilton Jordan predicted, however, a modest victory for Jackson in New York would eliminate Udall and provide Jackson with only a slight boost; and these were competitive dynamics that would aid Carter.[93]

### (VIII) PENNSYLVANIA PRIMARY (APRIL 27, 1976)

*At the Pennsylvania primary Carter eliminated Jackson, his remaining serious rival. The campaign decisions of the rival candidates caused this result.*

This proved to be Jackson's last stand. His victory in New York had been smaller than expected, but it nonetheless affirmed that he remained a force in the major industrial states. Pennsylvania presented another opportunity for success for Jackson, and the possibility of prolonging his candidacy. After his Florida primary victory, Carter's campaign moved from trying to consolidate Carter's leading position in the race to purposefully forcing the elimination of his rivals.[94] Jackson's exit remained the final hurdle for the completion of this stratagem.

In February, in an attempt to explain his opposition to government intervention to achieve racial integration, Carter committed his 'ethnic purity' gaffe and this gained attention when Carter was questioned by a journalist about it in the run up to the Pennsylvania primary. Despite this, Carter's winning campaign attracted new supporters. Jackson again benefited from heavy union and Democratic establishment support. However, Jackson's support in the state remained limited to these groups. Jackson's supporters struggled with the fact that labour activists were unenthused by their candidate, and Jackson's stock declined further as he was subjected to frequent comparisons with labour-favourite Humphrey, who remained an active politician with presidential ambitions (although these were unlikely to be fulfilled in 1976). Carter swept every

[92] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 114.
[93] 1976 Presidential Campaign, Box 199. Carter Presidential Library.
[94] Jordan wrote that 'Where we must continue quietly and methodically to run everywhere and win delegates everywhere, the real goal is the confrontation strategy which eliminates our remaining opponents. There is no way that we will be helped by a brokered convention.' (1976 Presidential Campaign, Box 199)

Pennsylvania county except for Philadelphia, organised by Mayor Frank L. Rizzo's machine, and the liberal Montgomery County which backed Udall.[95]

With the exception of Mo Udall, all of Carter's principal opponents exited by the end of April.[96] Carter would face spirited challenges from two newcomers, Frank Church and Jerry Brown, in the primaries that remained; but they had arrived too late and could only slow Carter's momentum as he moved toward guaranteeing a first ballot victory at the convention.[97] Indeed, by June both Wallace and Jackson had pledged their support and delegates to Carter. 'Carter', Schram explains, 'had won the nomination when he defeated Jackson in Pennsylvania'.[98] Time opined that 'by triumphing decisively and against formidable odds in Pennsylvania's pivotal primary, he all but crushed his remaining opposition'.[99] Carter appeared completely undisturbed by the entry of Church and Brown, and claimed that because he had wrapped up the nomination he had turned his attention to reconciling with Democratic elites and preparing for his general election campaign.

[95] Carter won 37 per cent (64 delegates), Jackson 25 (19 delegates), and Udall 19 (22 delegates).
[96] Robert Shrum, a Carter speechwriter, quit the Georgian's campaign on April 26 after accusing Carter of deliberate fuzziness regarding his defence. A shock of this sort, which confirmed the allegations of Carter's opponents, might have seriously undermined Carter's candidacy if it occurred earlier.
[97] Some analysts speculated that Church and Brown made their late presidential nominations in a bid to enhance their chances of winning appointments to Carter's cabinet.
[98] Schram, *Running for President, 1976*, 152.
[99] Time, May 10, 1976.

# 10 THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1980

In a memo penned by Pat Caddell in December, 1976, President-elect Carter read that 'Governing with public approval requires a continuing political campaign'.[1] However, upon his arrival at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Carter discovered the fundamental difficulty of making laws and politics from studying short-term poll swings.[2] As Gregory Paul Domin writes in *Jimmy Carter and the Search for Values*, 'Carter discovered that public opinion must not only be ascertained, but transformed into tangible legislation'.[3] This captures the essence of Carter's major dilemma: How to formulate a policy agenda that made sense in the American political landscape – to the members of Congress who would either approve or reject it; to the Washington press corps who would praise, criticise, and interpret it; and to the president's diverse audiences beyond Washington. Carter accepted that New Deal-Great Society liberalism was intellectually and politically bankrupt; but he appeared unable to offer solutions to recurring and new problems in the economy and society, while steering American foreign and defence policies toward modesty and restraint.

The perception that the Carter Administration was suffering grave political problems became widespread by 1978. Burgeoning conservative activism in intellectual and policy circles combined with liberal retreat to strengthen the prospects of a Republican victory in 1980. 'Liberal Democrats', commented Alan Baron in the Los Angeles Times, 'are trimming their sales'. [4] However, despite widespread coupling of liberalism with perplexing public policy problems, Senator Edward M. Kennedy emerged as a potential challenger to Carter's re-nomination by the Democratic Party. Kennedy's appeal was, in part, lingering family magic, but it also reflected the president's low standing and deteriorating reputation.[5]

Although both of these factors should have provided Kennedy with a foundation from which to build a head-start over the president, his delayed entry decision and haphazard campaign operation negated these potential benefits. Hence, as Black and Black judge, Kennedy's campaign 'self-destructed almost immediately' after it was conceived.[6] Instead the race morphed in ways that drastically improved Carter's prospects, and harmed Kennedy's. First, while Kennedy procrastinated, Carter moved decisively to sure up his support in constituencies that he could influence directly through patronage. Second, at a fortunate moment for the president's politics, the capture of the American embassy in Tehran by a group of radical students caused a surge in his popularity that aided his candidacy. With his strengthened portfolio of political resources, Carter forced decisive defeats on Kennedy in early primary contests and established a lead that Kennedy was unable

[1] December 10, 1976. Quoted in Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 123.
[2] See for instance Blumenthal, *The Permanent Campaign*.
[3] *Jimmy Carter and the Search for Values, 1977-1981*, 3.
[4] Los Angeles Times, September 16, 1979. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 359. Reagan Presidential Library.
[5] Baron details the growing clamour from federal, state, and local politicians, labour unions, and other party activists who, by late 1979, feared that Jimmy Carter's re-nomination would lead to electoral disaster in 1980. (Los Angeles Times, September 16, 1979. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 359. Reagan Presidential Library).
[6] Black and Black, *The Vital South*, 255.

to overturn despite his late rally toward the end of the race. The critical junctures that formed Carter's path to the Democratic nomination are presented in Table 10.1 below.

Table 10.1 Critical Junctures in Democratic Nomination, 1980

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE | AGENT | NATURE OF CAUSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Health Breach** | July 1978 | Kennedy becomes disillusioned with President Carter and ponders a challenge of the president's re-nomination. | A, though contributory A | Kennedy; Carter | A (Kennedy): assessments of Carter administration (Identity)<br><br>A (Carter): health policies (Identity) |
| **President Carter's Crisis of Confidence Speech** | July 15, 1979 | Kennedy decides to challenge Carter. | A, though contributory S | Carter; Kennedy | A (Carter): interpretations of America's problems in the late 1970s (Identity)<br><br>S: exogenous state of affairs (economic stagnation) |
| **Seizure of US Embassy, Tehran** | November 4, 1978 | Revival of Carter's political prospects. | A, though contributory S | Carter | A (Carter): response to hostage crisis (Identity, Tactics)<br><br>S: exogenous event (taking of hostages) |
| **Iowa Caucuses** | January 21, 1980 | Kennedy suffers surprisingly large defeat. | A > A | Carter; Kennedy | A (Carter): campaign activities (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Kennedy): (Identity, Tactics, Management) |
| **New Hampshire Primary** | February 26, 1980 | Carter defeats Kennedy again – expectations of Kennedy's exit. | A > A | Carter; Kennedy | A (Carter): campaign activities (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Kennedy): (Identity, Tactics, Management) |
| **New York Primary** | March 25, 1980 | Astonishing victory for Kennedy triggers new phase of Kennedy revival and 'protest voting' against Carter. | A (Carter), though contributory A (Carter and Kenedy) | Carter; Kennedy | A (Carter): decision with respect to UN Security Council Resolution 465 on Israeli settlements (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Carter and Kennedy): campaign activities (Tactics, Identity, Management) |

Key:

(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

## (I) HEALTH BREACH (JULY 1978)

*The Carter-Kennedy health breach was a turning point because it caused Kennedy to begin to consider running to challenge President Carter. It was caused predominantly by unconstrained changes in Kennedy's assessments of the Carter administration, though the health policy decisions of the Administration acted as a contributing factor. As Carter and Kennedy became candidates, these causes are characterised as agency factors.*

Carter's tenure in the White House began auspiciously. With his approval soaring to 75 per cent by April of his first year, Carter's political identity – as an outsider to Washington politics, and centrist committed to ethics and competence rather than ideology – was interpreted as a natural fit for a disillusioned nation in search of a new politics.[7] However, Carter's new administration soon became overwhelmed by complex policy and political problems. A steady decline in the president's popularity followed from the persistence of the country's economic 'stagflation'. In the four years that followed his election, unemployment hovered between 6 and 7.5 per cent and inflation rose consistently, by an average of one percentage point per year, from 6 per cent in 1976.

As Carter acted to reform the welfare and energy institutions that he believed were to blame for America's slow growth, the coalition that had supported his presidential run began to splinter. Suspicious liberals solidified in their opposition as Carter stressed the importance of government's limited capacities and urged a broad embrace of constraints and balance in federal spending. Following threats by the president to veto stimulus legislation and dam building projects in his first two years in office, Carter faced high levels of obstruction on Capitol Hill. Furthermore, the growing opposition to Carter's leadership on the political left was joined by increasing frustration among centre-right politicians and voters. The rotten liberal establishment, reasoned a growing clamour of conservatives, required much more than the incremental change offered by Carter. Instead it demanded a new regime committed to pursuing alternative goals and not merely the objectives of the liberal paradigm with greater efficiency. For Jimmy Carter these liabilities combined to weaken the strength of his incumbency to a critical level where he faced a meaningful challenge from Edward M. Kennedy. Theodore White confirmed that Carter's troubles produced a collapse of the axiom that sitting presidents win re-nomination by their parties. 'No Democrat', White writes, 'would have dared raise a voice against Jimmy Carter had he been clearly successful, or more vengeful – or even moderately lucky. But by 1979, all the sweet memories of the winning Carter of 1976 had faded'.[8]

[7] In his remarks to the National Conference of State legislators, leading pollster Louis Harris explained that 'the public is finished with the old politics'. He presented data showing that conservative-liberal divisions were no longer relevant to most Americans, and he challenged politicians to embrace a new and less rigid form of politics: 'exercise the pluralism inherent in our having 50 states', Harris demanded. (Presidential Campaign 1976, Box 121. Carter Presidential Library).
[8] *America in Search of Itself*, 256-257.

Sean Wilentz assesses that by 1978 Carter's most pressing problem was his deteriorating relationship with Senator Kennedy over national health insurance.[9] While Kennedy was a vigorous supporter of comprehensive coverage financed by income taxation, Carter deemed this idea to be too expensive and instead proposed a plan that combined mandated private insurance with coverage of serious accidents and illnesses. Despite detailed and ongoing correspondence between the Administration and Kennedy, Senator Kennedy remained unsatisfied by the proposals from Carter's appointees at Heath, Education, and Welfare. In an address to the American Public Heath Association, Kennedy remarked that progress had been achieved on prioritising health reform but revealed his disappointment at the Administration's proposals by lamenting that these contained 'troublesome signs'.[10]

By July 1978, these grumblings had become intractable and in an open break with the president, Kennedy declared his exasperation with Carter's 'failure of leadership'.[11] Arthur Schlesinger, one of Kennedy's closest confidants, confirms that Kennedy's growing distrust of Carter in the summer of 1978 coincided with an increasing seriousness about a presidential run in 1980. In a lunch meeting with Schlesinger, Kennedy departed from his regular – though unenthusiastic – defence of his Democratic president by questioning whether Carter had any true policy commitments.[12]

*Pre-Empting a Challenge by Kennedy*

The president's political strategists had long suspected that Kennedy would mount a challenge. And although Kennedy remained non-committal about his intentions for 1980, Carter's team forged ahead with their plans to secure the president's re-nomination by assuming competition from Kennedy. Hamilton Jordan was once again the chief architect of Carter's campaign plan, and his January 17, 1979 memorandum to the president aimed to jolt the White House into reconsidering its political vulnerability. Jordan described as 'The Myth of the Incumbent President' the idea that presidents almost always win re-election. While the myth stood up to empirical scrutiny through most of presidential history, Jordan argued that its validity had been undermined by pressures unique to the 1970s: party system fragmentation, television, and the frustrating confluence of intractable demands and tightly binding constraints on presidential action.[13]

Jordan recalled the errors committed by Ford in planning too late for Reagan's entry, and urged Carter to anticipate that Kennedy would enter. The memo called for action in two areas. First, Carter would need to improve his performance as president because his nomination bid was inseparable from his incumbency. His prospects in a contest against Kennedy would strengthen considerably if he could argue credibly that his administration was achieving important successes. Second, while concentrating on the multiple challenges of presidential leadership, Carter must direct subordinates to organise his campaign in the early primary states.

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[9] *The Age of Reagan*, 84.
[10] 'Congress and National Health Policy. Fifth Annual Rosenhaus Lecture', American Journal of Public Health, 68:3 (March 1978).
[11] Wilentz, *Age of Reagan*, 84.
[12] Schlesinger, *Journals*, June 10 entry, p. 449.
[13] White, *America in Search of Itself*, 291. 'Rose Garden Campaign Strategy Can Prove Thorny for Incumbents', by Lawrence K. Knutson, Los Angeles Times, April 14, 1996.

Any Kennedy strategy would hinge upon scoring decisive victories over the president in these early North-Eastern states.

