

The Past, Present, and Future – An In-depth Examination  
of the Republican Party in the Context of the  
Political Realignment Theory

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	IV
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One – An Analysis of the Theory on Political Realignment .....	5
Chapter Two – The Past: Examining the Development of the Republican Party within a Broader Historical Analysis of Political Realignments from the Pre-New Deal Era to the Twenty-First Century .....	15
The Pre-New Deal Era.....	17
The New Deal Majority .....	19
The 1964 Caesura and the Unravelling of the New Deal Majority .....	24
The Republican Turn .....	37
The Coming of Age of the Conservative Republican Majority.....	47
The Conservative Republican Majority in the Post-Reagan Era .....	56
Chapter Three – The Present: Dissecting the Coalition of the Contemporary	
Republican Party .....	60
The Moderate Wing of the Republican Party .....	75
The Libertarian Wing of the Republican Party.....	83
The Neoconservative Wing of the Republican Party .....	91
The Institutional Wing of the Republican Party .....	97
The Social Conservative/Evangelical Wing of the Republican Party .....	101
Chapter Four – The Future: A Cautious Exploration of the Future of the	
Republican Party .....	109
Conclusion.....	124
Works Cited.....	128

## Abstract

This Master's thesis will provide an in-depth examination of the Republican Party by focusing on three distinct aspects – the past, the present, and the future. The political realignment theory will form the theoretical framework in this thesis because it serves as a useful tool for examining and thinking about the Republican Party, party coalitions, and American political history in general. Chapter two – the past – provides a historical analysis of the Republican Party from roughly 1900 until the early twenty-first century in the context of the realignment theory, and it will be argued that the roots of the present-day coalition of the party can be traced back to the 1960s when Barry Goldwater captured the Republican presidential nomination. Chapter three – the present – dives into the different factions of the Republican Party. Although most factional models that have been put forth in academia and journalism show some similarities, there is no universal consensus on the factional makeup of the GOP. Because of the lack of agreement, I present my own factional model of the party in chapter three. Instead of merely focusing on voting blocs and constituencies, it will be argued that it is equally important to take into account other groups/actors in the party that do not have a natural constituency, but still, through other means, exert a significant amount of influence on the party. Chapter four – the future – will explore the potential future of the party by looking at different aspects and arguments such as the realignment theory and the changing demographic nature of the United States.

Key words: Political realignment, majority coalitions, 'sun' and 'moon' analogy, Republican Party, Democratic Party, conservatism, New Deal, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Goldwater, Nixon, Reagan, Sunbelt, institutionalists, libertarians, evangelicals, neoconservatives, moderates.

## Introduction

From a distance America's political party system seems fairly structured and easy to grasp. The United States has a two-party system in which there is a party on the Left – the Democratic Party – and a party on the Right of the political spectrum – the Republican Party. While Democrats generally see a role for government to play in regulating the excesses of capitalism, Republicans for the most part believe that the regulatory role of government in the nation's economy should be limited in order to, among other things, incentivize entrepreneurs to make investments and create jobs. The differences between the two parties are equally pronounced on matters of social issues. When it comes to the major social wedge issues in the United States, Democrats are typically more supportive of same-sex marriage, abortion rights, and legalizing soft drugs, while Republicans commonly hold opposite views on those issues. Now, these observations might create the perception that both parties are unified and homogenous organizations – one party on the Left and one party on the Right – but when one digs deeper it becomes clear that both parties are far from unified and homogenous organizations.

In fact, it is precisely because of the two-party system that makes the country's political party system challenging to understand and comprehend. Granted, there are other political parties in addition to the two major parties, but these so-called third parties, such as the Green Party, the Libertarian Party, and the Reform Party, are relatively small and often operate within the margins of the country's political system. Because there are only two major political parties in the United States, each party functions as a big tent in the sense that they harbor a broad coalition of individuals and groups that share a commitment to conservative or liberal political ideology. This width and broadness within each party, however, also frequently causes tensions because the various groups are not always on the same page in terms of policies and strategy. Frictions and tensions within political parties in general are commonplace, but this is especially true in the United States where both parties consist of different factions.

This notion of American political parties being big tent organizations is something that has intrigued me for a long time. While both parties are fascinating to examine, the Republican Party has caught my eye in particular because of recent developments that have accentuated some of the fault lines that run through the party, such as the rise of the Tea Party in the early days of the presidency of Barack Obama. Another reason why the Republican Party is especially interesting to look into is because of the fact that there is a lively debate in academia and journalism in regard to the party's factional makeup. There are those, for example, who argue that the party is made up of two different wings – an establishment wing and an anti-

establishment wing – but there are others who have put forth other factional models and argue that the party consists of more factions. While different people have identified different factions, many factional breakdowns share some commonalities, such as the presence of a social conservative wing and a moderate wing.

It is not just the factional makeup of the Republican Party that is interesting to examine and dissect. Equally intriguing is tracing the historical roots of the party and scrutinizing how the party has developed over the course of history. A historical analysis of the growth and evolution of the Republican Party provides a valuable insight into the makeup of the party and how and why different groups have gravitated towards the party. An additional interesting facet is to think about the future of the party. After the 2008 election, but especially after the reelection of Barack Obama in 2012, political obituaries were written about the Republican Party as the party had failed, in the words of David Frum, former speechwriter to George W. Bush, “to broaden the party’s appeal” to millennials, women, and minority voters (Frum, “How the GOP” par. 10). However, in 2016, Donald Trump got elected president even though he did not fare better among those groups of voters compared to past Republican presidential nominees. While the future cannot be predicted with certainty, an examination of where the party might be headed in the future is certainly interesting and important because of the fact that the Republican Party is one of the two major political parties in the United States. In other words, the future course of the party will have important implications for the country at large.

Now, these aforementioned aspects will be at the heart of this thesis. That is, this thesis will provide a comprehensive examination of the Republican Party in terms of the past – how the party’s coalition has come together – the present – the factional composition of the present-day Republican Party – and the future – exploring some potential future scenarios. These three different aspects will be provided and explained in the context of the political realignment theory. The realignment thesis, as will be discussed in chapter one, is a theory that enables one to chronicle and classify American political history into periods in which one party or the other is the dominant political party in terms of frequently winning elections and setting the policy agenda in Washington D.C. During the course of American political history, several periods can be identified in which new majority coalitions emerged and supplanted the disintegrating old majority coalition. Besides a discussion of the theory in which the most prominent elements and characteristics of the realignment thesis will be dealt with, chapter one will also address the relevance of the realignment theory because it has been subject to criticism in both academia and journalism. One of the major points of criticism revolves around the idea that the notion of a prolonged period of divided government undermines the validity of the theory. As a solution

to the criticism, I am proposing to revise the theory so that it retains its relevance, even in periods of divided government. The realignment theory in chapter one serves as an important stepping stone to chapter two, which offers a historical analysis of the development and evolution of the Republican Party, and, in the process, the Democratic Party since roughly 1900 until the twenty-first century.

Indeed, using the realignment theory as the theoretical framework, chapter two lays out the development and growth of the GOP – and the Democratic Party – since the turn of the twentieth century when William McKinley occupied the White House until the present day in the early twenty-first century. This historical analysis enables me to clarify and provide insight into how and why seemingly opposing segments of the population – evangelical conservatives, northeastern socially liberal/moderate Republicans, and libertarians, among others – have coalesced in the Republican Party. What becomes clear in this chapter is that the Republican Party – as well as the Democratic Party – is an amalgamation of different constituencies that in some instances can be considered strange bedfellows because they do not necessarily share the same policy views or values. Another aspect that will be illuminated is that the roots of the present-day Republican Party can be traced back to the 1960s, when the party decidedly turned to the Right of the political spectrum after the nomination of Barry Goldwater as the party's standard bearer in the presidential election of 1964. The reason why the Democratic Party will also be addressed in this chapter is because it is impossible to examine the evolution of the Republican Party without talking about the developments within the Democratic Party. In other words, both parties' developments over the course of the past century are very much interconnected.

Chapter three focuses on the question of the composition of the present-day Republican Party. More specifically, in this chapter, I will discuss the various wings of the party – from libertarians to social conservatives – within the context of the existing academic debate with regard to the Republican Party's factional makeup. That is, after having studied the makeup of the GOP extensively, I found that many academic and journalistic sources use different names or classifications when trying to dissect the various factions of the contemporary Republican Party. I will contribute to this debate by offering my own factional model of the party that aims to map all the different wings, including those that do not have a natural voting constituency, but, instead, play an influential role through other means. What will become clear in chapters two and three is that there is an overarching ideology in the Republican Party in terms of economic and social policies, but there are significant differences palpable when one digs

deeper into the different factions of the party. This regards an ideological proclivity for neoliberal economic policies and social conservatism.

Chapter four will focus on the future of the Republican Party and, by extension, American politics in general. This chapter will be shorter than chapters two and three because my aim is not to present a comprehensive projection of what the future will hold for the party, but, rather create an opening for debate and dialogue about the future of the party and American politics. With the help of the realignment theory and other arguments and observations, I will share my views on what I think might happen in the future, but it will by no means be a full analysis in which I extensively dissect every argument that I could find that supports my thesis. I will argue that regardless of the election of Donald Trump and the uncertainty of what this means for the party in the (near) future, the GOP is likely to face some uphill challenges in the future because of certain demographic trends, among other things.

All in all, the overarching goal in this thesis is to provide an in-depth examination of the Republican Party by tracing its historical roots since 1900, breaking down its factional composition, and looking ahead into the future to see what might be in store for the party. Before diving into these three aspects, chapter one will start by examining and discussing the political realignment theory.

## Chapter One – An Analysis of the Theory on Political Realignment

In my pursuit of examining the past, present, and future of the Republican Party, I decided to utilize the political realignment theory as a theoretical framework that runs through this thesis. One of the main motivations for using the political realignment theory in this thesis is because it can help to create clarity and structure in the complicated and often fuzzy realm of American political history and American politics in general. More specifically, the political realignment theory is “a valuable tool ... for understanding a process of periodic change that has occurred in American politics” (Judis and Teixeira 13). That is, the realignment theory identifies certain periods in American political history in which one party functioned as the so-called majority party or coalition while the other one functioned as the minority party. These majority coalitions, however, do not exist indefinitely because throughout American history both major political parties have gone through periods in which at a certain point they were the dominant party with a majority coalition – electorally and politically speaking – capable of governing and winning elections for a prolonged period of time, whereas at another point they were the underlying minority party. In the event of such a period in which one party emerges and “produces a lasting majority coalition,” political scientists use the term ‘political realignment’ (Gyory, “Lecture II” 1). That is, the dawning of a new political era in which the political cards are reshuffled in such a way that it affects and changes the political status quo of the time, both election and policy wise.

In this particular chapter, I would like to dive a little deeper into the realignment thesis. This chapter consist of two parts. The first part of this chapter provides a brief explanation of the realignment thesis in which some of the major characteristics are discussed. Besides discussing the theory itself, the second part of this chapter will present an in-depth discussion on the continuing relevance of the theory despite critics who argue to the contrary. The case will be made to revise and broaden the theory instead of adhering to a gold standard that is not likely to return any time soon. I will do so by offering my own suggestion and adjustment to the theory because, as will become clear, I believe that the realignment theory is a valuable and helpful instrument to identify and understand (electoral) currents and patterns in American politics. The realignment theory is particularly relevant to this thesis in the sense that it offers a framework that helps to explain and understand the developments in American political history in the twentieth and early twenty-first century, the specific time span chapter two focuses on. In addition, the realignment theory will also be helpful in chapter four of this thesis,

which focuses on the future of the Republican Party and American politics in general. As will be pointed out later, the realignment theory cannot with certainty predict coming realignments, but it can offer some valuable observations and clues about what might happen in the future.

Now, I should first note that in order to grasp the content of this chapter and this thesis in general it suffices to offer a concise discussion of the realignment theory in which a definition is provided along with some of its most relevant characteristics. This is, however, not to say that I do not acknowledge the complexities, depth, and scope of the theory. The realignment theory is a complex thesis because beyond the generally agreed upon consensus of what a political realignment is, scholars who deal with this subject are in ongoing academic discussions with regard to identifying and describing actual occurrences of political realignments in American political history. The reason for this is that there are disagreements in regard to questions as to how to qualify the nature of realignments. That is, there are debates about, among other things, the specific year in which a realignment materializes, what kind of a realignment has occurred – a sudden or a gradual realignment – or even whether the theory still bears any relevance at all <sup>1</sup>. Thus, although the definition is clear, many other aspects of the theory are not as clear-cut. Despite the complexities and disagreements amongst scholar, it is, as indicated, not necessary nor my aim to extensively analyze and contemplate all the ins and outs, controversies, and disagreements surrounding the theory since one can devote an entire thesis just to the theory alone.

To cut to the chase immediately, a political realignment, in the words of John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, “entails a shift in the political coalitions that dominate American politics and in the worldview through which citizens interpret events and make political judgments” (12). In other words, a political realignment fundamentally changes the status quo of American politics in the sense that the balance of power shifts from one party to the other. That is, when a realignment occurs in American politics, the party that had hitherto been the majority party that dominated the political scene both election and policy wise becomes the minority party and vice versa. These newly emerging political majority coalitions are able to come to fruition because of “shifts in the partisan orientation of the electorate” that are the result of several specific developments (Abramowitz and Saunders 635). In the event of a political realignment, “the emerging majority party creates a new coalition by winning over voters from its rival party,” a key factor that explains the disintegration of the old majority coalition, and “by increasing its sway over its own voters” (Judis and Teixeira 14). The latter component is

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<sup>1</sup> The last two issues will be dealt with later on.

predominantly the result of the growth of the political party's base voters "whose ranks have typically increased through birth [and] immigration ..." (14). A third and equally important element regards what is "referred to as a new alignment based on 'mobilization' as distinct from or in addition to 'conversion' " (Rosenof 13). More specifically, this "mobilization," or activation, comes down to "an increase in participation by previously inactive citizens" (13).

Political journalist Samuel Lubell, who, along with political scientist V.O. Key, was among the first to develop the theory in the early 1950s, analogized this majority versus minority theory to the "sun" and the "moon," meaning that the majority party is the "sun" party which "[creates] the 'orbit' in which both parties [move]" while the "moon" party "[reflects] the power of the sun" (Rosenof xiii; 41). With this Lubell meant that being the majority party does not necessarily mean winning every election, but rather setting the agenda and "the parameters of politics" (41). Indeed, as Rosenof articulates Lubell's analysis, "[the] major issues, debates, and conflicts of an era ... [are] played out above all within the dominant party; and the orbit shaped by the dominant party ... [continues] to provide the parameters of politics until new issues and controversies [arise] powerful enough to replace those which had held sway" (41). Thus, as the 'sun' and 'moon' analogy suggests, the importance of political realignments is twofold: In order for a realignment to materialize, the political party that had previously dominated the American political landscape erodes, which, as a consequence, enables the forming of a newly emerging majority coalition. This general outline laid out some of the dynamics that are inherent to every political realignment, but not every realignment is of the same nature.

That is, political realignments can materialize in two fashions – through a so-called "critical election" or through a gradual process known as "secular realignment," also referred to as a "realigning sequence" (Key 3; Rosenof 56; Gyory, "Lecture IX" 10). Starting off with the 'critical election' thesis, V.O. Key theorized in his seminal essay "A Theory of Critical Elections" from 1955, "the existence of a category of elections in which voters are, at least from impressionistic evidence, unusually deeply concerned, in which the extent of electoral involvement is relatively quite high, and in which the decisive results of the voting reveal a sharp alteration of the pre-existing cleavage within the electorate" (4). These 'critical elections' are 'critical' in the sense that one single election "[leads] to sharp and durable changes in voting patterns" due to the fact that these elections are "characterized by severe stresses to the political system resulting from some cataclysmic event such as the Civil War or the Great Depression" (Rosenof 25; Abramowitz and Saunders 635). The 1932 election, which led to the disintegration of the Republican majority that had dominated American politics since 1896 and the ascension

of a new Democratic coalition, the so-called New Deal coalition, serves as a good example of a ‘critical election.’ That is, a seminal event, the Great Depression, precipitated a realignment that would go on to define and dominate American politics for decades to come. Key theorized that elections in “times of great stress ... cut so deeply that people continued to vote the way they had been driven to do in a time of great emotion” (Rosenof xiv). Indeed, the 1932 election completely altered the prevailing status quo in American politics as the balance of power moved decisively away from the Republicans towards the Democratic Party for about the next thirty-six years.

Having been a pioneer in the development of the ‘critical election’ theory, V.O. Key was also instrumental in developing the ‘secular theory,’ which he laid out in his 1959 essay “Secular Realignment and the Party System” (Rosenof 56). Not only can political realignments occur through a ‘critical election,’ Key argued, they can also materialize through a “[secular] realignment,” by which a gradual process of realignment is meant that does not materialize in one ‘critical’ election, but instead over the course of multiple successive elections (56). An apt example of such a gradual realignment of the electorate is the period during which the existing New Deal coalition started to disintegrate in the election of 1964 despite President Johnson winning 61.1 percent of the popular vote, the highest percentage in American history (Whitney and Whitney 577).