The tenets established in Jordan's memo were supplemented by a notable contribution from Pat Caddell submitted to President Carter on April 4, 1978.[14] Caddell highlighted that 'Time is running out': the president's slippage in the polls was accelerating; 'The public', Caddell details, 'is beginning to give up on you as a leader'. Caddell identifies a number of problem areas for immediate and sustained action. Most obviously, 'The politics of this Administration are rightfully seen by many as confused, amateurish, and self-destructive'. The source of this problem, the Carter Administration's other difficulties in marketing and organisation, and the focal point for Caddell's prescriptions for an improvement in the president's standing, lay in the absence of a conceptual philosophy of action. The unresolved questions were fundamental: 'How you see the office, what you want the office to be, where you want to take the country …' Caddell explains that these issues of identity 'dwarf the more strategic and tactical concerns' of Carter's presidency because the president's failure in the realm of ideas had meant that he had been unable to direct the energies of the nation toward a new agenda. Consequently, Caddell surmised, 'America today is a goal oriented society without any discernible goals'. Caddell's astute diagnosis for President Carter was not matched by a penetrating remedy. Beyond calling for a return to greater public engagement to search for answers to abstract questions of purpose, Caddell's lengthy memo offered no definite steps for a revival of Carter's standing and prospects.

Carter mulled over Caddell's analysis, and it moulded his thoughts as he prepared his 'Crisis of Confidence' speech a year later. Nonetheless, Carter understood completely the threat that he faced, and skilfully used the privileges of incumbency to improve his standing amongst local and state Democratic elites. In a series of guest events hosted at the White House, Carter invited legislators, governors, and mayors to remind them 'who holds the purse strings'; the White House began to check for allegiance among existing federal employees and new hires; and Carter's staffers arranged for the president to meet with mayors of townships before their scheduled primary contests.[15] Carter also gained the support of the influential National Education Association by agreeing to establish a cabinet level Department of Education.[16]

### (II) PRESIDENT CARTER'S 'CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE' SPEECH (JULY 15, 1979)

*Carter's speech was a turning point because it caused Kennedy to decide to enter. The speech was the result of agency factors: Carter's interpretations of the nation's social health. An exogenous state of affairs (economic stagnation) contributed to the event by encouraging the President to take bold action.*

A release of polling figures showing Carter's popularity stabilising at 38 per cent – levels lower than Nixon's in his final week in office – caused Pat Caddell to urge the President to return speedily from an economic

[14] Jody Powell Papers, Box 30. Carter Presidential Library.
[15] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 139.
[16] White House Central Files, Political Affairs, PL-5. Carter Presidential Library.

summit in Tokyo. Upon his return, Carter hastily arranged for a live presidential address on the nation's energy crisis to be broadcast on July 5. For Caddell, America's transcendental 'crisis of confidence' cut much deeper than the pain caused by high energy costs. Caddell had been influenced by historian Christopher Lasch's book *The Culture of Narcissism*, which argued that a societal malaise in 1970s America was evident in the disintegration of families, general fear of emotional closeness, and excessive hedonism. Convinced that the mass psychological condition diagnosed by Lasch should form the basis of his efforts to revitalize Carter's political prospects, Caddell penned a memo to the president, dated April 23 that outlined the nation's 'dwindling faith in the future'.[17]

When Carter returned from Japan, Caddell pressed him to delay his scheduled television appearance and take time to consider further these issues with experts. Even with opposition from Vice President Mondale and Chief Domestic Policy Adviser Stuart Eizenstat, Carter acceded to Caddell's request. For eleven days, Carter and his advisers met with academics (including Lasch), journalists, community leaders, and politicians at Camp David. Based on these discussions, Carter's speechwriters constructed a draft assessing America's psychological plight but it was weighted toward the nation's pervading optimism and unlimited potential to overcome its problems.

Carter rejected most of this draft, and presented a bleaker picture. In his 'Energy and the Crisis of Confidence' speech delivered on July 15, the President spoke of 'a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in a loss of a unity of purpose for our nation'.[18] Additionally, Carter continues, 'The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and political fabric of America'. Carter's sermon was praised for its candour and eloquence. Journalists Tom Wicker and David Broder described the speech as Carter's most effective since his 1976 campaign; there was widespread support from Democratic officeholders; and Carter's public standing improved drastically – his approval ratings rose by 11 points.[19] As J. William Holland reported, 'It appeared that Carter had recaptured the initiative and might truly resurrect his political strength'.[20]

However, the president's impulsive decision two days later to call for the resignations of the entire White House and cabinet staff, only to dismiss the five with whom he was particularly displeased, caused a sharp re-interpretation of the malaise speech.[21] The public was unimpressed. Was the problem the nation's spirit or its

[17] White, *America in Search of Itself*, 258.
[18] PBS Primary Sources: The 'Crisis of Confidence' speech. www.pbs.org. Accessed 11/5/09. Note that when campaigning for the governorship of Georgia in 1970, Carter had made some similar remarks about Georgia 'mediocrity syndrome', explaining that Georgians could not legitimately blame the Civil War, the federal government, or the state government, for their problems. (Glad, p. 123).
[19] J. William Holland, 'The Great Gamble: Jimmy Carter and the 1979 Energy Crisis', Prologue: Quarterly Journal of the National Archives, Vol. 22: 1 (Spring 1990), 63-79. Carter Library, Vertical File, s.v. 'Crisis of Confidence'.
[20] Ibid
[21] Michael Blumenthal (Treasury), Joseph Califano (Health, Education and Welfare), Griffin Bell (Attorney General, Justice). Hamilton Jordan, who emerged from the resignation debacle as Carter's chief of staff, had urged action by the president after he became aware of unencumbered dissention by cabinet officials at Carter's Camp David summit.

clumsy political leadership, commentators mused. In 1976, the Carter campaign famously called for a 'government as good as the people'. Now, without achieving this standard, the president in his search for a solution appeared to be inverting the problem; and infusing it with pessimism that 'clashed with [America's] sanguine political culture'.[22] Carter's executive actions had brought into the spotlight the degree to which the nation's pressing problems seemed too substantial and complicated for its uncertain president. By late July, representative polls showed that 71 per cent of the population believed that 'the president may well not have the basic competence to do the job'.[23] Asked whether the 'crisis of confidence' best described the 'nation's future' or its 'elected officeholders', an overwhelming 65 per cent of respondents believed it referred most accurately to the country's politicians. For President Carter, a lack of faith in his veracity compounded the negative perceptions of his ability. A majority of respondents disbelieved his claims about a national energy shortage.[24] For Reagan strategist Richard Wirthlin, Carter was asking the right questions but had reached an erroneous conclusion. According to Wirthlin 'The more powerful and commanding explanation is that the country has not had time to recover from the downward spiral it was trapped in as a result of two decades of inadequate policy and leadership'.[25] Kevin Mattson confirmed that Carter's mass resignation demand caused a serious breakdown in perceptions of his authority:

> The announcement sent shock waves throughout the country and the world. By asking for across-the-board resignation, Carter created an appearance of meltdown. He also sent conflicting messages. He had said a 'crisis of confidence' existed in America's psyche but then suggested the crisis resided squarely within his own administration.[26]

At issue, critics agreed, was not the question of Carter's political philosophy – was he a liberal or conservative? – but the fundamental matter of whether he could inspire the nation. Or whether the Office presented too demanding a requirement for its incumbent? While Carter had the analytical abilities to diagnose deep faults in 1970s, he appeared to offer only patchwork solutions, without the coherence of an existing, or new, philosophy with which to weld his disparate ideas. Carter's difficulties in formulating long-term plans for his administration demonstrated important differences between campaigning and governing.[27] Supported by Pat Caddell's polls, Carter successfully moulded a moderate and amorphous political identity to win the Democratic nomination and general election in 1976. However, short-term poll swings offered few indications about how to direct incremental processes in government. Criticising Carter's self-presentation as an activist, Schlesinger explained that the president had not learned that 'coherence' and 'vision' were necessary to achieve connected policy change.[28] As Tevi Troy tells it, 'the American people were never able to adduce an ideology from Carter until the malaise speech, when they did not like what they heard'.[29]

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[22] Sloan, FDR and Reagan, 52.
[23] Kevin Mattson, *What The Heck Are You Up To, Mr President*, 171.
[24] Prologue: Quarterly Journal of the National Archives, Vol. 22: 1 (Spring 1990). The Great Gamble: Jimmy Carter and the 1979 Energy Crisis. J. William Holland. Pp. 63-79. Carter Library, Vertical File, s.v. 'Crisis of Confidence'.
[25] Campaign plan, 1980, p. 38. Box 177, Reagan Campaign 1980. Reagan Presidential Library.
[26] Mattson, *What The Heck Are You Up To, Mr President*, 168.
[27] See for instance Blumenthal, Permanent Campaign.
[28] Juxtaposing Carter with Democratic presidents Wilson, FDR, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson, Schlesinger sees Carter's 'defect' as his tendency to present 'disparate and unrelated shots rather than … a coherent program'. (p. 437).
[29] *Intellectuals and the American Presidency*, 140.

Two months after the malaise speech, in September 1979, White House deputy chief of staff Al McDonald submitted a memo to the president affirming the view of Carter's staff that his 'Crisis of Confidence' speech had failed to establish the president's leadership credentials.[30] Following discussions with Caddell and Powell, and borrowing ideas from *Leadership* by James MacGregor Burns, McDonald posited that Carter should ideally intermix Burns's transformational ('leader of society') and transactional ('leader of government') leadership types. The memo suggested that Carter's approach to the tasks of leadership had been feeble. To McDonald, the president spent too much time in transactional mode, and should devote two-thirds of his time '[positioning] himself sufficiently above the mass to gain recognition as our Leader of Society'. [31] McDonald carefully avoided mention of Carter's recent malaise speech, but he outlined a new agenda through which the president might achieve transformational leadership: by initiating a (positive) 'Program for the Eighties', centred on implementing recommendations from taskforces created specifically to debate America's 'overall goals' and directions in key policy areas to counter the nation's 'growing feeling of being overwhelmed by the complexity of the world and its problems'.

For Ted Kennedy, the speech became powerful evidence of Carter's incompetence, and the pretext for an acceleration in his plans to challenge the president. As Mattson writes, Kennedy was 'galvanised by the speech – July 15 became his turning point too'.[32] The Kennedy campaign operation moved from a speculative stage to active planning. Carter's malaise speech, Kennedy opined, 'was so completely contrary to everything I believe in that it upset me'.[33] After four weeks of personal contemplation, Kennedy resolved that he would contest Carter. Carter had been receiving memos from staffers who had seen Kennedy meeting with some of his prominent backers, or heard rumours of these meetings; and, fearing that the uncertainty surrounding Kennedy's intentions was preventing the clarity he needed to govern or campaign, Carter decided to confront the Massachusetts senator. At a lunch on September 7, Kennedy revealed, apparently to Carter's surprise, that he was likely to mount a challenge to the president's re-nomination.

*The Chaos of the Kennedy Campaign*

Despite his experience in politics, Kennedy had never faced a contest like the one he would face against Carter in 1980. Chagall observes that Kennedy's campaign experience was more limited than it appeared: it 'consisted of helping his brothers as a young man, and four cakewalks to the Senate, where the Kennedy name was enough to win him office'.[34] Some exceptional aspirants without a deep familiarity with national campaigning compensate for this through rigorous planning (Carter), early and decisive campaign activity (Carter, McGovern), and by recruiting strategists with a clear sense of how to win (Ford's hiring of Stu Spencer). However, this combination of effective planning, personnel, and pre-emptive activity was absent from Kennedy's campaign. And against an opponent with proven tenacity and resourcefulness in campaign politics, the liabilities of the Kennedy operation were likely to be exposed and exploited.

[30] Alonzo McDonald Papers, Box 27, Carter Presidential Library.
[31] McDonald suggests task forces for inflation, energy, productivity, education, health, and the role of the federal government.
[32] Mattson, *What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr President*, 173.
[33] White, *America in Search of Itself*, 271.
[34] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 133.

Kennedy's procrastination was supposed to ensure that he entered only when Carter's popularity lay in tatters. Extrapolating from the history of Carter's tenure, the longer he waited the more his entry would appear to be a desperate draft from his party. However, the result was that Kennedy was woefully underprepared for the start of the primary season.[35] Another of Kennedy's 'wrong moves' was the appointment of his brother-in-law Steve Smith to manage his campaign instead of an experienced campaign professional.[36] Chagall asserts that Smith had only a rudimentary grasp of nomination politics, and he did not move to fill the Kennedy campaign's lacuna in political strategy. By virtue of the Kennedy family brand, experienced operators who had been involved in John's and Robert's presidential bids were willing to lend help to Teddy. However, most of Smith's recruits worked in Kennedy's Senate office and, while this fostered a high level of personal loyalty to the candidate, it meant that the campaign forfeited the insights of experienced organisers. Despite this, Joe Napolitan who had been instrumental in John Kennedy's 1960 campaign, penned unsolicited memos that he sent to Smith, but these were ignored.

The technical blunderings of the Kennedy operation became apparent in the first caucus and primary contests. However, even before Kennedy's official announcement, it became obvious that his campaign had yet to distil a clear justification for Kennedy's candidacy. Kennedy's immediate reaction to Carter's malaise speech was criticism of the president's leadership, but he offered few assurances that his sense of purpose was more sharply defined. In response to Carter's malaise, Kennedy offered garbled gibberish:

> The essence of political leadership is basically challenge and response. Constantly, that's sort of the central element in terms of my makeup, and I think then you are getting response to the challenging again. In this country, I think it is an essential aspect of the soul of this society, and one of the things that's made it sort of great. And it seems to me that this is sort of what the Democrats have been about.[37]

Kennedy's eloquence had not improved by November 5, two days before his entry announcement, when he was interviewed about his presidential bid by CBS reporter Roger Mudd. Though it appeared a predictable query for a presidential aspirant, Kennedy appeared stunned and unprepared when Mudd questioned him about his reasons for running. Wilentz recorded that Kennedy 'hemmed and hawed about why he was seeking the presidency and never delivered a convincing answer'.[38] For close observers of the Kennedy campaign – even those who were sympathetic toward Kennedy – his stuttering explanations proved that his campaign lacked a core mission. Schlesinger decided that Kennedy lacked his brothers' thorough grasp of national affairs, and suspected that Kennedy's conformist staff had stifled creative discussions in his Senate office.[39] For White, 'Ted Kennedy had nothing, at this point, to say. Whatever he had to say echoed back to the 1960s and the popular insurgency of that time. In a troubled country this was no longer enough'.[40]

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[35] By declaring his entry before he had an effective campaign operation in place, Joe Napolitan explained that Kennedy 'violated one of the cardinal rules of announcing'. (Quoted in Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 165).
[36] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 133.
[37] Mattson, *What The Heck Are You Up To, Mr President*, 174.
[38] White, *Age of Reagan*, 117.
[39] Schlesinger, *Journals*, 478-479.
[40] White, *American in Search of Itself*, 278.