Despite the Democratic landslide victory in 1964, a new Republican electoral template started to gradually coalesce with its core base in an up until then unexpected region – the South – which would consequently constitute the backbone of the newly and gradually emerging “Conservative Republican Majority” that came to full fruition in 1980 (Judis and Teixeira 14). More specifically, a historically staunch Democratic voting bloc – white southerners – started to abandon its party amidst the civil rights movement of the 1960s and instead gravitated to the Republican Party (Phillips 204). This gradual process of realignment of southern whites from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party was to a large degree caused by a growing support for civil rights legislation among Democrats outside of the south while the Republican presidential nominee of 1964, Barry Goldwater, voiced his concern about the federal government mandating desegregation and instead stressed “states’ rights” and “law and order,” which referred to the racial unrest that had hit the nation (Thurber 45; Mackenzie and Weisbrot 171). Now, as will be pointed out in the next chapter, “the trend toward Republicanism in the South [continues] into the present due to conservatism’s prominence in the region and its growing dominance in the Republican Party by the 1980’s and 1990’s” (Caverly 1).

Now, moving on to the second part of this chapter, the political realignment theory is not free from controversy and debate. In fact, as will be pointed out, some have even questioned its relevance. One point of criticism revolves around the idea of political realignments and a divided government being mutually exclusive. A divided government in which neither of the two parties unilaterally controls the executive and legislative branch leads some scholars, such as Demetrios James Caraley, to believe that we are in a period of dealignment rather than realignment (Caraley 424). Dealignment means that neither party has a dominant majority coalition due to weakening party affiliations and loyalties, and “the growth of independent voters” (424; Rosenof 129; 110). Proponents of the dealignment thesis point to, among other things, divided government, the rise of independents, and split ticket voting as indicators and characteristics of a phase of dealignment in American politics (Rosenof 141; Caraley 424). These theories of dealignment rather than realignment have been put forth ever since the disintegration of the New Deal coalition and the Republican presidential victories from 1968 onwards even though Democrats remained the dominant party in Congress (110). In fact, going by this theory, the political realignment thesis might have lost its relevance since there has not been a realignment, whether a critical or a secular one, in which one party, for a prolonged period of time, became the dominant majority party in the White House and Congress after the New Deal majority crumbled. Indeed, already at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, various academics, such as Allan J. Lichtman, questioned in the absence of a realignment New Deal style in the 1960s and 1970s the validity of the theory, and consequently argued that the theory “was in ‘decay’ and now constituted an ‘impediment’ to political understanding” (125).

Despite the dealignment theory and the prolonged period of divided government in recent history, it is my belief that the realignment theory is still relevant because it remains, as Judis and Teixeira contend, “a valuable tool ... for understanding a process of periodic change that has occurred in American politics” (13). That is, the realignment thesis remains “a valuable tool” as it enables one to find and discern patterns and currents that run through American politics and the electorate (13). Moreover, despite the absence of a realignment of the likes of 1932, the “classic realignment,” I agree with those who argue that the “realignment theory based on the New Deal case [is] not generally applicable” and that “note [has] to be made of differing versions of the realignment phenomenon and that a current or future realignment [should] not necessarily conform to past patterns” (Rosenof 125). In other words, it is important to continue to adapt, revise, and complement the theory instead of adhering religiously to the parameters of the realignment that ushered in the New Deal majority.

One such revision might be to not rule out the theory by virtue of the absence of a majority coalition that controls the executive as well as the legislative branch of government. Rather, if one allows to separate these two institutions, one can still observe patterns and currents in American politics that can point to realignments, despite the fact that these realignments differ from the one during the Great Depression when the Democratic Party controlled politics and the agenda on the federal level from top to bottom. This view is implicitly echoed by political scientist Alan Abramowitz whose essay, which he wrote in the aftermath of the presidential election of 2012, carries the title “The Emerging Democratic Presidential Majority.” In spite of “structural advantages” he sees for Republicans on the congressional level, Abramowitz also observes “that there are ... forces at work in American society that are gradually transforming the American electorate,” “forces [that] were crucial to Obama’s [2012] victory and ... [which] are likely to affect elections for many years to come” (28; 18). These ‘forces’ Abramowitz talks about regard the changing “demographic and cultural trends” in the United States by which he means that “the American electorate is gradually becoming more racially diverse and more liberal in its attitudes on social issues” which “[represents] a long-term threat to the viability of an overwhelmingly white and socially conservative Republican Party, especially in presidential elections” (29; 19; 18).

Furthermore, another argument to justify the need to continue to revise and complement the realignment theory relates to what Abramowitz refers to as “structural advantages” for Republicans in congressional electoral politics (28). These advantages, which are especially palpable in the House of Representatives and to a lesser extent in the Senate, make it unlikely for Democrats to regain control of both houses of Congress in the near future. The Republican advantages are a combination of demographic, geographic, and political factors. The first advantage regards the fact that core Democratic voting blocs “are heavily concentrated in a relatively small number of overwhelmingly Democratic urban districts” (Abramowitz 26). That is, urban areas in the United States are the geographical bastions and backbones of the Democratic Party as its core base of minority/nonwhite voters, especially Hispanics and African Americans, young voters, and women, especially “unmarried women,” “are heavily concentrated in urban districts” (Halperin and Heilemann 468-469; Abramowitz 27). In his research, Abramowitz points out that in the 2012 election “there were approximately 66 House districts in which Barack Obama won 70% or more of the major party vote compared with only 23 districts in which Mitt Romney won 70% or more of the major party vote” (27). This high concentration of Democratic voters in urban areas is disadvantageous for the Democratic Party because these voters are “much less efficiently distributed than Republican voters” which

consequently means that “far more Democratic votes ... [are] ‘wasted’ in overwhelmingly Democratic districts” (27).

The effect of “the increased clustering of Democratic voters into densely packed population centers” and the more evenly spread out Republican voters is, as David Wasserman of the *National Journal* posits, that “this ... [Democratic] coalition is way too clustered in too few districts to allow Democrats to win the House in the absence of a huge anti-GOP wave” (qtd. in Schaller, *The Stronghold* 247). This may even lead to situations in which the Democratic Party garners a higher percentage of total votes cast in the 435 House districts combined but fail to capture control of the House of Representatives. This has happened in the 2012 election when “Democrats received 1.4 million more votes for the House of Representatives” but Republicans ended up with a 234 to 201 majority (Wang, par. 1). The effect of this density of Democratic voters is also palpable on individual state levels such as Pennsylvania in which “Republicans won 13 of 18 House seats while losing the statewide congressional vote, 2.8 million to 2.7 million” in 2012 (Giroux, par. 28). The fact that Democratic voters are disproportionally centered in the state’s two major cities, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, helped Republicans to win most House seats in the state despite losing the aggregate congressional vote in Pennsylvania (par. 28).

Besides this particular disadvantage for Democrats, a second advantage for Republicans has been the latest process of redistricting congressional House districts, a procedure that takes place every ten years “[in] order to comply with the dictum of equal population representation” (Lowi et al. 295). This process is carried out every decade after “the U.S. Census updates the official population figures of the states” (295). The main aim of redistricting congressional House districts nationwide is to ensure that the “number of U.S. House districts in each state is proportional to the state’s population” (Sides et al. 30). Thus, after the census establishes the population increases per state, some states, depending on the population growth, get allocated additional House seats whereas other states might lose one or more seats.

Now, after the completion of the census and the subsequent allocation of House seats per state, also known as “reapportionment,” every individual state goes to the drawing board to redraw its congressional House districts (30). In a few states the process of drawing new congressional districts is done by an independent committee, however, in the vast majority of states this redistricting is done by state legislatures, which as a consequence makes it “a fiercely political process” in the sense that political parties that control both the state legislature and the governorship may use this redistricting process to create congressional districts that are more favorable to their party and less favorable to the other party (Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee 48).

This process is also known as ‘gerrymandering,’ meaning “the deliberate manipulation of district boundaries for some political purpose,” usually to “purposefully [maximize] seats for one party or voting bloc” (Sides et al. 35; Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee 49).

The specific advantage that the Republican Party enjoys is that the latest round of redistricting took place after the 2010 midterm election, a major wave election “in which they picked up key governorships and hundreds of state legislative seats,” which resulted in the following reality, as the *Washington Post*’s Aaron Blake reported in the wake of the election: “‘Republicans hold the governor’s mansion and both chambers of the state legislature ... in at least 17 states, which are projected to contain 196 of the House’s 435 districts,’ four times as many seats as Democrats will be able to redraw” (Schaller, *The Stronghold* 247; qtd. in Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee 48). Indeed, research shows that Republicans have taken advantage of the redistricting process after the 2010 midterm election as the number of “Republican-leaning districts” went up from 232 in 2010 to 241 after the redistricting process was finished whereas the “Democratic-leaning districts” went down from 203 to 194 (Abramowitz 27). This development in combination with the previously discussed high concentration of Democratic voters in urban areas makes it a herculean task for Democrats to win back the House of Representatives as it requires them to win twenty-four districts that lean Republican to get to a minimal 218-217 majority, provided that they also win each of the 194 districts that lean Democratic.

A third Republican advantage regards the discrepancy between presidential and congressional midterm elections in terms of the composition of the electorate. That is, in presidential elections more people turn out to vote than in midterm elections “when turnout hovers around 40 percent, or 10 to 20 points lower than in presidential elections years” (Sides et al. 313). This drop-off in the share of voters has important implications because, as Professor Schaller states in *The Stronghold*, “[some] empirical studies and ample circumstantial evidence ... suggest that Republicans benefit from voter turnout drop-off in midterm elections, when the presidency is not on the ballot” (227). Indeed, the drop-off of voters in midterm elections is specifically advantageous for Republicans because “those who tend to fall off in midterm years are disproportionately Democratic voters” (Barreto and Segura 137). These are the earlier mentioned young voters, minority/nonwhite voters, and unmarried women while at the same time “the proportion of whites, and especially, seniors will increase,” thus making the electorate less diverse and more Republican leaning than in presidential elections (Brownstein, par. 1).

The 2014 midterm election is a good case in point as “[the] election of a historically large Republican majority coincided with the lowest turnout in a midterm election since 1942” as a

meager 36.3 percent of eligible voters turned out to vote (Wasserman, par. 4; “The Worst Voter Turnout in 72 Years,” par. 3). Looking at the specific breakdown of the electorate in the election, it becomes clear that the white vote ticked up three points to seventy-five percent of the voting public compared to the 2012 presidential election, the African American vote went down a point to twelve percent, and the Hispanic vote decreased from ten percent in 2012 to eight percent in 2014 (“Exit Polls”). The differences are even more pronounced when looking at the different age cohorts since there was a significant decrease among young voters (eighteen to twenty-nine years) in electoral participation as their share of the electorate went down from nineteen percent in 2012 to only thirteen in 2014 (“Exit Polls”). Meanwhile, older voters (sixty and over) constituted more than one-third of the electorate, thirty-four percent, compared to twenty-five percent two years earlier (“Exit Polls”). To sum up then, the provided election data aptly illustrates that, in the words of Ronald Brownstein of *The Atlantic*, “Democrats have become increasingly reliant on precisely the groups most likely to sit out midterms, while Republicans score best among those most likely to show up” (par. 3).

Now, taking this entire discussion about the relevance and applicability of the realignment theory into account, I would argue that the realignment theory remains valid and applicable when one allows to adjust it to account for new circumstances and developments in politics such as the discussed advantages Republicans enjoy in Congress because of structural demographic, geographic, and political factors, which make it unlikely for Democrats to regain control of the legislative branch any time soon, even though, as will be discussed in chapter four, they seem to have the upper hand in presidential elections. Ross Douthat, author and a Republican himself, makes a similar argument when he writes in his article “The Obama Realignment” that “just as Reagan dominated the 1980s even though the Democrats controlled the House, our own era now clearly belongs to the Obama Democrats even though John Boehner is still speaker of the House” (par. 12). I am personally not fond of the word ‘clearly’ here since rarely is something crystal clear in politics, but the implicit suggestion of the applicability of the realignment theory despite a divided government is persuasive. In sum, the realignment thesis remains in my view important because political realignments can still occur despite the fact that they may differ in character from past ones (e.g. divided government) and also because it offers a framework or a lens through which one can analyze and understand the course of American political history.

In conclusion, this chapter introduced the theory on political realignment which, as argued, can be used to identify patterns and currents that run through the American electorate. Political realignments can occur either through a so-called critical election, such as the New Deal

coalition which coalesced at the time of the Great Depression, or through a secular and more gradual process, such as the period from 1968 to 1980 when the New Deal majority disintegrated and a new Republican majority started to coalesce gradually. The theory has been subject to criticism as some argue that it has lost its relevance since there has not been a realignment in the style of the New Deal coalition since this particular majority disintegrated and also because of the perpetual state of divided government since 1968 in which neither party simultaneously pulls the strings in the legislative and executive branches of government for a prolonged period of time. However, what I have tried to argue is that these facets do not necessarily undermine the validity of the realignment theory. Instead, I have made a suggestion to adjust the theory by arguing that realignments still occur if one moves away from the notion that realignments only occur when it resembles past realigning elections, especially the one in 1932 which brought forth the New Deal coalition. When one allows to interpret the theory in a broader way, one can find patterns that may suggest that the Democratic Party, as some academics such as Judis, Teixeira and Abramowitz argue, is potentially in the process of forming a new majority despite the fact that the Republican Party, due to structural reasons, has a firm grip on Congress, especially in the House of Representatives <sup>2</sup>. The next chapter will provide a historical analysis of American politics from roughly 1900 until the present day through the lens of the theory on political realignment.

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<sup>2</sup> Chapter four will deal with the issue of the future of the Republican Party and American politics in general.

Chapter Two – The Past: Examining the Development of the Republican Party within a  
Broader Historical Analysis of Political Realignment from the  
Pre-New Deal Era to the Twenty-First Century

Whereas the previous chapter dealt with the realignment thesis on a predominantly theoretical basis, this chapter will offer an analysis of political realignments from the beginning of the twentieth century until the early part of the twenty-first century, and, in the process, lay out the development of the Republican Party in this period. As indicated in the previous chapter, shifts in terms of one political party becoming the “sun” party while the other party descends to the status of the “moon” party “which [reflects] the power of the sun,” to borrow Samuel Lubell’s terminology, have occurred throughout the course of American history and it is my aim in this chapter to shed light on this pattern by looking at a number of periods in which a political realignment took place that altered the existing balance of power in American politics (Rosenof 41). However, the aforementioned is not my only aim in this chapter since one of my goals in this thesis is to examine and discuss how the GOP has developed through time and how certain groups/factions gravitated towards the party. This chapter, then, aims to do both. That is, providing a broader historical analysis of political realignments since the twentieth century and simultaneously examining the historical development of the GOP within this timeframe.

One of the reasons why I decided to offer a broad historical analysis of political realignments instead of just focusing on the Republican Party is because of the symbiotic relationship between the GOP and the Democratic Party. More specifically, since there are only two major political parties in the United States, the development of the GOP is closely connected to the development of the Democratic Party. Put differently, one cannot observe the development of one political party without taking into account the other party. Analyzing American political history through the lens of the political realignment theory allows one to discern and illustrate how and why both political parties have changed and evolved over time in terms of the factions or wings that make up both parties. In other words, this theoretical framework serves as a helpful tool to explain how the parties have transformed from majority party status to minority party status and vice versa. The historical time span of this chapter will be limited from the pre-New Deal era to the contemporary era for the sake of available space but also because in this time span several of the most prevalent political realignments have occurred that are relevant to understanding where the contemporary Democratic Party and, more important to this thesis, Republican Party are coming from. That is, the roots and

ideological foundations of today's Democratic Party and Republican Party can be found in this period.

Using the political realignment framework and parameters as a tool to analyze and depict American political history from the pre-New Deal era and FDR to the twenty-first century, it becomes clear in this chapter that American politics is volatile and subject to change in the sense that political majority coalitions do not exist indefinitely. Rather, since FDR's New Deal majority coalition supplanted the Republican majority that came into being in the realigning election of 1896, after which "the Republicans reasserted their dominance of the national government," two new realignments have taken place and, according to a growing chorus of academics such as Alan Abramowitz, a potential third one is currently underway (Lowi et al. 339). Given this ever changing nature of American politics, the following quote by Professor Gyory of the University at Albany in New York serves as an apt summary of American political history: "[In] American politics there are no final victories, because in the loosened soil of each election can be found both the seeds of political decline and rebirth" (Gyory, "Lecture I" 1). As will be discussed later on in this chapter, the presidential election of 1964 might perhaps be the ultimate testament to Gyory's assertion.

Before starting off, it might be a good idea to present an overview of the various realignments that have occurred in the United States. The following scheme by John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira reflects, up until the "Conservative Republican Majority," a widely shared consensus in regard to realignments in American political history (14). Kevin Phillips, for example, leading GOP strategist in the 1960s and 1970s, echoes the same observations in his influential book *The Emerging Republican Majority* from 1969 (15). Judis and Teixeira's scheme gets a little trickier and more controversial from the 1990s and beyond, as the question what happened after the alleged end of the most recent Republican majority is anything but settled. At this moment, there is no overall consensus among scholars and political experts about the current political era and whether or not the country has gone through another realignment. As pointed out at various instances in this thesis, there is a growing chorus discernable among experts, such as Alan Abramowitz and Ross Douthat, about a potential new Democratic realignment, but that is impossible to unequivocally state as factual since the realignment theory is more of an ex-post theory than an ex-ante thesis, meaning that predicting realignments is a much more precarious endeavor as opposed to identifying past realignments. Instead of a new Democratic majority coalition, we may well be going through a dealignment process, or perhaps the "Conservative Republican Majority" is in the process of morphing into a new GOP majority coalition, just as what happened in and after 1896 (Judis and Teixeira 14). Despite the lively

academic debate about the contemporary era, the scheme below serves as a useful guide to categorize and understand past realignments <sup>3</sup>.