Under a generous interpretation, the shortcomings of the Kennedy campaign reflected the Kennedy camp's expectation that Carter's liabilities would ultimately overwhelm him; and that therefore Kennedy needed merely to be available. However these assumptions downplayed Carter's ruthless determination, the possibility that the president's popularity might improve, and the potential for Kennedy's liabilities to become relevant factors in the contest. Carter's uncompromising plans ensured that he was much better prepared than his rival; and his standing as president turned sharply upward following the unexpected seizure of the American embassy in Tehran. While the public focused on Iran, Carter's liabilities receded into the background. In contrast, Kennedy's controversial personal history became more important. He was inarticulate when probed about his controversial marriage. And the return of media attention to the Chappaquiddick incident, which the Kennedy team had naively believed would no longer be an issue, resurrected questions about their candidate's character and judgment.

### (III) SEIZURE OF US EMBASSY, TEHRAN (NOVEMBER 4, 1979)

*The seizure of the US Embassy was a turning point because it caused a rapid improvement in Carter's standing and prospects. This result occurred because of the perception that Carter handled the crisis effectively (agency factors). The actions of the hostage-takers (structural factors) were a contributing cause.*

Following a series of strikes and violent demonstrations from August 1978, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi abdicated his throne on January 16, 1979, first for Egypt but ultimately for the United States when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Under the realpolitik of the Nixon-Kissinger years, the US backed the Shah to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence to Iran. The fall of his monarchy and its replacement with an Islamic Republic led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini caused an unrestrained outpouring of anti-Americanism.

On the morning of November 4, 1979, a group of 300 students forced their way into the US Embassy in Tehran, and proceeded to take hostage 52 American diplomatic staff. The radical students demanded that America return both the Shah to face trial and the wealth he had allegedly moved to the US for safekeeping. The students had initially planned to stage a short demonstration but, encouraged by Khomeini's claims that the US was plotting to reinstate the Shah, their stubbornness intensified and a stand-off ensued between the hostage-takers and the United States government.

Kennedy had scheduled November 7 as the date he would declare publicly his entry into the 1980 presidential race and, despite events in Tehran, Kennedy officially launched his campaign with an announcement in Boston on this day. However, this climax to several months of speculation was overshadowed by Carter's handling of the embassy invasion. President Carter emphasised that the safety of the American hostages was his priority, and he pursued a restrained policy of negotiations under economic pressures (achieved by banning imports of Iranian oil and securing Iranian-owned assets in the US). Wilentz summarises the new

parameters in the nomination race: 'Now, at last, Kennedy's candidacy would become a vehicle for Democratic liberals infuriated for years by what they considered Carter's apostasy – but it would do so under the shadow of the hostage crisis in Iran'.[41]

Carter initially benefited from the groundswell in patriotic fervour unleashed by events in Iran. In an October 29 – November 3, 1979 poll taken by Gallup, Carter's approval rating was a lowly 30.4 per cent. By early December it stood at 61 percent, though it had fallen back to 55 per cent in early 1980.[42] His foreign policy approval exceeded his domestic policy approval by 13 per cent.[43] As a result of the hostage crisis, Wilentz explains, Kennedy's chances of defeating Carter dwindled.[44] While polls in the summer of 1979 showed Kennedy with a comfortable lead, Carter's popularity soared – rising faster than any other president in the history of the Gallup poll – in the weeks after the hostage crisis. In national polls, backing for Carter's approach to the Iran crisis ranged from 64 per cent (ABC News) to 78 per cent (Harris).[45] Arthur Schlesinger, a devout Kennedy backer, accepted that events had conspired to strengthen Carter's position of leadership in the party. In a December diary entry, Schlesinger reflected that 'While Democrats don't much like [Carter], they don't dislike him enough, for the moment anyway, to start organizing against him'.[46] Compounding these changing perceptions, Kennedy opened himself to attack by publicly denouncing the Shah and criticizing Carter's decision to allow him access to America.[47]

It was apparent to contemporary analysts, even without the benefits of hindsight, that the situation in Iran would have a major bearing on domestic politics in America. For the *American Political Report*, writing before the beginning of the 1980 election year, the embassy seizure was the turning point of 1980 campaign: 'By most yardsticks, the Iranian crisis is emerging as a watershed of 1980 presidential politics as well as of international relations – and the prime beneficiary is Jimmy Carter'.[48] Although Carter's overall performance as president made him especially vulnerable to any downward turn in perceptions of his management of the crisis, so far, the Report summarised, the Iran crisis was the 'miracle' behind Carter's 'remarkable political recovery'.[49] Gallup showed that Carter was expected to comfortably defeat Reagan in a hypothetical election, but Kennedy was head-to-head with the Californian.[50]

[41] Wilentz, *Age of Reagan*, 116.
[42] John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-Evaluation*, 7.
[43] Gallup poll, February 1-4, 1980.
[44] Wilentz, *Age of Reagan*, 116-117.
[45] The American Political Report IX: 6 (December 7, 1979). Box 359, Reagan 1980 Campaign. Reagan Presidential Library.
[46] Schlesinger, *Journals*, 453.
[47] Betty Glad points to the irony that Carter's failure to free the hostages never caught up with him during the primary season. Even his ill-fated rescue attempt was generally supported, despite Secretary of State Vance resignation because of it. (469-470).
[48] The American Political Report IX: 6 (December 7, 1979). Box 359, Reagan 1980 Campaign. Reagan Presidential Library.
[49] Ibid
[50] Gallup, February 1-4, 1980.

## (IV) IOWA CAUCUSES (JANUARY 21, 1980)

*The Iowa Caucuses were a turning point because Carter defeated Kennedy in the first significant test in the race to establish an important lead over his rival. The outcome was the result of agency factors: the contest between the campaigns of the principal candidates.*

At the end of 1979, Schlesinger reflected, the Kennedy campaign lacked organisation and direction. 'Circumstances compelled them to start before they were ready', Schlesinger leniently concluded.[51] In reality, Kennedy and his backers had consumed the precious months since November developing their critique of Carter and speculating about the possibilities of defeating him. However, this was also the time period when an organisation would need to be constructed if Kennedy's entry was to be more than symbolic. Consequently, Kennedy's fledgling campaign effort was failing in crucial areas such as the raising of funds, recruitment and organisation of fieldworkers, and delegation of tasks. Kennedy's organisation relied on his inexperienced Senate staffers; sporadic advice from older practitioners, inexpert in post-1972 management techniques; and a smaller finance base than his brothers' because of post-1972 limits on 'fat cat' donations. In the reformed institutional environment, against an experienced incumbent president who relished the challenge of campaigning aggressively against Kennedy, such delays, inexperience, and resource constraints were severely costly. Rick Stearns, whose campaign experience was both recent and rigorous, was recruited by Kennedy in October 1979. Stearns, however, 'was appalled, not at disorganization, but at no organization'.[52]

Carter's campaign tried to manipulate expectations to put pressure on Kennedy. Campaign chairman Robert S. Strauss explained to reporters that Kennedy was 'going for broke' in the state, but that the president's prospects did not hinge has heavily on the Iowa result.[53] They believed that Carter could survive politically if he suffered defeats in New England because of his strength in the South. Tim Kraft, the Carter campaign's political director, stressed 'all the resources' Kennedy was investing in Iowa, and the advantages of proximity to Massachusetts.[54]

However, as Germond and Witcover reported, by mid-December expectations in Washington were beginning to track the turn in the president's polling. Observers tended increasingly to view Carter's nomination as relatively safe, compared with its fragility before the Iranian crisis. For the White House, this shift in expectations would have been beneficial for the president if Kennedy had decided to not enter or to withdraw. Now, however, the effects of new expectations were more ambiguous. A close result in Iowa would benefit Kennedy more than the front-runner president. As Germond and Witcover stated, 'The White House is discovering suddenly that there is a flip side to the extraordinary gains President Carter has achieved in the opinion polls during the crisis in Iran… the "sure loser" has become the "sure winner" in the eyes of

[51] Schlesinger, *Journals*, 478-479.
[52] White, *America in Search of Itself*, 276.
[53] Washington Star, December 17, 1979. Reagan Papers, Box 358. Reagan Presidential Library.
[54] Ibid

many of the politically unschooled.'[55] Furthermore, managing expectations in Iowa was especially problematic for the White House because, unlike in most of New England, the president had always been popular in Iowa. He won the caucuses in the state in 1976 and since then had comfortably described the state as his 'second home'.[56]

Within a week of his arrival at Kennedy headquarters, Stearns arranged for twelve organisers to begin preparations in Iowa for their state caucuses. However, with only eighty days between their set up in the state and the convening of the caucuses, and with a likely attendance at the Democratic caucuses of 100,000, their task was formidable. For his part, Carter pulled out of a debate with his Democratic opponents scheduled for January 7, and thereby ensured that Kennedy's frustrations about his presidency could be aired only indirectly. Consequently, without the fundamentals of their campaign organisation in place, and deprived of the platform of a televised debate, the Kennedy staff began to pare down their expectations for the state. On the eve of the primary, their latest pronouncement was that they hoped to come within 10 per cent of the president.

The actual results were even worse than these revised expectations. Carter won by nearly two to one, 59-31. A survey analysis of caucus attendees by Walter J. Stone demonstrated the importance of perceptions of Kennedy's slump and Carter's political renewal.[57] 45 per cent of the Democratic activists identified Kennedy as closer to their preferred ideological position while only 40 per cent saw Carter as more proximate to their hypothetical bliss point. However, 65 per cent of Democrats believed that Carter would be more electable in November than Kennedy, and only 20 per cent thought that Kennedy stood a better chance than the president in the general election. Consequently 34 per cent of respondents who preferred Kennedy's ideology admitted that they backed Carter.

Schlesinger conveyed his belief that this all but doomed Kennedy's nascent campaign. 'I feel very sorry for Ted today, but also rather mad at him, for having kicked away the opportunity to deliver the nation from four more years of Carter and incompetence'.[58] Kennedy's campaign manager, Steve Smith, urged his candidate to quit.

### (V) NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY (FEBRUARY 26, 1980)

*The New Hampshire primary was a critical juncture because Carter's victory in this state caused the near-collapse of the Kennedy campaign. The causes of this event were agency factors: the campaign activities of the Carter and Kennedy teams.*

[55] Jack Germon and Jules Witcover, December 18, 1979, Washington Star. Reagan Papers, Box 358. Reagan Presidential Library.
[56] Ibid
[57] Party, Ideology, and the Lure of Victory: Iowa Activists in the 1980 Prenomination Campaign', 529-530.
[58] Schlesinger, *Journals*, 487. January 22 entry.

New Hampshire, the *Washington Post* reported, was for Kennedy a state 'he had to win'.[59] However, in this critical New England contest, Kennedy was once again comfortably defeated. His prospects, which had been bleak since the embassy crisis, now appeared hopeless. The *Washington Post* assessed Kennedy as 'a candidate with irreparable shortages of votes and hope'.[60] New Hampshire marked the end of Schlesinger's commentary on the build-up of the contest between Carter and Kennedy. He recorded the New Hampshire primary result in a revealing footnote: 'A sad few days; the Kennedy campaign [has come] to an end'.[61] Journalists speculated about when and how Kennedy was going to exit.

In a desperate move to revive his struggling candidacy, Kennedy made a determined effort to dislodge Carter from his untouchable position as the nation's lead negotiator in the Iran crisis. In a speech at Georgetown University on January 28, Kennedy attacked Carter for exploiting foreign policy situations for his own political benefit. Carter's campaign reversed the charge, alleging that it was Kennedy who was posturing whenever it was politically expedient to do so:

> Senator Kennedy's speech is his latest attempt to develop a rationale for his candidacy. As hard and as many times as he has tried, Senator Kennedy has once again failed to make clear why he is running against an incumbent President of his own party. In November, it was electability – until the polls changed. In December, it was leadership – until the Senator's comments on the Shah. Now, in January, it is a catchall compendium of new positions on old ideas. Throughout, the rationale has been dictated by which way the political winds are blowing in which primary state …[62]

The efforts of the Carter campaign to muzzle Kennedy and sustain their control of the interpretation of events in Iran continued to bear fruits. Following New Hampshire, Carter scored impressive victories in Wyoming and Vermont on March 4, and from March 11 he comprehensively swept the South. Kennedy's meagre response was an expected victory in his home state. Chagall opines that 'the press was unimpressed'.[63] Reflecting on his lunchtime conversation with Kennedy after the New Hampshire primary, White admits that 'Kennedy himself probably knew it [the race] as over'.[64]

### (VI) NEW YORK PRIMARY (MARCH 25, 1980)

*The New York primary election was a critical juncture because it caused a Kennedy resurgence. It was predominantly caused by agency factors: Carter's unconstrained actions in respect of an important UN Security Council Resolution. The campaign activities of the rival candidates contributed to the rival outcome.*

Carter had been in regular contact with New York politicians since late 1979. New York Mayor Ed Koch jumped aboard the Carter bandwagon, but only after presenting the president with a list of projects for which he expected federal support. Six days before the primary election, a Harris poll showed that Carter held a

[59] *Washington Post*, February 28, 1980.
[60] *Washington Post*, February 28, 1980.
[61] Schlesinger, *Journals*, 490.
[62] White House Central Files, Political Affairs, PL-5. Carter Presidential Library.
[63] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 151.
[64] White, *America in Search of Itself*, 297.

tremendous lead 61-34 over Kennedy.[65] However, Carter committed a major blunder that dented this significant lead. Under pressure from Vice President Mondale, Carter repudiated the US vote for UN Security Council Resolution 465, which condemned Israeli settlement expansions.[66] Almost immediately he reversed his stance by claiming 'a mistake in communications'.[67] 'Apparently, no one was in charge', White evaluated.[68] Carter's support in New York's large Jewish community evaporated; and polls showed large numbers of non-Jews recoiling from the president following this latest demonstration of incompetence. On primary day, Kennedy triumphed with a comfortable 59-41 victory. In nearby Connecticut, Kennedy's fortunes also improved as he again reversed Carter to win in the state by 47-42.