Table 1. Realignments and Transitional Periods throughout American Political History

<b>Year</b>	<b>Realigning Party</b>
1828	Jacksonian Democrats
1860-64	Lincoln Republicans
1896	McKinley Republicans
1932-36	New Deal Democrats
1968	Transition: Disintegration of New Deal Majority
1980	Conservative Republican Majority
1992	Transition: Disintegration of the Republican Majority
2004-8	New Democratic Majority

Source: Judis, John B., and Ruy Teixeira. The Emerging Democratic Majority. New York: Lisa Drew Book/Scribner, 2002. p. 14.

The Pre-New Deal Era:

Prior to the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, the Republican Party had been in the driver’s seat of American politics “from the time of William McKinley’s election in 1896 until 1930” at the time of the Hoover Administration and the unfolding of the Great Depression (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 44). On both the presidential level and the congressional level, Republicans dominated the American political landscape for most of this period: “in Congress Republican majorities prevailed more than 80 percent of the time” and, with the exception of Woodrow Wilson’s presidency from 1913 until 1921, Republican presidents occupied the White House throughout this entire period (44). Underlining the strength of the Republican Party at the time, Kevin Phillips, former influential Republican strategist to Richard Nixon,

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the specific names allocated to the various realignments and majority coalitions in Judis and Teixeira’s scheme are not universally used. Others have used different terms to describe the same process. For example, instead of using the term ‘McKinley Republicans,’ one might also call it the ‘Reform era’ or the ‘Progressive era.’ Similarly, the term ‘Conservative Republican Majority’ can be supplanted by ‘Cold War Liberalism,’ a term that captures one of the central elements that defined that particular era.

writes that “Woodrow Wilson’s years in the White House were less the result of positive Democratic appeal than the division which split the GOP into two presidential candidacies – those of [incumbent president] William Howard Taft and former President Theodore Roosevelt – and enabled a minority Democratic victory in 1912” (35).

More specifically, Theodore Roosevelt, unhappy that Taft “had succumbed to the influence of the business forces that ... [he] had fought,” decided to run against Taft as the presidential nominee of the Progressive Party – also known as the Bull Moose Party – that was founded in August 1912, after he failed to successfully challenge Taft in the Republican presidential primaries (Whitney and Whitney 229; 230). “Roosevelt had not expected to win” the election but he did finish second, ahead of Taft with an impressive 27.4 percent of the popular vote and 88 electoral votes (230; 576). Indeed, as Kevin Phillips observes, Roosevelt and Taft split the Republican vote which allowed Wilson to win the election with only 41.9 percent of the vote (576). Four years later in 1916, President Wilson squeezed out a narrow victory in a two way race over his Republican opponent Charles E. Hughes with once again a plurality of the vote – 49.4 percent – and a minimal 277 electoral votes, only seven above the 270 electoral vote threshold (576).

It must be noted, however, that Kevin Phillips’ aforementioned views on Woodrow Wilson’s presidency might make it seem as though Wilson was only an anomaly in an era dominated by Republicans. Wilson’s legacy and influence, however, are too significant to relegate to the fringes. While Phillips brings up a valid point to illustrate how specific circumstances in the election of 1912, propelled Wilson to the presidency, – i.e. the divisions within the GOP and Theodore Roosevelt’s third party candidacy – Woodrow Wilson and his legacy form an important part of the so-called Reform Era or Progressive Era, an era that in political realignment circles is described as an era of a Republican realignment. As noted in the previous chapter, the ‘sun party’ does not necessarily win every election, but it does conventionally set the political agenda. If a candidate of the ‘moon party’ wins an election, such as Wilson in 1912 and 1916, it usually means that the candidate is acceptable to a large portion of the electorate and fits the political and societal zeitgeist of the moment. In other words, Wilson, the “progressive governor of New Jersey,” was not a sudden break from what had been the political norm since 1896, but rather a continuation of a series of reformers (Reynolds 281).

The Progressive Era was defined by “movements or coalitions that had sprung up to address the cultural, economic, social, and political dislocations and inequities caused by the growth of industrial capitalism” (Rosenzweig et al. 224). As Rosenzweig et al. argue, this “progressivism” came in conservative forms, such as “to ‘Americanize’ millions of new immigrants” and “to

make city government more businesslike,” but also in progressive forms such as “regulating corporate activity, and conserving the natural environment” (224). While, as historian David Reynolds postulates, Wilson and Roosevelt offered the electorate different messages during the campaign, “the differences were largely rhetorical” (281). That is, “in office Wilson continued the mix of anti-trust actions and regulatory bodies used by Roosevelt and Taft to rein in big business” (281). Ironically, as Reynolds continues, the “[creation of] ‘the Fed’ [under the auspices of the Democrat Woodrow Wilson] was perhaps the biggest reform of the progressive era” (281).

### The New Deal Majority:

By 1932, however, the Republican Party – the ‘McKinley Republicans’ according to Judis and Teixeira – that had dominated American politics for a little less than four decades descended into minority status when incumbent Republican president Herbert Hoover got routed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As argued in the previous chapter, in the realm of the political realignment theory the election of 1932 is seen as the main template for the so-called ‘critical election’ version of realignment as the Great Depression, a “cataclysmic event,” produced “a shift in the political coalitions that [dominated] American politics,” or, as Abramowitz and Saunders put it, “set off a realignment of party loyalties” (Abramowitz and Saunders 635; Judis and Teixeira 12). Significant precursors of the ‘critical election’ and the subsequent realignment were the economic and societal conditions of the 1920s.

In stark contrast with the Progressive Era, the Roaring Twenties were a time of ‘laissez-faire’ – which included rising inequality, poverty, and a growing corporate influence – under successive Republican administrations who “identified the fortunes of America with those of business” (Rosenzweig et al. 337; 343). In fact, under Warren Harding and his Republican successors, there was an “extraordinary corporate influence on national policy,” “the political power of big business climbed to new heights,” and “the rich grew richer, [while] middle- and lower-income Americans barely made modest gains” (Rosenzweig et al. 336; Norton et al. 649). Meanwhile, as Norton et al. write, “[the] urgency for political and economic reform that inspired the previous Progressive generation faded in the 1920s” (631). These developments in the 1920s along with the stock market crash in 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression created the conditions for a ‘critical election’ and a new political realignment: The New Deal Democrats.

Whereas Hoover received fifty-four percent of the vote in 1928, he failed to even crack the forty percent mark four years later. FDR won 57.4 percent of the vote along with 472 electoral votes compared to Hoover's mere 39.7 percent and fifty-nine electoral votes (Whitney and Whitney 576). Not only did the Democratic Party win back the White House decisively, unlike Woodrow Wilson's narrow victories in the 1910s, they also made tremendous gains in Congress, in fact, they took full control of it. Democrats won an astonishing ninety-seven House seats as they went from 216 seats from 1931 until 1933 to 313 seats after the 1932 election (Whitney and Whitney 612-613). Likewise, in the Senate, Democrats went from forty-seven seats in President Hoover's last two years in office to fifty-nine seats after FDR's election (612-613).

Besides the seismic shifts that took place in the 1932 election, there were already signs of a changing political landscape in the presidential election of 1928. The pre-1928 Democratic Party was "a socially conservative, agrarian party" whose political and electoral base was the in South, making the party in the words of Kevin Phillips "something of a Southern institution" (Miller and Schofield 437-438; Phillips 206). Indeed, "the Southern states were the geopolitical heartland of the Democratic Party for almost a century after the civil war," as these states' electoral votes consistently ended up in the Democratic column and most of the Southern congressional delegation were Democrats (Phillips 206; Mackenzie and Weisbrot 38). The Democratic strength was especially palpable in the states of the Deep South – Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina – whose electoral votes in the fourteen presidential elections between 1880 and 1932 went to the Democrats an astonishing fourteen times (Phillips 205-206). Besides the party's strength in the South, Democrats were not able to appeal to voters outside of Dixie on a level that delivered them electoral victories, with the aforementioned exception of Woodrow Wilson in the 1910s. Professor Thomas Schaller shares this observation as he writes in his book *Whistling Past Dixie* that "[the] South was unified, but in their unity southern Democrats mostly found themselves on the outside of American politics looking in" (16).

This all started to change in 1928. V.O. Key, one of the leading political scientists in regard to the development of the political realignment theory, argues that in 1928 the contours of the coming New Deal majority were already palpable because the Democratic presidential nominee Al Smith "made gains in all the New England states," "especially ... in Massachusetts and Rhode Island," by "the activation ... of low-income, Catholic, urban voters of recent immigrant stock" (Key 4). Up until that point, New England – and the Northeast at large – had been firmly in the Republican column since 1896, in fact both Massachusetts and Rhode Island "had never

cast a majority of their votes against a Republican presidential nominee” but in the 1928 election Smith won both of them with fifty percent of the vote (Phillips 41-43). Despite Smith’s loss to President Hoover, the electoral shift in the Northeast was significant in the sense that “even before the Great Depression, Smith sparked a revolt of the urban ethnic groups which foreshadowed the make-up of the New Deal coalition” (42). Given these shifts in the Northeast, V.O. Key asserts in his article *A Theory of Critical Elections* that “[in] New England, at least, the Roosevelt revolution of 1932 was in large measure an Al Smith revolution of 1928” because, as Rosenof paraphrases Key’s observation from his book *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*, the New Deal coalition “was in part based on Democratic urban, Catholic, working-class voter additions of the Al Smith campaign of 1928” (Key 4; Rosenof 52). Strategist Kevin Phillips echoes Key’s point as he writes that “[in] the South and West, the Democratic upheaval came in 1932, coinciding with F.D.R., but in the Northeast, the patterns of 1932 reflected the earlier breakthrough of 1928” (45). Thus, despite the fact that the new Democratic majority came into being in the 1932 election when the Great Depression had struck American society with full force, change had already been on the horizon four years earlier, at least in the Northeastern part of the country.

Notwithstanding the 1928 election in which signs of change were looming, it took a ‘critical election’ (1932) in the wake of the outbreak of the Great Depression to fully materialize the New Deal coalition. The new Democratic majority was able to come to fruition due to the fact that “anger over the Great Depression drove a number of groups – industrial workers, small farmers, blacks, Catholics, and Jews – back into the Democratic Party” (Judis and Teixeira 14). These groups, “[together] with the party’s existing base in the South ... gave the Democrats an enduring majority” that lasted until the latter parts of the 1960s (14). In essence, this new majority coalition was “a polyglot alliance of urban voters in the North, labor unions, ethnic and racial minorities, and southern whites” (Critchlow 18). The key of FDR’s New Deal coalition, which, as will be pointed out later in this chapter, was also its inherent weakness, was the fact that the “Democrats controlled most of the northern cities” from 1932 onwards while maintaining their hold on “the rural South” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 46).

However, prior to disintegrating after the presidential election of 1964, the New Deal coalition proved to be a strong alliance that would dominate and control the political agenda for decades to come. Even during the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1950s and early 1960s, the Democratic Party – the “sun” party – and its New Deal majority “[provided] the parameters of politics” while the Republican Party that controlled the White House was the “moon” party “which reflected the power of the sun” (Rosenof 41). Indeed, as Mackenzie and

Weisbrot hold, “Eisenhower’s presidency had sought to reverse almost none of what the previous twenty years of Democratic ascendancy had established” as “[his] ‘moderate Republicanism’ looked different only at the edges from the New Deal liberalism that had come to dominate the American political center” (43). Conservative Republican opponents of the New Deal and the course the Republican Party took in this period of the Democratic majority coalition pejoratively called these moderate or liberal Republicans who accepted and even supported the New Deal “me-too [Republicans]” (Perlstein, *Before the Storm* 160).

Despite the dominance of the Democratic Party in the period from FDR’s election in 1932 through the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, the New Deal majority had its share of frictions and contradictory forces – most notably the divide between southern and northern/urban Democrats – that undermined the stability of the coalition. More specifically, the Democrats’ majority coalition was, as Mackenzie and Weisbrot argue, “an odd mix” composed of “dirt farmers and immigrants, of blue collar and blue overalls, of racists and racial minorities” (46-47). All of these different factions in the Democratic coalition enabled the party to dominate the American political landscape for decades but it was at the same time precisely this broad and ideologically divergent coalition that made it prone to instability and fragmentation. One of the foremost examples that underline this observation is the presidential election of 1948 in which incumbent Democratic president Harry Truman defeated Thomas Dewey, the Republican governor of the state of New York.

In this election, Truman lost four of the five states in the Deep South (Georgia being the exception), a significant development since this was the first time since the presidential election of 1880 that the Democratic presidential nominee failed to carry each of these five states (Peters and Woolley, “Presidential Election Data”). It was not, however, Governor Dewey who won these states. Rather, it was another Democrat, then-governor from South Carolina Strom Thurmond, who ran for president as a third party candidate for the States’ Rights Democratic Party, a party “critical of civil rights policy as inimical to white supremacy and thus attractive to white segregationists” (Thurber 34; Mason 122). Outside of the Deep South, Thurmond and his party, also referred to as the Dixiecrats, had no success but his strong performance in the South was remarkable in that the ‘Solid South,’ a term referring to the overwhelming dominance of the Democratic Party in the region, decisively turned its back on the Democratic Party. The election results in the Deep South in 1948 reflect this observation accurately as Thurmond won 79.7 percent of the popular vote in the state of Alabama, 49.1 percent in Louisiana, 87.2 percent in Mississippi, and 72.0 percent in South Carolina (Peters and Woolley, “Election of 1948”).

The reason why Truman lost four southern states was the issue of civil rights that deeply divided the Democratic Party, especially between northern and southern Democrats (Thurber 34). The civil rights issue, as will be explained later on in this chapter, was one of the main causes of the crumbling of the New Deal coalition in the 1960s, but, as the 1948 election illustrates, it had already been a contentious matter and destabilizing force in the Democratic Party long before that decade. Harry Truman, who, as Mackenzie and Weisbrot pose, “had always welcomed black support as heartily as white,” set up “a committee in 1946 to investigate violations of black rights” whose subsequent recommendations that were published in October 1947, “urged broad federal action to end segregation” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 138; Gardner 23) <sup>4</sup>. On February 2, 1948, in response to the committee’s report and recommendations, President Truman “brought consternation to the ranks of southern Democrats when ... he sent a message to Congress calling for a ten-point civil rights program to end religious and racial discrimination” (Whitney and Whitney 306). Adding to southern Democrats’ anxiety was the president’s embrace of “a strong civil rights plank” that was “inserted in the Democratic national platform” in the presidential election year of 1948 (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 138).

Truman’s “support for civil rights legislation” and “the national platform’s endorsement of federal civil rights legislation” did not only madden southern Democrats, it also made them anxious as they saw that their president and party’s stance on civil rights was diametrically opposed to theirs in the sense that they opposed the passage and enactment of civil rights legislation that the president, the national platform, and the presidential committee on civil rights called for (Thurber 34; Critchlow 18). Furthermore, and this goes even back to the days of FDR’s presidency, southern Democrats increasingly saw the federal government as a threat to their way of life as they were worried “that the expansion of national government would eventually impinge on states’ rights in matters of race” (Critchlow 18). The term ‘states’ rights’ was code language for the position of supporting and maintaining the societal status quo of a racially segregated society in the South and opposing the idea of the federal government mandating racial integration.

This divide in the Democratic Party with regard to civil rights, which for a significant part revolved around the issue of segregation versus desegregation, proved to be unsustainable and consequently resulted in southern Democrats abandoning their party and “defecting to a

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<sup>4</sup> This report – “To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights” – was written by The President’s Committee on Civil Rights, which was established on December 5, 1946, following President Truman’s Executive Order 9808 (Wilson, et al. VIII).

Dixiecrat faction [The States' Rights Democratic Party] headed by Governor Strom Thurmond” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 138). This party of southern Democrats and its “full-throated advocacy of racial segregation” performed, as mentioned earlier, well in the Deep South in the presidential election of 1948 even though Truman ultimately squeezed out a narrow victory (Schaller, *Whistling Past Dixie* 274). “The rupture,” as historian Donald T. Critchlow asserts, “was not permanent, but the uneasy postelection truce within Democratic ranks did not look like it would last” (18). Indeed, this intra-party friction would play a significant role in the breakup of the New Deal majority in the 1960s during President Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency.

This entire episode – or ordeal from the viewpoint of the Democratic Party – can be seen through the lens of the political realignment theory as the presence of third party candidates who are able to appeal to a significant portion of the electorate can be seen as harbingers of a coming realignment. Or, as Judis and Teixeira postulate, “[one] indication that a realignment is imminent has been the rise of third parties that defy the existing political consensus” (16). In this light, one can argue that Thurmond and the Dixiecrats in 1948 exposed the tensions in the Democratic majority coalition that foreshadowed the forming of a new political era in which the Democratic Party descended to a minority status while the Republican Party ascended to a majority status. As will be briefly discussed later on in this chapter, in the election of 1968, there was another major race-related revolt within the Democratic Party as former Alabama governor George Wallace ran for president on a third party ticket for the American Independent Party. However, before George Wallace in 1968 and despite the intra-party tensions in the 1948 election which led to Thurmond’s third party candidacy, the New Deal majority coalition was the dominating force in American politics from the 1930s through the middle of the 1960s when it came to electoral politics, policymaking, and setting and driving the agenda.