Though anomalous, Kennedy's New York victory triggered a deviant phase in the Democratic race. The Kennedy camp was re-invigorated; the press stopped harassing the candidate about his exit strategy; and contributions re-started from Kennedy sympathizers who again believed that he might be able to stop the president. The Kennedy team hired campaign and media professionals, including Joe Napolitan and other John and Robert Kennedy campaigners. However, despite the renewed activity in the Kennedy movement, the fundamentals of the race were skewed heavily against their candidate. Carter had won 16 of the 18 caucus and primary contests before the March 25 events, and led in the delegate race by almost 2 to 1 (746-385).[69] To stop Carter, Kennedy would need to win more than 60 per cent of the remaining delegates. Chagall argues that media assessments that this task was 'almost impossible' quickly permeated the race and adversely affected Kennedy's ability to score even near this mark.[70] New hire Napolitan bemoaned that 'By the time Kennedy recovered, he was so far behind he didn't have a chance to catch up'.[71]

The race developed a more balanced complexion after New York but the president's advantage over his challenger remained intact. On April 22, Kennedy took Pennsylvania by a slim margin, 46-45; but, in the meantime, Carter had secured significant blocs of delegates in caucuses in Minnesota, Mississippi, and Virginia. The trend continued in May as Kennedy's 62-37 success in Washington DC was overwhelmed by a flood of Carter delegates from Indiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, and Texas. By the final day of the primary season on June 3, Carter was practically assured of a first ballot victory – Kennedy would require a staggering 86 per cent of all votes in the remaining eight states to overturn the president's lead.[72] With voters keen to register their dissatisfaction of the president and near-certain Democratic nominee for the 1980 general election, Kennedy captured large delegate hauls in California, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and South Dakota. Despite this large-scale protest vote, Carter still won West Virginia, Montana, and Ohio to swell his total to 1,971 delegates against Kennedy's 1,221. A Gallup poll taken in mid-

[65] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 156.
[66] Kenneth Stein, 'My Problem with Jimmy Carter's Book', Middle East Quarterly (Spring 2007), 3-15.
[67] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 157.
[68] White, *America in Search of Itself*, 298.
[69] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 157.
[70] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 157.
[71] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 166.
[72] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 162.

June confirmed that Kennedy ended the race much more popular than President Carter, but the game had been settled: 'the arithmetic read inexorably … The nomination was Carter's'.[73]

[73] Gallup poll, June 16 – 19. White, *America in Search of Itself*, 302.

# 11 THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION CONTEST OF 1980

In an article on the likely shape of presidential politics in 1980, the Philadelphia Inquirer discerned a set of conditions that favoured the Republican Party:

> For the first time in years, the major political issues are breaking in the Republicans' favor. It seems almost inevitable that the country will be struggling through an energy shortage, a recession and double-digit inflation – a grim combination for the Democrats … Despite his successes [in foreign affairs] – establishment of full relations with China, the Mideast peace accords, the Panama Canal treaties and completion of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (which awaits ratification) – those same achievements have stirred fears that the United States is losing strength and leadership in the world.[1]

Ronald Reagan led the Republican charge against President Carter. Endowed with an unswerving conservative identity that rejected the foundations of the weary liberal state; and with high visibility and prestige from running strongly against President Ford in 1976, Reagan was widely viewed as the heir apparent amongst both elite and rank-and-file Republicans. More than any other single event, Reagan's surprise resurgence at the North Carolina primary contest in 1976 set in motion a revival that established him as the front-runner in 1980. (See Table 11.1). In the period after the 1976 election Reagan strengthened further his prospects by maintaining his profile through regular media commentaries and building connections with networks of policy experts, campaign activists, and conservative sympathisers. By 1980, Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover thought, Reagan's political assets were 'formidable'.[2]

However, his seemingly inexorable path to his party's nomination was complicated by deep and crippling management feuds in his campaign which impaired important judgments. Those flawed decisions as a result of this internecine conflict created opportunities for former UN Ambassador George Bush to produce a surprise defeat for Reagan in the Iowa caucuses which in turn jolted Reagan from his previously complacent attitude to his campaign's mismanagement of his candidacy; and a renewed vigour superseded his acquiescence. Most pertinently, Reagan replaced John Sears, who had controlled the campaign's operations and strategy, and returned to his conventional close-contact mode of campaigning – a style that he believed suited his strengths as a candidate, but one that Sears thought too risky. These decisive manoeuvres helped Reagan to restore his advantage over Bush in New Hampshire, and Reagan's victory in this state's critical primary began a new phase of domination for the Californian. In contrast to Reagan's resolve under competitive pressures, George Bush rebuffed his suggestions from his strategists that could have helped him to regain campaign momentum from Reagan. Bush's candidacy continued, but neither he nor John Connally proved able to overturn the return of grassroots support for Reagan.

Table 11.1 Critical Junctures in Democratic Nomination, 1980

[1] Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 358, Philadelphia Inquirer, Sunday November 4, 1979.
[2] The Washington Star, November 14, 1979, Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 358. Reagan Presidential Library.

| EVENT | DATE | SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE (TRAJECTORY SHIFT) | CAUSE OF CRITICAL JUNCTURE | AGENT | NATURE OF CAUSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **North Carolina Primary** | March 23, 1976 | Establishes Reagan as front-runner in 1980 Republican race. | A > A | Reagan; Ford | A (Reagan): campaign activities and issue positioning (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Ford): (Tactics, Identity) |
| **Iowa Caucuses** | January 21, 1980 | Bush scores a surprise victory over front-runner Reagan, and establishes himself as an unexpectedly strong challenger. | A > A | Reagan; Bush | A (Reagan): campaign activities and issue positioning (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Bush): (Tactics, Identity) |
| **New Hampshire Primary** | February 26, 1980 | Reagan defeats Bush and regains his front-runner status. | A > A | Reagan; Bush | A (Reagan): campaign activities and issue positioning (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Bush): (Tactics, Identity) |
| **Wisconsin Primary** | April 1, 1980 | Reagan eliminates Anderson. | A > A | Reagan; Anderson | A (Reagan): campaign activities and issue positioning (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Anderson): (Tactics, Identity) |
| **South Carolina Primary** | April 12, 1980 | Reagan eliminates Connally. | A > A | Reagan; Connally | A (Reagan): campaign activities and issue positioning (Identity, Tactics, Management)<br><br>A (Connally): (Tactics, Identity) |

Key:

(i) A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(ii) S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture. There are no other factors that would have caused a different outcome. There may be other, but less determinative, structural or agency factors.

(iii) S > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *structural* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(iv) A > S: *Structural* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of this agency factor.

(v) A > A: *Agency* factors cause the critical juncture, even though another *agency* factor would have caused a different outcome but for the presence of the predominant agency factor.

## (I) NORTH CAROLINA PRIMARY (MARCH 23, 1976)

*The North Carolina primary in 1976 was a turning point in the Republican race in 1980 because it established Reagan as a viable presidential contender. Its cause was the choices of the Reagan and Ford campaigns (agency factors).*

Though he ultimately failed to prevent the nomination of President Ford by the Republican Party, Reagan's 1976 run established him as the party's leading contender in 1980. 'Ronald Reagan', Peter Hannaford confirms, 'left [the Republican Convention at] Kansas City not as a defeated candidate but as the leader of a large segment of his party and with the respect of those who had not supported him'.[3] Reagan's prospects in 1980 were ignited by his surprising performance in the North Carolina primary in 1976 – at this juncture his campaign rebounded from a sequence of primary defeats to seize a victory that kept alive Reagan's candidacy and forced a close contest in the remaining contests.

[3] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 137.

Reagan had worked consistently to enhance his national visibility and presidential prospects since his half-hearted 1968 bid. Reagan himself dismissed that venture as a hopeful 'favourite son' run but he nevertheless attracted the support of followers who became important to him in later campaigns. Governor Reagan had also been the focus of media attention as a Nixon envoy on foreign trips and in his testimony before Senate Finance Committee in opposition to the Nixon Family Assistance Plan (FAP).[4] However, Reagan's North Carolina primary victory, more than any other event, enhanced his stature and credibility as the Republican Party's most competitive asset. Lou Cannon is rightly clear on this point: 'North Carolina was the turning point in Reagan pursuit of the presidency. It kept him in the race to Kansas City, from which he emerged as the presumptive front-runner in 1980'.[5]

Despite Reagan's widely acclaimed performance in 1976, in the aftermath of the Kansas City convention the strategic uplift caused by Reagan's 1976 run was overshadowed by recurring questions about his political future. Prominent among those questions were those about his age. Sixty-nine in 1980, if he won the election Reagan would become the oldest man to take the Oath of Office. Throughout 1977 Reagan remained non-committal. However, he maintained his high public profile by giving regular lectures and contributing radio and newspaper commentaries.[6] In an important move that established him as the nation's leading facilitator of conservative political thought and action, Reagan committed the $1.5 million surplus remaining from his 1976 campaign to the creation of a political action committee, Citizens for the Republic (CFTR), to support the advance of conservatism in the Republican Party.[7] Most of its resources were channelled to assisting conservative aspirants to obtain elected office; and by 1978 it provided more money to more candidates than any non-business political action committee in the nation.[8] Chaired by Ronald Reagan, long-time Reagan loyalist Lyn Nofziger became executive director, and its steering committee comprised 'men and women in every corner of the country who shared the Reagan philosophy'.[9]

By the end of the year Reagan and his advisers confronted a dilemma. If he continued his high-profile activities with intensity, he kept open the possibility of mounting a presidential run in 1980. However, he risked creating an impression in media circles that he was already running, and might thereby invite unwonted scrutiny. On the other hand a lower profile might diminish enthusiasm for a Reagan candidacy in 1980, and allow competitors to seize the issue positions that Reagan had crafted and the supporters he had mobilized.

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[4] This was an administration proposal to replace the myriad of existing welfare programmes with a minimum income guarantee. Reagan argued forcefully that this benign attempt to simplify welfare provision was naïve: his experience in California had taught him to expect pressures that would be difficult to resist. Several senators claimed that Reagan's testimony was the most significant factor in the demise of FAP.

[5] Lou Cannon, *Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power*, 406.

[6] Early in his first term as Governor, Reagan declared his intention to serve only two terms – he did not run for re-election after his second term expired in 1975.

[7] Reagan's surplus was unintentional, and the result of complications with the implementation of the matching funds provision of the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) amendments. The Supreme Court stopped the flow of Federal Election Commission matching funds until Congress corrected the FECA amendments to accord with the constitution. When the funds were finally disbursed, the campaign had finished, and for Reagan this meant an instantaneous accumulation of significant resources.

[8] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 167.

[9] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 142.

Hannaford describes this dilemma, but offers no account of its solution.[10] However, from Hannaford's account, it is clear that Reagan embarked on a permanent campaign: he spent more time broadening his contacts in all segments the Republican Party and amongst issue activists with Republican, Democratic, or independent leaning.

His sharp attacks on the Carter Administration served also to clarify his own political identity and his philosophy of government. He made speeches on the entire sweep of government activity – in health, education, taxation, foreign policy, and states rights and skilfully connected his stances on those subjects to the broader themes of leadership and freedom. In one radio broadcast, on January 9, 1978, Reagan explained that his 'criticism is not directed against [the American] system [of government]', but rather 'I criticise those I believe are turning away from and repudiating the very principles which brought us greatness, eroding individual freedom, robbing us of independence and the right to control our own destiny'.[11]

Though he challenged the order established by Democratic politicians in Congress and the White House, Reagan was careful to make his case in a way that could appeal to disenchanted Democrats. Themes associated with leadership offered a useful vehicle for these purposes. Using his own life journey as an example, Reagan called on disenchanted Democrats to abandon their failed leaders: 'I am criticizing not the rank and file Democrats of this country. I am criticizing the leadership of the party – a leadership that made so many of us change because we could no longer follow it … And we as Republicans should be appealing to them to join us whether it is in name or not, but least in practice to make a change in our leadership …'[12] American citizens viewed leadership in complex ways, but most were clear that it was missing from the national scene.[13] In 1980, they aspired for a leader with 'vision' and 'strength', but they were willing to settle for someone who was consistent and 'knew their own mind'. Reagan's campaign believed that in each of these dimensions their candidate could offer advantages over his potential Democratic opponents. 'Leadership', for Reagan strategist Richard Wirthlin, 'is the ability to enlarge men's visions about the future and give them expectations of a less uncertain and more gratifying future'.[14] Carter had failed to foster these expectations and had responded 'only marginally' to substantial faults in economic, foreign, and urban affairs.[15] Most pertinently, Wirthlin realised that if Reagan spoke optimistically (unlike Carter) and coherently (unlike Kennedy) about his vision for the nation, he could defeat either of the likely Democratic nominees.

On March 7, 1979, a group of Reagan supporters met at the Republican Capitol Hill Club and, on their behalf, Senator Paul Laxalt announced to the assembled news reporters that they were forming a Reagan for President Committee. In contrast with his 1976 effort, Reagan benefited from a broad range of Republican elite endorsements. In 1976 Reagan's campaign committee was announced with fewer than 10 names on it,

[10] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 155.
[11] 'Our Country'. Reagan Pre-Presidential Papers, 1918-1980, Box 17. Reagan Presidential Library.
[12] Prepared Statement on 'Disenchanted Democrats'. Reagan Campaign 1980, Box 359. Reagan Presidential Library.
[13] Report on a Focus Group Discussion of the 1980 Presidential Election, Conducted by Peter D. Hart in Canton, Ohio. July 21, 1980. Reagan 1980 Campaign, William Timmons Papers, Box 250.
[14] Campaign Plan, 1980, p. 38. Box 177, Reagan Campaign 1980. Reagan Presidential Library.
[15] Ibid, p. 39.

but by 1980 the list had grown to 365 and included 5 senators, 20 representatives, and four former cabinet members from the Ford administration – William Simon (Treasury), Casper Weinberger (Health, Education, and Welfare), Earl Butz (Agriculture), and Stanley Hathaway (Interior).