#### The 1964 Caesura and the Unravelling of the New Deal Majority:

Then came the election of 1964, which in retrospect was a watershed moment in the dawning and development of a new political era – the “Conservative Republican Majority” – that would come to pass in the 1980 election with the election of Ronald Reagan (Judis and Teixeira 14). At the time, the unprecedented loss for the Republican Party was seen as anything but a turning point in the prevailing political power structure that would propel the GOP back in the driver’s seat of American politics a few years down the road. The quote by Gyory that was given at the beginning of this chapter about the idea that “in the loosened soil of each

election can be found both the seeds of political decline and rebirth” is especially fitting in the case of the 1964 presidential election, as will become clear in the discussion below (“Lecture I” 1). That is, in a mere time span of twenty years, the Republican Party and its conservative wing went from a party and faction that were seen by some in the 1950s and 1960s, such as literary critic Lionel Trilling, as becoming obsolete and irrelevant, as he “dismissed conservative thought as little more than ‘irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas,’ ” to a party that was the embodiment of “the mainstream of American politics” in the 1980s and beyond (Scarborough xii-xiii).

Indeed, as Professor Morgan notes, “[in] 1964 some analysts had pronounced the Republican Party close to extinction as a serious political force” after Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater’s electoral shellacking in the election of 1964 (64). In this particular election, the Republican Party had moved decidedly to the Right of the political spectrum with the nomination of Senator Goldwater from Arizona after having traditionally been a center Right party with the moderate and liberal wings exerting control of the party (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 41; Farber 80; 103). However, this time around in 1964, it was the conservative wing of the party that had “won the nomination for Goldwater by out-organizing the Republican Party’s moderate and liberal factions, the same factions that had controlled the nominating process for the prior three decades” and the same wings of the party that Goldwater and his fellow conservative Republicans had railed against since the days of FDR for its alleged liberalism and failure to present the Republican Party as an alternative instead of a watered down version of the Democratic Party (Farber 103) <sup>5</sup>.

This criticism from the conservative Republicans was on full display in the election season of ’64 when Barry Goldwater declared that he would offer the American people “a choice, not an echo” (qtd. in Mason 182). The rationale behind this line for Goldwater and conservative Republicans was the theory “that an electoral majority existed in support of conservative principles” (182). Once the GOP would present itself as an alternative – i.e. a conservative alternative – to the Democratic Party, conservative Republicans reasoned, the party would fare a lot better in elections since previous “Republican presidential candidates lost because millions of disgusted heartlanders stayed home rather than vote for so unnatural a beast as the ‘me-too Republican’ ” (Perlstein, *Before the Storm* 159-160). A conservative Republican, then, would

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<sup>5</sup> The earlier mentioned term “me-too [Republicans]” on page twenty-two is one such example that illustrates the divide between conservative Republicans and the liberal and moderate wings of the party (Perlstein, *Before the Storm* 160).

turn the tables of electoral fortune for the GOP. After Goldwater's defeat, however, the influential historian from the middle of the twentieth century, Richard Hofstadter, wrote in his essay "Goldwater and Pseudo-Conservative Politics" that the "old right-wing myth, that there was an enormous conservative 'silent vote' that would pour out to the polls if the party would only nominate a proper right-wing, was exploded" (113).

Prior to the general election of '64, Goldwater had to navigate through a primary season in which the liberal and moderate wings of the party fought the Arizona senator tooth and nail, even on the floor of the party's national convention (Perlstein, *Before the Storm* 383). Despite these efforts by centrist and center right Republicans in the primary season, such as New York governor Nelson Rockefeller and Pennsylvania governor William Scranton, to defeat the conservative Goldwater and to win the nomination for their particular wing of the party, also referred to as the 'establishment' or '(north)eastern establishment,' Goldwater prevailed and won the Republican nomination (Critchlow 13). This to the dismay of 'establishment' Republicans, such as Rockefeller, who saw the conservative resurgence and rise to prominence within the party as an "extremist takeover" and a recipe for disaster for both the short and long term (Perlstein, *Before the Storm* 383; Mackenzie and Weisbrot 106). Arguing along the same lines, "[experts]," according to Rick Perlstein, "claiming the Republican tradition of progressivism was as much a part of its identity as the elephant, began talking about a party committing suicide" (Perlstein, *Nixonland* 5). In the end, their short term fears of losing the election became reality as Goldwater got routed by President Johnson in an unprecedented landslide that delivered the incumbent president the highest popular vote percentage in American history; the popular vote went to Johnson 61.1 percent to 38.5 percent and in the electoral college Johnson amassed 486 electoral votes as opposed to a mere fifty-two for Goldwater (Whitney and Whitney 577).

In the direct aftermath of the election, political obituaries were written by journalists and pundits who foresaw the demise and decay of the Republican Party as "[conventional] wisdom, post-election, was that America had rejected not just a man but a movement" (Farber 79). Scotty Reston of the *New York Times*, for example, wrote that Goldwater "not only lost the presidential election yesterday but the conservative cause as well" (qtd. in Perlstein, *Before the Storm* 513). Reston continued by writing that Goldwater "has wrecked his party for a long time to come" (513). The historian Richard Hofstadter argued along similar lines when he contended that "Goldwater may have given the Republican Party the *coup de grâce* as a genuine major-party competitor" (qtd. in Mason and Morgan 5). Moreover, a poll conducted in the wake of Goldwater's loss showed that sixty-five percent "of rank-and-file Republicans still called

themselves conservative” (Perlstein, *Nixonland* 7). This, according to “two of the nation’s most respected political scientist” at the time, was not the right path for Republicans to be on since “[should] that two-thirds dominate their party’s direction, ... ‘we can expect an end to the competitive two-party system’ ” (7).

Taking all of these pre- and post-election observations into account, there seems to have been a wide-shared and agreed upon consensus at the time that the Republican Party was an endangered party as it moved away from the center right and instead took a sharp turn to the Right to conservatism, which did not seem to resonate with the American electorate. The outcome of the 1964 presidential election in which the conservative Barry Goldwater was at the top of the Republican ticket and subsequently lost badly was, as suggested above, the affirmation of this rationale. However, by 1980, a new Republican realignment had materialized when Ronald Reagan was swept into office along with thirty-four more House Republicans and a fifty-three to forty-six majority in the senate, the first Republican majority in the senate since the 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1953-1955) (Judis and Teixeira 21; Whitney and Whitney 612-615). Even more impressive – and unthinkable after the Republican debacle of ’64 – was that this Republican realignment was a conservative one rather than a centrist or right of center majority coalition since “[increasingly] the Republican Party became a home to conservatives,” which as a consequence alienated and minimized the political clout and influence of “liberal Republicans, the so-called eastern wing of the party” (Critchlow 13).

How and why could the political status quo in American politics change so fundamentally in such a relatively short period of time? Again, the political realignment theory serves as a helpful tool to analyze and discern certain patterns and currents in American politics that help to explain the changing and evolving dynamics of political clout and influence of both political parties in the United States. In regard to the transfer of political power from the Democratic to the Republican Party in the post-1964 election period, one can observe two distinct developments that account for the disintegrating Democratic majority coalition and the gradually emerging Republican majority. The first development regards the Democratic Party’s move to the Left of the political spectrum in both the Johnson and the post-LBJ era while the Republican Party moved to the Right and succeeded in shifting the geographical base of the party from the northeast – that is, the liberal and moderate northeastern establishment – to the conservative South and the southwest, which was electorally speaking an effective move because of the significant population growth in these regions after WWII. The second development, and the more immediate cause for the breakup of the New Deal coalition, was the

issue of civil rights, a matter that had always been contentious within the Democratic Party, as the earlier discussed account of the Dixiecrats in 1948 has illustrated.

Starting off with the issue of civil rights, the New Deal coalition had always been an odd alliance between groups of people that were politically aligned but not necessarily ideologically. The Democratic Party consisted of people that supported the advancement of equal rights for African Americans but at the same time a large chunk within the party, predominantly white southern Democrats, were vehemently opposed to the civil rights movement, the idea of racial equality, and the desegregation of society. This particular issue might prove to be the most immediate cause of the disintegration of the New Deal majority since it produced an irreconcilable rift between northern and southern Democrats after the passage and signing of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965) by President Johnson. This successful push by Democrats in Congress and LBJ for far-reaching civil rights legislation was what southern Democrats and pro-segregationists had feared since the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the first Democratic president who, with his New Deal policies, opened the door of inclusion to African Americans (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 136).

Despite the fact that, as argued before, the civil rights issue had always been a matter with the potential of destabilizing the New Deal majority, the coalition managed to function because “the confederal nature of the politics of the time, with politics at home more important than politics in Washington, allowed these strange bedfellows to accomplish many of their collective purpose without challenging their more cherished local values or upsetting their successful local political arrangements” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 47). That is, whereas southern Democrats in Congress “gave no quarter” on the issue of race, they “could be populist and even progressive on many matters of social policy” as the “New Deal had drawn significant support from that region” (41). As a result of these factors – the emphasis on local politics and avoiding dealing with the hot potato that was civil rights despite interludes (e.g. Truman in 1948) in which this issue rose to the surface within the party, and the shared interest in a pro-active federal government on social policy – the Democratic majority coalition was able to stand the test of time for roughly three decades. Now, notwithstanding the creation of a “new welfare structure” – the New Deal – that included African Americans and the support and advocacy for (modest) civil rights legislation from Roosevelt and Truman in the 1930s through the 1950s, “[by] 1960, political change was afoot” as “[liberals] were becoming far more interested in pushing forward with the civil rights agenda that President Harry Truman had cautiously embraced in 1948 and that African American activists were demanding” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 136; Farber 80).