*Reagan Plots his Path*

Although Reagan delayed his candidacy announcement until November 13, his new exploratory committee began to plan for his certain entry, and soon after its members would officially become staff of the 'Reagan for President Committee'. As in 1976 Laxalt would chair the Reagan for President Committee. John Sears would be executive vice-chairman, but executive responsibilities would also be shared with Michael Deaver (Deputy Chairman for Operations) and Lyn Nofziger (Deputy Chairman for Finance).

In 1980 Reagan's political identity as a conservative came to fit a growing trend toward conservatism in elite discourse.[16] Germond and Witcover contrast the 'image of right-wing of extremism' that had hampered Reagan's previous bids with the growing fit of his identity with political demands in 1980: 'In the broadest sense, Reagan is where the country is today, at least rhetorically.'[17] Skowronek observes that 'liberalism was on the defensive'.[18] Since the New Deal, liberal politicians had consistently outmanoeuvred their conservative rivals to construct the bureaucracies of the American state. Lacking the intellectual and grassroots bases of liberalism, anti-statist conservatives were left to hope that the courts would arrest and reverse federal advances into the economy and society. However, by the time of Lyndon B. Johnson's premature departure from the White House, the excesses of liberal domination of the federal bureaucracy had become apparent. Statist liberalism became associated with slow growth and high inflation, a perceived breakdown in family values and norms of decency, a widespread fear of declining American influence in global politics, and an overwhelming acceptance that the state was unable to meet the demands placed upon it. Theodore Lowi's polemic *End of Liberalism* appraised that the *status quo* governing apparatus neither achieved its professed end nor was inherently self-correcting. Indeed he argues that by entrenching interests in government institutions, it worked contrary to its stated aims of spreading opportunity. 'Interest-group liberal solutions to the problem of power', Lowi found, 'provide the system with stability by spreading a *sense* of representation at the expense of genuine flexibility, at the expense of democratic forms, and ultimately at the expensive of liberty'.[19]

Growing awareness of the limits of liberalism fuelled new intellectual and organisational energy on the part of conservatives. As Brian J. Glenn and Steven M. Teles write, 'Conservatism was reshaped by the liberal policy regime it sought to dislodge'. Grassroots organisers, networks of conservative activists and public action

[16] As Larry M. Schwab in *The Illusion of a Conservative Reagan Revolution* shows, media presentation of a rightward shift in public opinion from the late 1970s were mistaken. Instead Schwab finds that 'The major conclusion which can be drawn from the data and analyses is that US public opinion has remained relatively stable over the last two decades. The majority of Americans continually support the liberal positions on some issues and the conservative positions on others' (p. 6).
[17] The Washington Star, November 14, 1979. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 358. Reagan Presidential Library.
[18] Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 361.
[19] *End of Liberalism*, 62.

committees (of which Reagan's was the largest), and a new cadre of policy intellectuals based in independent research centres, saw opportunities to configure a conservative state and conservative policy outputs.[20]

Ronald Reagan was not an intellectual but held simple and consistent views about government and public policy that marked him as a faithful conservative. As the Republican Party became increasingly conservative, Reagan's leadership of the party became ever more congruent with the preferences of its officeholders and rank-and-file members.[21] Announcing his candidacy in New York on November 13, 1979, Reagan reaffirmed his identity credentials by repudiating the liberal regime:

> There are those in our land today … who would have us believe that the United States, like other great civilizations of the past, has reached the zenith of its power; that we are weak and fearful, reduced to bickering with each other and no longer possessed of the will to cope with our problems … I don't believe that. And I don't believe you do either. That is why I am seeking the presidency.[22]

Among his priorities, Reagan explained, were the reduction of 'punitive' taxes in order to revitalize the economy and tackle cost-push inflation, removal of government obstacles to energy production and usage, and restoration of America's assertiveness in international politics. Reagan's name recognition aided his candidacy, Hannaford assesses, but 'the components of his public image, however, were more important'.[23] Thus, Reagan's popularity in the late 1970s was rooted in the preferences of his supporters, and not merely in changeable expectations about the inevitability of his conquest.[24] As David S. Broder makes clear, 'Reagan is the legitimate GOP frontrunner not just because the polls say so, but because a remarkable number of the party's activists and faithful have been working and waiting for a dozen years now to make him their nominee… No one has a bigger following, or a better organization, among those who are likely to attend Republican caucuses and vote in Republican primaries than he does.'[25]

There being no incumbent Republican against whom to compete, Ronald Reagan entered the race as the leading contender with, in consequence, a different set of tactics and constraints from those that characterised his 1976 effort. Germond and Witcover conceded that Reagan was 'the overwhelming favorite to win the 1980 Republican nomination' but cautioned that 'he still must prove that he can function effectively as the front-runner against whom all other Republican candidates will be measured …'[26] These realities were acknowledged by Reagan's staff and associates, who had worked meticulously to engineer Reagan's leadership situation in the race. Hannaford explains that 'when you are the leader, you do approach campaigning

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[20] *Conservatism and American Political Development*, 324. Much of this intellectual initiative came from a group of former Democrats, who were especially disenchanted with the growing emphasis on order and interdependence in foreign policy-making circles; and argued for a return to anti-communism as the foundation of American foreign policy. Many in this group had backed Senator Henry Jackson's candidacy in 1972 and supported his call for the US to strengthen its national defence. (John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*).

[21] Nelson Polsby explains the growing homogeneity of the parties as a result of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Acts (1965). Because of the surge in the registration of black voters, these acts strengthened the liberal factions in the Democratic Party; but they also encouraged conservative Democrats to desert their party to become Republicans.

[22] Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 359. Reagan Presidential Library.

[23] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 201.

[24] Thus there is an important contrast between Reagan's robust front-runner status and Edmund Muskie's in 1972.

[25] *Washington Post*, November 11, 1979. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 358. Reagan Presidential Library.

[26] The Washington Star, November 14, 1979. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 358. Reagan Presidential Library.

differently from the way a challenger does. The circumstances in November 1979 were far different for Ronald Reagan and his followers from those of November 1975. It would take some getting used to'.[27] John Sears nevertheless maintained that Reagan's problems of staying ahead were much simpler than those of playing catch-up. For Sears, Reagan's difficulties were 'a burden that any of those other candidates would be happy to bear…'[28]

As the leading prospect in the Republican race, a volley of concentrated attacks by Reagan's opponents on his campaign was inescapable. Hannaford argues that their initial target was Ronald Reagan's age. To dispel the myth that Reagan lacked the stamina to compete against younger rivals, Sears arranged a whirlwind 11-state campaign blitz following Reagan's announcement. Beyond countering fears about Reagan's age, Sears's overarching strategy involved cultivating the perception that Reagan's victory was inevitable.[29] To pursue this strategy successfully, the candidate and his campaign sought to dissuade entry by potentially serious contenders and to minimize the support that might coalesce on these alternatives if they chose to enter. In a strategic u-turn from the grassroots foundation of Reagan's 1976 efforts, Reagan's campaign sought the endorsements of political elites to reinforce perceptions of his strength and the inexorable growth of his campaign's momentum. A case in point is the Republican elite in New York that, under control from Nelson Rockefeller, had generally opposed Reagan's previous presidential bids.[30] In the summer of 1979, major Republican leaders in the state came out in support of Reagan.

Though this set of tactics was testament to Reagan's strength over the other candidates, the race was inherently precarious – a fact recognised by Reagan's associates. Hannaford observes that 'It was true that organisationally we were far ahead of the other candidates', but reflected that, despite this, 'still there were pitfalls' even before the first primary election.[31]

Reagan's most serious problems concerned the management of his campaign organisation; and its fluctuating performance in support of its candidate impacted upon Reagan's performance in critical primary contests. From its inception, the Reagan operation was riven by factions. Attempts at collective direction of the campaign collapsed when Nofziger, supported by Laxalt, challenged Sears's strategy for the nomination. Nofziger was concerned that Sears was trying to restrict Reagan's public exposure and persuading Washington-based journalists that his candidate had mollified his issue positions and policy proposals. For Nofziger these tactics ignored the purpose of Reagan's candidacy, which he deemed to be instrumental to the candidate's support, and downplayed the potential for Reagan to win by campaigning vigorously and

[27] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 220.
[28] The Washington Star, November 14, 1979. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 358. Reagan Presidential Library.
[29] Sears' faith in this strategy was shown by his willingness to bet reporters that the name of the Republican nominee would be known before the Democratic nomination battle was finished. David S. Broder, *Washington Post* , Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 358 (No date)

[30] In a special report for the *New York Times*, August 19, 1979, Frank Lynn described the 'surprising strength of Mr. Reagan among New York City Republicans'. This included the Republican leaders of Brooklyn and the Bronx. Note that other prominent New Yorkers, including Senator Jacob K. Javits, remained neutral. (Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 363).
[31] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 219-220.

mobilising grassroots activists. Unable to reconcile his opinions with the campaign's trajectory under Sears's leadership, Nofziger resigned in the last week of August 1979.[32]

However, the fissures exposed by the Sears-Deaver conflict persisted. A geographical divide between the conservative Reagan loyalists based in California and the pragmatic professionals in Washington DC symbolised and exacerbated these tensions. And Sears became increasingly resolute in his desire to mould the campaign organisation to his preferences, and by the end of the year he had secured from Reagan his exclusive right to make executive decisions, moved the campaign's issue development unit to Washington, and forced the resignation of his new principal challengers, Martin Anderson and Michael Deaver.[33] Despite these actions, Sears's grasps for authority and control were being undermined surreptitiously as the California wing formed the view that he had become a liability. Peter Hannaford, Deaver's business partner, detailed his opinion that 'Sears's talents as a strategist were recognised … but many of his ideas were not translating into operational realities'.[34] As a number of examples demonstrated, Sears's reputation remained sufficiently robust for him to emerge as the victor in conflicts with other staffers, but Reagan's confidence in his chief strategist was not inviolable. Reagan had remained uninterested in the frictions in his campaign operation; and, when forced to make decisions to resolve power struggles, had backed Sears.[35] His surprising defeat in the Iowa caucuses, caused Reagan to alter radically his management structure and campaign strategy and to dismiss Sears.

### (II) THE IOWA CAUCUSES (JANUARY 21, 1980)

*The Iowa Caucuses was a critical juncture because Bush's victory established him as a potentially serious challenger to Reagan. Bush's victory was due to the activities of the rival campaigns (agency factors).*

Leading in the nomination race did not imply fewer choices for Reagan and his campaign team. In a contest that could quickly become highly fluid, making effective tactical moves remained paramount. However, with Reagan's considerable political assets Sears realised that early victories could cause the *de facto* elimination of his candidate's rivals. He explains that

> The northeast has to be the base for anyone else to beat us. If we do well in this region it will show that there isn't that much other support out there for the other candidates. West of the Mississippi we are untouchable. If they haven't beaten us by then it's all over. Someone has to beat us up front. We're happy to let them run second forever.[36]

With his broad aim the preservation of Reagan's aura of invincibility, Sears made plans to keep his candidate away from high-risk events. One such event was the all-candidate debate in Iowa organised by the *Des Moines*

[32] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 212
[33] Sears claimed the Deaver's fundraising had been ineffective, but for Deaver this accusation was little more than a cover in Sears' broader plans to centralise power. (Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 449).
[34] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 212.
[35] Accounting for Reagan's deference to his strategist, Cannon writes that Reagan 'did indeed have a western inferiority complex, and Sears at the time seemed the best antidote to it'. (Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 443).
[36] Washington Star, Reagan Papers, Box 358

*Register and Tribune* for January 5. Publicly, Reagan argued that he didn't want to debate with the other Republican contenders would be divisive.[37] However, Hannaford explains that the authentic explanation for this decision lay in 'Sears's reasoning, which fit the logic of the campaign strategy'. [38] Sears resolved that 'Reagan on the stage would be every other candidate's target and would give them all the kind of increased attention they wanted'. [39] By contrast, Sears calculated, 'Without him, the debate would be flaccid and meaningless'.[40] Hannaford, however, relates his fear, and one that he assumed Sears had considered, that Reagan's decision not to attend risked being thought arrogant. More generally, Sears decided to limit Reagan's appearances in the state – any appearance risked a headline-grabbing mistake, and Sears calculated that the risks associated with such public appearances outweighed any potential benefits. Reagan made appearances in the state on eight separate days, but his presence was so fleeting that Bush could brag – credibly – that he had spent more days in Iowa than Reagan had spent hours.[41] And these appearances served only to suggest that the Reagan campaign was struggling. Lou Cannon recalled that the Reagan visit to Iowa that 'attracted the most attention' was 'a short, confused' press conference at a hotel in Davenport that featured Reagan 'trying to explain why he had ducked the debate'.[42]

Sears did plan for Reagan to make a live, 30 minute television broadcast in the state two days before the district caucuses met, but this set piece event was low-risk compared with the spontaneity of debates with other candidates and members of the public. Instead, Sears relied on the assurances of national political director Charlie Block and his field workers that a sufficient number of enthusiasts could be mobilized. They aimed to get 25,000 Reagan supporters to the district causes to be held on January 21. In Hannaford's view, the debate gamble backfired as the other contenders rounded on the absent Reagan and Iowans recoiled from the increasingly 'imperial candidacy'. The *Des Moines Register* showed Reagan's strength plummeted from 50 to 26 per cent.[43] *Time* opined that Reagan 'seemed so complacent and venerable a Republican front runner that he hardly campaigned at all in Iowa'.[44]

In contrast, Bush campaigned vigorously in Iowa. Managed by James Baker III, Bush's campaign had studiously copied the tactics successfully used by Carter in 1976. Like Carter, Bush suffered the handicap of limited name recognition, and he was competing against a front-runner known by virtually every Republican.[45] The key for Bush, and the other 'GOP hopefuls', explained journalist Robert S. Boyd, was to 'Stop Reagan Early'.[46] And while John Connally seemed blissfully unaware of this fact and chose to make only a token-effort in the Northeast, Bush moved with purpose to seize opportunities that would shrink

[37] *New York Times*, November 14, 1979; Reagan Campaign 1980, Box 358.
[38] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 223.
[39] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 223.
[40] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 223.
[41] Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 456.
[42] Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 456.
[43] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 227.
[44] Time, March 10.
[45] Even before the campaign began Reagan's name recognition exceeded 90 per cent. (Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 201).
[46] Philadelphia Inquirer, Sunday November 4, 1979. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 358. Reagan Presidential Library.

drastically if Reagan could score early victories. In a letter to his Iowa supporters, Bush emphasised the 'make-or-break' potential inherent in the Iowa contest:

> I can't emphasize enough how important the Iowa caucuses will be for the Bush campaign… A major showing in Iowa is more than just one victory – it will be the keystone to future successes… With a strong finish in Iowa, we'll receive national attention. More and more Americans will join the Bush campaign. And a victory in Iowa lays the base for victory in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and all of the following primaries and caucuses.[47]

Bush made fifty-nine stops in the state, and his campaign cultivated an extensive grassroots operation.[48] In his standard letter to supporters, Bush outlined the basic parameters of 'a very special project' labelled VICTORY IOWA. His operation ensured that phone banks were established to persuade potential supporters; personal letters were sent to confirmed supporters; transport to the caucuses was guaranteed; and that caucus packages including rules, regulations, bumper stickers, and buttons, were sent to each supporter.[49] Indeed, the names of other Bush caucus attendees were included to 'make the sessions seem more neighborly'.[50] In his assessment of the strategies used by the Republican contenders, Martin Schram gauged that 'For Bush steady organization proves the key'.[51]

The efforts of Bush's Iowa operation were productive. Bush swept five straw polls in the weeks before the primary.[52] A poll by the *Des Moines* register showed that Reagan had lost votes to his principal rival, and that the respondents had thought poorly of Reagan's absence from the campaign trail. Reagan's slippage in Iowa was accepted by his Iowa state co-ordinator, but Peter McPherson remained adamant that his candidate retained a depth of popularity that Bush could not match. On the eve of the caucuses, McPherson, accounting for the passive approach taken by Reagan's Iowa operation, explained that 'We didn't have to phone and organize the way Bush did. They started from a different base than we did. They did not have loyalties that were long and deep'. Although McPherson accepted that 'Bush will do well', he envisaged that the Texan would 'be a strong second'.[53]

Sears and Black anticipated a crowded field that would split approximately 50 per cent of the Republican caucus vote, and expected Reagan to win the remainder. Sears's strategy proved to be flawed. Republican turnout exceeded 110,000 and Bush polled 2 points higher than Reagan. A basic problem for Sears was that his candidate's greatest asset – Reagan's image as unbeatable – appeared less credible by the day of the caucuses. With Bush's ideological positions closer to the median Iowa Republican's, former Reagan backers flocked to his rival.[54] Bush had confounded expectations to score an unexpected victory. As Hannaford

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[47] Box 360, Reagan 1980 Campaign. Reagan Presidential Library.
[48] Trent and Friedenberg, p. 43.
[49] The Bush campaign spent $329,807 on its Iowa operations. Box 360 Reagan papers.
[50] *New York Times*, Jan 13.
[51] *Washington Post*, January 23, 1980.
[52] Box 360, Reagan 1980 Campaign. Reagan Presidential Library.
[53] *Washington Post*, January 23, 1980.
[54] Walter J. Stone's survey's of Republican activists in Iowa showed that a majority preferred Reagan, although Bush's issue positions were favoured 42-34 over Reagan's. ('Party, Ideology, and the Lure of Victory: Iowa Activists in the 1980 Prenomination Campaign', The Western Political Quarterly, 35:4 (December 1982), 529-530.

surmised, 'in the world of presidential campaigns, where perceptions become realities, the momentum had suddenly passed from Reagan to Bush'.[55]

*Reagan Plots his Path, Part II: Management Fixes*

Reagan correctly identified his malfunctioning campaign team as the primary explanation for his underperformance in Iowa. Rather than working cohesively to enhance his appeal, it had descended into factional strife with damaging electoral consequences. Compounding the pain of a critical defeat, the campaign was subjected to attacks from its supporters and activists. Leading endorsers in the House criticised a lack of accessibility to senior members of the 'imperial candidacy', and activists on the ground in Iowa were shocked at the detachment of the Sears-dominated campaign headquarters. Even the Regional Political Director for Iowa, J. Kenneth Klinge, had not been informed of Sears's decision to pull Reagan from the January 5 Republican debate in the state. Mr. Klinge reported that he had (unacceptably) learned of this decision in the *Washington Post*; and Klinge deduced from this and other episodes of communication failure that Sears had assumed control of the campaign's Iowa operations without informing him.[56]

Reagan decided that he would reject Sears's risk-averse approach to return to his handshaking style in New Hampshire. Reagan also asked William Casey, former chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, to join as the campaign's chief of operations, with Sears relegated to a more restricted role as the campaign's lead strategist. When Sears resisted new incursions into matters that had previously been under his sole authority, Reagan, advised by Casey and Deaver, dismissed Sears.[57]

Casey's most pressing priority was to reign in the campaign's soaring expenditures. Sears's strategic plans had assumed a race that would effectively end following Reagan's triumph in New Hampshire's primary election. Consequently he overlooked the spiralling costs of the Reagan operation as its staff and activities grew. For instance, Lou Cannon stresses the additional burden on the campaign of Sears's insistence that Reagan remain airborne as he travelled between destinations in order to avoid 'the grubby, ground-level combat in which he might be tripped up by the press or local issues or ducking proposed debates with other Republicans'.[58]

Reagan's unexpected problems in Iowa raise the spectre of a lengthy contest against Bush. Unfortunately his campaign had been spending as if the contest were nearly over – $13 million of its total $17 million primary allowance had been spent or committed. Casey projected the campaign would reach the federal spending limit by the end of March. Indeed, revenue shrinkage following Iowa meant that the campaign might be forced to wind down before then. Casey accordingly cut employee numbers from 350 to 150, and forced 25-30 per cent salary reductions on executive level staff.

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[55] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 227.
[56] Letter to Sears November 8, 1979. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 361. Reagan Presidential Library.
[57] Sears's dismissal was not revealed until after the New Hampshire primary result to avoid attention being focused on the management problems afflicting Reagan's campaign operation.
[58] Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 454.

### (III) NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY (FEBRUARY 26, 1980)

*The New Hampshire primary was a critical juncture because Reagan regained his position as front-runner by defeating Bush. This result was due to the candidates' campaign choices (agency factors).*

Reagan's air of invincibility had vanished. The widespread expectation was that Ronald Reagan's candidacy was doomed if he lost the New Hampshire primary. Campaign members frustrated by Sears's strategy, including Paul Laxalt, began to voice their concerns that it would produce a repeat of the New Hampshire result. Reagan too became convinced that he should return to a strategy that involved extensive touring of New Hampshire and involvement in public debates. As Cannon writes, Reagan's defeat in Iowa 'freed him from the shrouds in which his managers had wrapped him, permitting him to campaign as a natural candidate drawing on the resources of his personality'.[59] Furthermore, in a clear demonstration of the importance of learning in campaign tactics, Reagan's team resolved to plan campaigning events for the candidate until the primary election, and not to leave in advance as he had in advance of the New Hampshire primary in 1976.

Bush's Iowa victory produced an upsurge in his polls – and he entered New Hampshire level with Reagan in a poll of the state's Republicans.[60] His campaign reported $2.4 million in contributions during February, over twice as much as Bush had raised in the year preceding the Iowa caucuses.[61] Experienced journalists predicted that Reagan's status as a front-runner would no longer be credible if Bush were to perform strongly in New Hampshire.[62] James Baker, Bush's campaign manager, rushed to Washington DC to meet with reporters to dampen expectations. Bush's target, Baker explained, was to finish a 'strong second'.[63] Broder reported that this answer left the assembled reporters 'incredulous' and Baker's statement was widely dismissed as a failed attempt to manipulate media expectations to benefit his candidate's prospects. Media observers, backed by Bush's markedly improved polling, expected a tight race.

Bush's prospects of a victory in New Hampshire improved noticeably following Iowa, but his impressive showing in this event also meant that he was subjected to more intense media scrutiny. For most Republican Party members, Bush's victory in Iowa initiated their most sustained observations of him. This, *Time* reports, 'caused him trouble in New Hampshire'.[64] His bland speaking style and knee-jerk resort to vague generalities presented a weak contrast to Reagan's energy, clarity, and conviction.[65]

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[59] Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 458.
[60] ABC News – Louis Harris poll of independents and Republicans. Analysed in *Washington Post*, January 24 1980.
[61] Alexander, *Financing the 1980 Election*, 177.
[62] *Washington Post*, January 13.
[63] *Washington Post*, January 30.
[64] Time, March 10, 1980.
[65] This was apparent, for instance, during Bush's uninspiring performance at a debate in Manchester hosted by League of Women Voters on February 20. (Cannon, *Governor Reagan*).

These impressions of Bush implied that his surge in support was more superficial than his strong polling suggested; and also more vulnerable to shock events that lowered his standing. The Nashua debate between Reagan and Bush, three days before the polls opened, would initiate a jolt of this kind. When the *Nashua Telegraph* pulled out of its initial offer to pay for the event, Reagan agreed to fund the debate from his campaign's funds.[66] Initially billed as a head-to-head between Reagan and Bush, the other Republican candidates – Senators Howard Baker and Bob Dole, Representatives Phil Crane and John Anderson, and John Connally – charged that the debate format was rigged unfairly. Reagan was willing to accept them into the debate, but Bush was not, and 'Sensing that a "fair play" issue could embarrass the Bush campaign at a critical moment, the Reagan people let the controversy swirl'.[67] The Reagan team had no clear expectation of how the pressures would affect Bush, but gambled that such uncertainties might produce an adverse reaction by Bush, who they believed lacked the wit and spontaneity of their candidate.[68]

Negotiations between the candidates and producers continued until immediately before the scheduled debate. Reagan invited the other candidates to join the debate, but was called 'out of order' by John Breen – the Telegraph executive. Reagan shouted back 'I *paid* for this microphone Mr. Green'.[69] Under growing pressure from an excited crowd, the other candidates were seated, and upon taking their positions they targeted Bush. Bush was roundly castigated as a spoilsport. His response was to freeze, and his shock was palpable to the assembled audience of 2,500 packed into the gymnasium hosting the debate. For the *Union Leader*'s William Loeb, Bush resembled 'a small boy who had been dropped off at the wrong birthday party'.[70]

The Reagan campaign had been feeling optimistic about its New Hampshire operation, and in particular believed that Reagan's on-the-stump campaigning was producing effects that had yet to picked up in the polls or by media commentators. However, the Nashua debate altered the race sharply. The gradual gains that Reagan's team had perceived became a steep climb as Bush's support crumpled under claims that he was 'weak'. As Bush biographer Timothy Naftali tell it, Bush's 'paralysis on the stage in Nashua … wiped out his front-runner status for good'.[71] Reagan won New Hampshire by a resounding 27 points. This victory marked the return of the perception that Reagan's momentum was unstoppable. 'It was going to be a Reagan landslide', Hannaford gushed. 'The feeling I had back in November, when the governor announced his candidacy – the feeling that he could not be stopped – finally returned'.[72] Prominent media outlets reported the momentum swing in Reagan's favour. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Joseph Kraft commented that 'The former California governor buried George Bush and the rest of the Republican field. His lead was so big that he's now in position to streak to the nomination'.[73] Even Bush's supporters, Hedrick Smith reported,

[66] Bob Dole had complained that the debate's format meant that the *Telegraph* was effectively making campaign contributions to Reagan and Bush, and the Federal Election Commission agreed with Dole's judgment.
[67] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 237.
[68] David S. Broder, *Behind the Front Page*.
[69] Reagan mispronounced Mr Breen's name.
[70] Quoted in David S. Broder, p. 43 Behind the Front Page.
[71] *George H.W. Bush*, 37.
[72] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 242.
[73] *Washington Post*, February 28, 1980.

conceded that their candidate's loss 'probably cost him the chance of a close race against Mr. Reagan'.[74] Hannaford documents the growing momentum in the Reagan camp as strong campaign performances generated a virtuous circle of optimism and victory:

> [The following day] we flew to Burlington, Vermont ... The mood there was buoyant. The following Tuesday, Ronald Reagan won the Vermont primary. That same day, March 4 he did as well, or better than expected in Massachusetts, where he had done little campaigning. Bush won, and Anderson placed second, but the three were so closely bunched in the voting results that the delegates were divided nearly equally.[75]

Bush's planners conceded that his campaign now lay in tatters. His leading strategists convened to reassess their tactics in order to regain the initiative from Reagan. They admitted that the strong lead that Bush had thought he held in states like Massachusetts and Vermont would probably now disappear; and without victories in these New England states, Bush would fail in Florida, the fulcrum state in his campaign's grand strategy.[76] Bush's planners concluded that their candidate's most viable options involved making sharp substantive attacks on Reagan's policy proposals; challenging him for instance to explain the budgetary consequences of his tax cutting plans or how states would fund the welfare responsibilities that he proposed to transfer to them. Bush's more moderate stands put him in a position to expose Reagan's proposals as either ill-defined or too conservative for most Americans, and claim that he was therefore more electable in a race against Jimmy Carter. Indeed, this was the conclusion that Rowland Evans and Robert Novak had reached.[77]

Despite their conviction that their candidate's chances probably turned on changing the shape of the race, Bush's advisers were unsure of whether patrician Bush would be willing to adopt the 'issue-oriented thrusts' that they had prescribed.[78] Indeed, the primary contests following New Hampshire would show their prediction to be accurate. Chagall surveyed Bush's tactical moves after his New Hampshire slip, and writes that 'despite his underdog role, Bush gamely observed the unspoken party injunction – not to speak ill of any Republican, particularly Ronald Reagan, with whom he wanted to maintain cordial relations'.[79]

For Bush, the Massachusetts and Vermont primaries on March 4 loomed as potential turning points. Bush won in Massachusetts, but his razor-thin margin meant that he shared nearly equal numbers of the state's delegates with the second (Anderson) and third (Reagan) placed candidates. To compound this disappointment and Bush's overall predicament, he lost comfortably to Reagan in Vermont. In combination these results confirmed that the Bush candidacy had peaked in Iowa, and that it was unlikely to do so again.

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[74] *New York Times*, March 8, 1980.
[75] Hannaford, *The Reagans*, 242.
[76] In attendance at this 'post-debacle strategy meeting' were James Baker, pollster Robert Teeter, national political director David Keene, issues adviser Stefan Halper, and press secretary Peter Teeley. (*Washington Post*, February 28).
[77] They write that Reagan's New Hampshire victory and his decision to sack John Sears had 'renewed the conservative faithful's vitality' but they reported a 'stubborn belief by substantial numbers of Republicans that Reagan, for reasons of age and ideology, is a sure loser to Jimmy Carter'. (*Washington Post*, February 29).
[78] *Washington Post*, February 28.
[79] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 177.

Bush remained in the race, but with trimmed ambitions – 'Though he denied it publicly, Bush recognized that the best he could hope for was the second spot on a Reagan ticket'.[80]

### (IV) THE WISCONSIN PRIMARY ELECTION (APRIL 1, 1980)

*The Wisconsin primary was a turning point because, at this juncture, Reagan strengthened his leading position by eliminating Anderson. This result was due to the candidates' campaign choices (agency factors).*

On March 18, Reagan won Illinois, defeating fellow Illinoisan John Anderson 48-37. In New York, Reagan met with state leaders who pledged their support – post-Rockefeller, the New York party was no longer monolithic and was prepared to rally behind Reagan, a perceived winner. On March 25 Reagan secured most of New York's delegates and Bush carried Connecticut, his home state, but by a smaller margin than expected 34-29(Reagan). Anderson looked to Wisconsin, with its crossover voters and unpredictable voting history, to revive his flagging campaign. However, the following week Reagan won Wisconsin, defeating Bush and Anderson 40-31-28. Anderson made moves to launch his independent effort. For Reagan's strategists, it was clear that the Wisconsin result marked a new phase in the campaign, and they turned their attentions increasingly to the general election campaign against President Carter. In a confidential memo to the to the governor penned immediately after the Wisconsin result, Richard Wirthlin set out his view that this transition needed to occur urgently:

> With over a third of the 998 delegate votes needed to nominate now locked into the governor's column, and with his best primary states starting to come upon on the primary calendar, the general election campaign, from our point of view, starts today.[81]

### (V) THE SOUTH CAROLINA PRIMARY (APRIL 12, 1980)

*The South Carolina primary was a turning point because, at this juncture, Reagan eliminated Connally. This result was due to the candidates' campaign choices (agency factors).*

John Connally targeted the South Carolina primary as the event where he could break the Reagan stronghold on the contest. He invested heavily in his campaign in the state and benefited from widespread local media coverage. He could also count support from Senator Strom Thurman and former Governor Jimmy Edwards as weighty assets in the state. Connally hoped that victory in South Carolina would unlock the South, and that triumph in the Southern states would provide him with a base for strong performances in the Midwestern and Western states that remained. By the end of 1979, Haley Barbour, Connally's Southern regional co-ordinator, was publicising the Connally campaign's position that South Carolina was the key to the South. Stressing the importance of the state's primary, she explained to *New York Times* correspondent Hedrick Smith that 'South Carolina is the most important of the Southern primaries because of chronology. It's three days before the Alabama, Georgia, and Florida primaries, and it's bound to have an impact on the rest of

[80] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 177.
[81] Chagall, *The New Kingmakers*, 177.

them'.[82] The Connally operation made clear the scale of intentions when it announced that it would not seek matching funds, so that it could exceed the $423,000 limit prescribed by federal regulations for campaigning in the state.

Reagan, however, remained the stand out candidate. His campaign in the state focused on reiterating the issues that had brought him victories in previous contests, including tax reduction and a hardening of the nation's foreign policy apparatus.[83] Furthermore, Reagan's team countered Connally's prominent endorsements by flaunting Reagan's Steering Committee in the state which had snowballed to exceed 1,500 prominent South Carolinians, including its Honorary Chairman General Mark Clark (who had commanded the US forces during the Korean War). Despite Connally's concerted effort in the state, the confident and well-organised Reagan campaign scored a decisive victory. Reagan won 54 per cent of the state's vote to Connally's 30 per cent and Bush's 15 per cent. Connally announced his withdrawal. On March 11, Reagan won Alabama, Florida, and Georgia.

Evidently Connally had struggled to make inroads with conservatives. In part this was because many viewed him as a turncoat. However, Reagan had also been a Democrat, albeit in the distant past. Their detachment from Connally, as one Republican commentator explained, stemmed more generally from their fear that Connally was a 'classic old-time, all-things-to-all people politician who lacks any principles whatsoever'.[84] John D. Lofton writes that 'there's no doubt that John Connally *sounds* like a conservative', but highlighted a number of liberal decisions that Connally had taken or supported: government intrusion to address energy problems, Kissinger's détente policies, Nixon's wage and price controls and Family Assistance Plan, and re-establishment of the New Deal Reconstruction Finance Corporation. For Republican conservatives, the consistency of Connally's record could not match Reagan's.

Additionally Connally's candidacy was harmed by his decision to concentrate on the South, which holds primary contests after key events in Iowa, New Hampshire, and other North-Eastern states. This strategy was understandable given his base of political support. However, as Carter demonstrated in 1976, Southern politicians can succeed in the North, and are greatly advantaged if they can do so. Conversely, waiting for the first Southern primaries before committing wholeheartedly to the race is a strategy fraught with risk, because other candidates are likely to have accumulated substantial political resources by this stage in the contest. In polls at the start of the 1980 contest, George Bush trailed Connally, but Bush's strategic focus on Iowa and New Hampshire improved drastically his overall prospects in the contest and ensured that he emerged as Reagan's most serious rival.

[82] *New York Times*, December 17, 1980.
[83] Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 370. Reagan Presidential Library
[84] John D. Lofton, March 17, 1979. *Human Events*, p. 11. Reagan 1980 Campaign, Box 370.

*The President Ford Possibility*

While Reagan continued to force the elimination of his rivals in primary contests, a potential threat lurked beyond these contests. President Ford had been considering, for months, the possibility of contesting the Republican nomination. To do so would offer him the chance to defeat Carter – who beat him in 1976 – and Reagan – who he blamed for weakening his campaign against his Democratic opponent. Having registered for no primaries, Ford's only chance lay in a deadlocked convention – a possibility that seemed decreasingly likely as Reagan continued to win primary contests by increasing margins. In mid-March Ford's advisers considered the possibility that the former President might be able to win the nomination by defeating Reagan in the 8 remaining states: California, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas. As the deadlines for these states approached, Ford met with a number of his old friends in Washington to gauge their opinion about the possibility that he might be able to defeat Reagan. However, they were generally unenthused by the prospect, citing a widespread belief that Ford's active interest was too late. Further, with the race between Reagan and Carter looking likely to be close, most thought that a Ford challenge could lead to a Republican defeat in the general election. Ford announced publicly that he would not be a candidate, and the Ford boom died.

# 12 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I tie together the study's theoretical and empirical strands. In chapters 1 and 2 I developed a candidate-centred theory of nominations. In this chapter I detail the insights about candidates' choices and their choice settings gained from combining the theory-building and case analysis in this thesis. I conclude by considering the relationships between the demands on candidates in nominations politics and their performance as presidents.

## (I) CANDIDATES' CHOICES IN NOMINATION POLITICS

The question of how candidates influence their prospects in nomination politics was the core problem that this thesis set out to address. My theoretical and empirical investigations suggest a number of characteristics of candidates' choices in nominations.

### *(a) Impact*

In each of the cases that I analyse, the candidates' choices are fundamental to the process of nominee selection. Exogenous events, such as the Iran hostage crisis of 1979, can impact significantly on a nomination contest; but even events of this kind must be interpreted and politicians can exert influence in these portrayals, and thereby affect the political realities that they face. My case analysis also suggests that most path-changing moments arise from candidates' choices and not from exogenous political events; and that candidates understand their capacity to cause shifts of significant magnitude in their prospects. For instance, Woodrow Wilson's identity and strategic manoeuvring broadened his appeal, which became crucial when no candidate could achieve an early-round nomination. Similarly, the liberal and outsider insurgencies of McGovern and Jimmy Carter combined vital identity, tactical, and management choices. The unique case of John W. Davis's nomination in 1924 demonstrated a decisive role for Davis's identity credentials in a party split by a deep conservative-progressive schism. Governor James Cox's role in leading convergence on Davis also shows that party leaders can exert critical influence in contests. More generally, my thesis supports Cohen, et al's assertion that opinion-leadership by elites is important, but supports the primacy of candidates' choices

Tracing a nominee's path to his party nomination, and the critical junctures that comprise it, reveals that it is generally the choices of the winning nominee that are most central to the nomination process and its outcome. My critical juncture analysis does not purposefully privilege the choices of the winning candidates, but the empirical cases in this study suggest that their choices feature most prominently in the determination of real world turning points. While other potential paths might have raised the importance of other actors, I do not detail these hypothetical narratives.

A more general proposition can be formulated: *candidates' impact on the nomination process is positively related to their prospects*. As their prospects improve, the impact of their decisions increases because the effects of their actions are magnified by the greater attention paid to them by independent observers, rivals, and potential supporters. It follows that there is an interactive and reinforcing relationship between candidates' capacities and their prospects. For aspirants, this raises the question of how to capture this beneficial dynamic (and avoid the opposite one that combines diminishing influence and declining prospects). This problem is one of achieving influence and control over events and their interpretation, and it is the most basic problem for any candidate seeking his party's nomination.

An incumbent president's ability to exert control of these political realities ensures that his prospects of gaining his party's nomination are always high relative to his challengers'. More than any other actor, he retains a capacity to continually *make politics*.[1] In contrast, outsiders must struggle to fracture the reinforcing cycle of influence that benefits presidents and party luminaries. The cases suggest at least four ways through which they can overcome the political advantages of established and renowned officeholders, and successful outsider candidates combined elements of these.

First, to an important degree, aspirants can improve incrementally their standing in the party by increasing their involvement in its affairs. Examples of this status-building activity include gaining election to a state or federal office (Carter, McGovern), serving as a senior appointee (McAdoo), or becoming an issue advocate or expert (McGovern on Vietnam, Reagan on taxes). And for Carter, McAdoo, McGovern, and Reagan, these status-building steps became fundamental to their candidacies. However, while these activities can improve a candidate's prospects, my cases suggest that a politician cannot expect to gain promotion to his party's presidential nomination – invariably the nomination is the result of an intense struggle, and so for a politician to accomplish this goal he must effect a non-incremental advancement. Thus, achieving a high state or federal office, or becoming a policy leader, can provide opportunities, but alone these are insufficient. Instead, my case analysis suggests that successful candidates have benefited from the combination of this purposeful career-building activity with at least one of the following: a decision by a dominant figure that causes a serious collapse in his political standing (Ford's Nixon pardon); second, an event or trend that improves the appeal of an aspirant's political identity (the crumbling of New Deal-Great Society liberalism in the 1970s); or third, the effects of small scale and highly visible victories over a presumed front-runner (for instance in early primary contests).

*(b) The Structure of Candidates' Choices*

My cases show that there are a variety of choice types that impact upon nomination outcomes. In each case, the leading candidates confronted identity, tactical, and management problems. Furthermore, the types of problems that they faced in each of these realms varied considerably. So, for instance, President Taft's activities to lock up endorsements using presidential patronage were a set of tactics unavailable to insurgent

[1] Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*.

outsiders (McGovern, Carter) whose strategic planning focused on overcoming a relative absence of political resources. However, even in these divergent situations, there remain important parallels: the candidates sought to rupture the paths of their rivals, and studied carefully the viable alternatives through which they could accomplish this end.

It is generally the case that aspirants' identity is sticky, and can be changed only slowly, and only over a substantial period. Of the candidates studied in my cases, Woodrow Wilson was probably the most adept at metamorphosis of this kind. He shifted from a traditional conservatism to embrace a progressive identity. However, Wilson's previous identity was not a well-publicised one – and this reduced the costs in credibility from his movement to an alternative philosophy. And nonetheless his transition was not a costless one as both conservatives and progressives queried his authenticity. Tactical and management variables can be altered more quickly, and to great effect – consider, for instance, Reagan's foreign policy shift in advance of the North Carolina primary in 1976; or his management restructuring following his Iowa defeat to George Bush in 1980.

Although there is evidence of important identity, tactical, and management choices in each of the cases that I examine, there is an important disjuncture concerning the importance of management choices. In pre-reform contests these appeared to be less critical than in post-reform nominations. In 1912 Wilson's campaign displayed a number of management frailties that cost him valuable votes in primary elections. However, the existence of the two-thirds rule made it difficult for any candidate to build winning coalitions on the basis of delegate commitments secured before the primary. Thus, the penalty for underperforming at important primaries was less severe. In modern contests, a simple majority decision rule, a more complex legal environment, and the availability of access to professional pollsters and advertising consultants, has raised the returns to effective management, and increased the costs of management failings. Despite benefiting from significant grassroots support in 1972, George Wallace's bid spluttered as soon as it ventured beyond the South, mainly because of the limitations of his management team whose members knew neither the rules governing entry into primary contests nor the best methods by which to grow a small candidacy with potential for expansion. Ronald Reagan's surprising defeat in Iowa and revival in New Hampshire tracked closely the performance of his management team.

*(c) Candidates' Abilities*

The candidates in my cases demonstrate differing capacities to make effective choices. Furthermore, the essence of a politically superior choice is a fluid measure. Only in his identity as a political moderate at a Democratic convention riven by deep-seated factionalism was John W. Davis a stronger candidate than either McAdoo or Smith. However, in the face of seemingly interminable deadlock Davis's identity became the pivotal commodity that fuelled the support in favour of his nomination. In 1980, the collection of ideas and politics that journalists and political elites construed as liberalism was widely perceived to have been discredited; and the conservative trend in elite and popular preferences enhanced the value of Reagan's

political identity. This timely alignment of broad philosophical trends and a candidate's identity can radically improve an aspirant's prospects – it lay at the heart of Reagan's front-runner status in 1980. However, because political identities and governing philosophies are difficult to manipulate, chance plays a vital role in structuring the world in ways that help some candidates and hinder others. Obviously, however, it is the most flexible and innovative candidates who are best prepared to seize opportune moments. In 1972 the most adaptable candidate was McGovern who, in a transformed institutional setting, mobilised organisers and activists more effectively than his rivals because of his campaign's capacities to seek out rare opportunities and concentrate their resources on these. In 1976, Hamilton Jordan confidently predicted that Carter could do the same: 'I believe that our campaign will be better prepared to adjust and take advantage of fast-changing circumstances than any other candidates'.[2]

### (II) CANDIDATES' CHOICE SETTINGS

My thesis also developed important assumptions about the setting in which nomination politics take place. In this macro structure, nomination politics is changeable at critical junctures, but relatively stable between them. My cases suggest that this perspective is a useful way of conceptualising the nomination process, and although it implies passing over much of the colourful detail between critical junctures, it focuses analysis on those fluid points in the contest where meaningful change in candidates' prospects occurred and can be observed. At these junctures candidates struggle to control the directions and interpretations of events. The outcomes that result are given meaning by media commentators and political elites, but the moulds that these observers use to understand nomination contests are malleable, and permit a wide range of interpretations – after all, many things have happened that at some earlier point appeared wholly improbable if not impossible. Thus, with critical junctures at the centre of my analytical framework there is a recurring potential for surprise events to alter expectations of candidates' prospects; and for those surprise events to be endogenous to politicians' choice-making.

Anchoring my case analyses in this macro structure also yields two additional insights about nomination politics. First, standard accounts of brokered convention during the pre-reform era have focused on the bartering that took place at these forums. For instance, in their APSA-commissioned study of national conventions Paul David and his colleagues contrasted the centrality of politics in the national conventions of the bargained era with the pre-determined conventions of the modern, primary-dominated era.[3] However, my empirical cases suggest a more complex distinction. In the pre-reform cases in this thesis, many of the critical junctures that resulted in decisive changes in the candidates' prospects occurred *before* the convention. For example, the Ohio primary in 1912 marked a decisive shift in the prospects for the protagonists in the Republican contest. In a recent study Kathleen Kendall argues that existing scholarship has understated the

[2] 'Review of Progress', written after Florida primary election; 1976 Presidential Campaign, Box 199, Carter Presidential Library.
[3] David, Goldman, and Bain, *The Politics of National Party Conventions*.

importance of primary elections in pre-reform contests.[4] My analysis supports her argument. Indeed, I show that important critical junctures occurred before conventions that were not primary elections but congressional elections, gubernatorial elections, and important executive actions. Thus, just as in the reformed institutional context, the politics that takes place before the delegates convene at their party's national convention are vital for understanding the outcomes that obtain during it. Here there is fundamental continuity connecting pre- and post-reform contests, and one that has been generally neglected.

Second, an important contrast that scholars frequently flag to distinguish the characteristics of pre-reform and post-reform contests is the occurrence of deadlock. According to the conventional wisdom, pre-reform contest occasionally produced deadlock which was resolved in 'smoke-filled rooms'.[5] By contrast, the modern nomination process is heavily 'front-loaded' and produces definitive outcomes early in the nomination cycle, and normally months before the national convention. Moreover, this commonplace distinction is robustly supported by empirical data. Not since 1952 has there been a brokered convention; and prior to 1952 they were fairly common – especially in the Democratic Party before it abolished its two-thirds rule in 1936.

However, my study suggests that this empirical regularity is not intrinsic to post-reform nominations. Rather it is a consequence of purposeful actions by campaign front-runners to eliminate their rivals early and decisively. The institutional environment – without a super-majoritarian rule, and with numerous, sequential, and highly publicised primaries at which to force rivals' exits – favours elimination strategies once a candidate has a lead. Nevertheless, it is clear that in years such as 1972 and 1976 a brokered convention was a genuine possibility while the contest remained volatile and lacked a dominant candidate. In both of these years, the candidates who took leads – McGovern and Carter – worked diligently to occasion knock-out blows to their opponents at potentially decisive primaries. For these outsiders, a brokered convention would likely be to their disadvantage. Even early in these contests, when outcomes were uncertain, both McGovern and Carter sought to build consensus around the idea that a 'brokered convention' would offer an inadequate solution to the problem of selecting a presidential nominee.[6] Thus, although a desire to reduce bartering by elites at conventions might have been an important motivation encouraging the reforms of the late 1960s, the absence of brokered contests is also a testament to the efficiency with which post-reform candidates have used opportunities and advantages to crush their opponents.

Those candidates who are weakened by poor performances frequently discuss the possibility of mounting a combined blocking bid, but my cases suggest that these are difficult to sustain. In 1972 and 1976 the attempted stop-McGovern and stop-Carter efforts splintered. In 1980, there was speculation about a joint effort by Bush and Connally to defeat Reagan but this came to nothing. These attempted blocking coalitions

[4] Kendall, 'Communication Patterns in Presidential Primaries, 1912 – 2000: Knowing the Rules of the Game' in *Communication in the Presidential Primaries: Candidates and the Media, 1912-2000*.
[5] In *The Shadow of Blooming Grove: Warren G. Harding in His Times*, Russell writes that the expression came from an Associated Press report in 1920 of a meeting of Republican senators in the Blackstone Hotel, Chicago, at which they decided to nominate Harding.
[6] Consider Hamilton Jordan's memo explaining that, because 'the term "brokered convention" has many negative connotations', the Carter camp try to dissuade the entry of favourite son candidates by suggesting that their presence would produce an undesirable deadlock; 1976 Presidential Campaign, Box 199, Carter Presidential Library.

were unstable for two reasons. Most obviously, the rival candidates – each of whom initially sought the presidency as an individual – struggled to agree on who should run as the representative of the combined opponents of the leading contender. Consequently, this unwillingness to cede ground increased the likelihood of a forced exit by each of these candidates. This elite collective action problem was exacerbated by the difficulties of convincing the supporters of a diverse set of candidates to coalesce on one of these politicians.[7] Only rarely do voters' entire preference orderings of the candidates parallel those of the elites that they support, and therefore it might not be obvious to a voter that he should commit himself to vote for an alternative 'blocking' candidate, instead of voting for the race leader, or staying at home on polling day.[8]

### (III) NESTING THE GAME: NOMINATION POLITICS AND PRESIDENTIAL PERFORMANCE

In chapter 1 I argued that nomination politics is important because of its contribution to the selection of presidents. I conclude by returning to this idea, but by asking a different question – how does nomination politics affect presidential performance? In *Constitutional Government of the United States*, Woodrow Wilson argued for the importance of the president as a programmatic leader who could unite – for desirable common purposes – the divided institutions of the American political system. In Wilson's organic account of American political development, incremental progress toward a clear set of goals for the nation implied that by the early twentieth century the separation of powers had become a defect that served to inhibit political growth. Wilson's solution was to advocate presidential leadership of the federal government. If it is desirable for a president to act in this way, how should the nomination process function?

By this Wilsonian criterion, the nomination system should encourage candidates to develop clear platforms that offer their analyses of national problems, interpretations of the effects of feasible courses of action, and advocacy of a particular set of solutions. The cases in this thesis suggest that nominations accomplish this function. The nomination contests that I examine are arenas for debate and divisions about public policy problems. In 1912, the debates in both parties concerned the desirability of progressive reforms. In 1932, Roosevelt's prominence and support for a new relationship between the federal government and the economy forced his rivals to engage in debates about political economy. In 1972, Senator McGovern's rise was fuelled by his impassioned critique of American involvement in Vietnam.

More generally, the aptitudes of leadership highlighted in classic texts on the presidency, including Richard Neustadt's *Presidential Power*, James David Barber's *Presidential Character*, and the contributions in James Pfiffner's *The Managerial Presidency*, align with the exacting demands on candidates in the nomination process. Consistent with Neustadt's thesis, strong candidates strive to maximise their effective influence over others to achieve outcomes. Their objectives vary depending on whether the candidate is attempting to effect a response from rivals, party leaders, or a section of rank-and-file members. However, in each situation the

[7] For instance, Glad relays the analysis of a public opinion expert on the difficulties of the argument used by the 'Anybody But Carter' lobby: 'First, Humphrey is a great guy; secondly, Carter is a jerk, so therefore you have to vote for Jackson. That's an awfully complicated set of ideas to get around.' Glad, *Jimmy Carter, in Search of the Great White House*, 249.
[8] Elites may be persuaded by the prospect of future political benefits, which are not relevant to a voter's calculus.

sources of a candidate's influence correspond closely to Neustadt's three bases: professional reputation, popular prestige, and human qualities. Candidates who espouse active and positive visions of leadership, such as Ronald Reagan in 1980, attract support in nomination politics; and, as Barber showed, in presidential politics. Pfiffner explains that 'management matters in the presidency' – it also matter at an earlier stage, in nomination politics.[9]

Nevertheless, there are numerous examples of politicians who were effective as candidates for their party nomination but struggled to enunciate programmatic vision as president, or whose effective influence in the policy process disintegrated during their presidency, or who faced continual problems in maintaining personal control over the White House and executive branch. Indeed, the presidencies of successful nominees Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford displayed elements of all three sets of problems. Why is this so? A part of the answer lies in the fact that the requirements for success as a president align closely but not exactly with those for success in nomination politics. Above all presidential politics is even more demanding. The president faces new sets of institutional and partisan challengers. He must offer leadership beyond his campaign and those party members who choose to involve themselves in nomination politics. Instead, the politician as president acts as 'unique points of intersection' in the leadership of the White House, executive branch, his political party, and the nation. And he must reconcile his leadership visions with the constraints of time and financial budgets. 'Dilemmas', for Richard Neustadt, 'are the Presidency's daily bread'.[10] This is also true of nomination politics, but the nomination dilemmas have fewer faces and the tensions on the decision-maker cut in fewer directions. Controlling the politics of a nomination campaign is a challenging task, but 'making politics' in the White House extends and contorts these problems even further.

As I show in this thesis, candidates' choices matter in nomination politics. And improving our understanding of their choices can illuminate new layers in the character of institutions and processes that have been rigorously studied but generally analysed using alternative lenses. My macroscopic conception of nominations starts from the view of their politics as fluid and manipulable. Joined with a microscopic understanding of aspirants as problem-solvers who make identity, tactical, and management choices, several pictures of nominations emerge. And, by examining my *Theory of Agency* in different empirical settings, I demonstrate the pervasive influence of candidates as agents of change in nomination politics.

[9] *The Managerial Presidency*, xi.
[10] 'The Presidency in Mid-Century', *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 21: 4 (1956), 614.

# 13 APPENDIX

| State | Average Score on Liberal-Conservative Issues | Size of State Delegation to 1924 Convention |
|---|---|---|
| Alabama (AL) | -0.67 | 24 |
| Arizona (AZ) | -4.0 | 6 |
| Arkansas (AR) | +1.0 | 18 |
| California (CA) | +4.33 | 12 |
| Colorado (CO) | +1.57 | 26 |
| Connecticut (CT) | +0.3 | 14 |
| Delaware (DE) | -0.2 | 6 |
| Florida (FL) | -3.0 | 12 |
| Georgia (GA) | -0.43 | 28 |
| Iowa (IA) | +1.02 | 26 |
| Illinois (IL) | +1.125 | 58 |
| Indiana (IN) | +1.57 | 30 |
| Kansas (KS) | +3 | 26 |
| Kentucky (KY) | +0.43 | 26 |
| Louisiana (LA) | -0.33 | 20 |
| Maine (ME) | +1.0 | 12 |
| Maryland (MD) | +0.25 | 16 |
| Massachusetts (MA) | +0.11 | 36 |
| Michigan (MI) | -0.8 | 30 |
| Mississippi (MS) | +0.8 | 20 |
| Missouri (MO) | +1.41 | 36 |
| Minnesota (MN) | +0.17 | 24 |
| Montana (MT) | +3.5 | 8 |
| Nebraska (NE) | +2.8 | 16 |
| Nevada (NV) | +2.75 | 6 |
| New Jersey (NJ) | -1.5 | 28 |
| New Mexico (NM) | +1.4 | 6 |
| New Hampshire (NH) | +3 | 8 |
| New York (NY) | +1.6 | 90 |
| North Carolina (NC) | +1.18 | 24 |
| North Dakota (ND) | +3.0 | 10 |
| Ohio (OH) | +2.57 | 48 |
| Oklahoma (OK) | +3.143 | 20 |
| Oregon (OR) | +3.67 | 10 |
| Pennsylvania (PA) | +0.83 | 76 |
| Rhode Island (RI) | +1.33 | 10 |
| South Carolina (SC) | +0.66 | 18 |
| South Dakota (SD) | +1.0 | 10 |
| Tennessee (TN) | +2.5 | 24 |
| Texas (TX) | +0.57 | 40 |
| Utah (UT) | +3.5 | 8 |
| Vermont (VT) | +2.0 | 8 |
| Virginia (VA) | +1.71 | 24 |
| Washington (WA) | +3.0 | 14 |
| West Virginia (WV) | +1.07 | 16 |
| Wisconsin (WI) | +1.5 | 26 |
| Wyoming (WY) | +3.33 | 6 |

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