After John F. Kennedy's death in November 1963, his successor Lyndon B. Johnson fully embraced the civil rights movement. One of the most prevalent examples of President Johnson's commitment to civil rights came in his speech to Congress in 1965 in which he told the American people "that he was about to introduce a voting rights act" and ended his speech with the historic words that echoed the civil rights movement: "And we shall overcome" (Caro, par. 2-20). These are only four words, yet they are crucially important because this was yet another major sign to civil rights activists that they could trust the president on issues of racial equality, which was not necessarily logical since over the course of his tenure in the senate Johnson had not been an outspoken or ardent advocate on this particular issue. That is not to say that LBJ was opposed to advancing civil rights, but, in the words of Mackenzie and Weisbrot, he had to walk "a fine line," being a senator from conservative Texas while also "protecting his national political options" (77-78). He knew that he could not be the leading champion for civil rights in Congress since that would have been a politically tough position to hold given his southern and conservative home state of Texas, but at the same time, he harbored "gut liberal instincts," resented the "bigotry, poverty, and backwardness" of the southern states, and he was aware that in order for him to play any role in presidential politics as a Democrat, it was imperative for him to garner support from "[the] movement for civil rights [that] was building, foremost among black Americans but also among the white liberal intellectuals and the labor unions that provided much of the political power of the Democratic Party" (Shapiro 11).

Consequently, as a U.S. Senator, Johnson remained somewhat ambivalent with regard to civil rights as he attempted "to keep sizeable majorities of his colleagues to his right and his left," a deliberate political strategy because "[survival] in Texas politics required Lyndon Johnson to keep his liberal instincts submerged during much of his congressional career" (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 77-78; 76)<sup>6</sup>. Put differently, as suggested before, "Southern political expectations limited the Texan's ability to support legislation that posed an overt challenge to segregation" (Lerner 11). To no surprise then, there was a great deal of mistrust of Johnson within the civil rights movement and liberal circles at large when it came to the issue of the advancement of civil rights in America (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 159). Rick Perlstein underlines this notion when he writes in *Before the Storm* that "[the] black magazine *Jet* reported that when Johnson was sworn in, 'a wave of pessimism and dejection began to build across Negro America' " (305). However, as argued earlier, his embrace of the civil rights

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, when LBJ ran for the U.S. Senate in 1948, he ran on a platform that included opposition to "civil rights reform" (Lerner 11).

movement as president, as opposed to the senator from Texas, changed that, although it took him a while to gain the trust of liberals and proponents of civil rights in the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination since "[civil] rights leaders had lost too many battles, been encased in too many compromises, borne too many scars from the formidable legislative skills of the former majority leader of the Senate [LBJ] to forget all that now and embrace him as their true ally" (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 159). That is, prior to his time in the executive branch of government and his commitment to passing far-reaching civil rights legislation, LBJ, according to journalist Ronnie Dugger, "seemed to be just another Southern racist" when it came to "legislation that could be recognized as pro-black" (qtd. in Lerner 11).

Before trying to advance the Voting Rights Act in 1965, President Johnson "[used] every means at his disposal to move passage of the Civil Rights Act" after Kennedy's death in November 1963 (Farber 102). In his first State of the Union speech in January 1964, the newly sworn in president made an appeal to members of Congress to commit themselves to advancing civil rights legislatively: "Let this session of Congress be known as the session which did more for civil rights than the last hundred sessions combined" (qtd. in Perlstein, *Before the Storm* 306). Given the opposition of Southern Democrats to the civil rights movement, they "led the fight to stop it [the Civil Rights Act]" in Congress (Farber 102). Ultimately, the 1964 Civil Rights Act passed both houses of Congress by significant margins, although Southern Democrats broke en masse with their fellow Democrats (103). It was at this time that President Johnson famously said that "I think we just gave the South to the Republicans for your lifetime and mine" (qtd. in Farber 103).

LBJ's political instinct could not have been more accurate since the American electoral playbook radically altered after the passage of the Civil Rights Act. What used to be at the core of a winning electoral template for Democrats – the so called "Solid South" - now became a Republican dominated region (Levy, par. 3). In the presidential election of 1964, Johnson defeated Goldwater handily, "but he lost the Deep South – the first Democrat since the Civil War to do so" (Norton et al. 803). Indeed, as argued earlier, Truman lost states from the Deep South too in the hotly contested presidential election of 1948, but not all of them like Johnson did in '64. From that moment, the Deep South became Republican territory, not only on the presidential level, but also on the congressional and increasingly on the state level as well. In fact, on a side note, the 2014 midterm elections were historic in the sense that the political transformation of the South was completed with Republicans gaining full political control of every state in the Deep South. More specifically, in these five states in 2014 – Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina – the Republican Party controlled every

governorship and state legislature, the latter of which with significant majorities. Furthermore, on the national level the ten U.S. Senate seats were occupied by Republicans and a whopping thirty out of thirty-eight House seats were held by Republicans.

Back to the 1960s, LBJ's victory in the 1964 presidential election was at that time the biggest electoral defeat in a presidential election for any political party since 1936. Given the breadth of Johnson's victory and the humiliating defeat for the Republican Party, political observers and journalists unsurprisingly saw the election as an "affirmation of a political and cultural order that had endured since the New Deal thirty years before," i.e. the New Deal majority coalition (Douthat and Salam 17). Equally as worse post-election analyses for Republicans foresaw the demise of the GOP and conservatism, as illustrated earlier with Lionel Trilling's unflattering description of conservatism as a bankrupt political and governing philosophy. However, only two years later, Republicans gained forty-seven House seats and three Senate seats in the 1966 midterm elections. Furthermore, in 1968 Richard Nixon got elected president after narrowly defeating Hubert Humphrey, the vice-president under Lyndon B. Johnson. In other words, rather than the 1964 election being evidence of a perpetual liberal political order, LBJ's "triumph represented [instead] the electoral high-water mark of the New Deal tradition" (Mason and Morgan 4).

While the civil rights legislation of the sixties created a rift between northern and southern Democrats, the composition of the Republican Party also began to transform fundamentally. Prior to this transformation, a majority of Republicans in Congress had previously voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Republican leadership wanted to portray themselves as the party that advocated for civil rights. That is, in 1964, the "Republican National Committee [RNC] in Washington had sent notices around to all Republican members of Congress reminding them to lambast the Democrats for their long and sordid history of race baiting and to remind the civil rights activists and their supporters that the GOP was the traditional party of civil rights" (Farber 102).

However, a short time after the passage and signing ceremony of the Civil Rights Act, the Republican Party nominated a candidate for president, Barry Goldwater, who was one out of six Republicans in the United States Senate who voted against the Civil Rights Act (103). As a result of Goldwater's nomination, "white [southern] Democrats who had been alienated by the civil rights movement" flocked to the Republican Party since its nominee "rejected a commitment to racial equality" (Judis and Teixeira 17). This was not to say that Goldwater harbored racial resentments or vehemently opposed the desegregation of society. Rather, Goldwater believed that the issue of race relations in the United States should have been dealt

with on the state level as opposed to on the federal level. This states' rights position, as touched upon earlier in this chapter, proved to be tremendously appealing to southern Democrats since the Republican nominee made clear with this stance on the matter of racial integration that he believed government should leave this issues to the individual states. Moreover, Goldwater's opposition to the Civil Rights Bill stemmed from his libertarian view that the bill's "public accommodation section violated people's right to do business with whom they pleased" (Barone 99). With his states' rights position, Goldwater effectively conveyed to southern Democrats that he, as president, would not federally mandate racial integration.

Whereas southern white Democrats gravitated toward the GOP from 1964 onwards, an up until then important electoral faction of the Republican Party, African Americans, defected from the party during the election of '64 because of Goldwater's opposition to the Civil Rights Act and his states' rights philosophy. This defection, in hindsight, proved to be permanent as African Americans realigned themselves politically as they en masse started to identify themselves with the Democratic Party. Before Goldwater, African Americans had "traditionally [been] a GOP stronghold since Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves a century earlier," a central goal during the later stages of the Civil War when Lincoln signed the historic Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, which "defined the war as a war against slavery" (Scarborough 49; Norton et al. 389). It must be noted, however, that African Americans already started to move in large numbers to the Democratic Party at the time of FDR's presidency because "the New Deal opened for them new avenues of participation in American life" since it enabled "the substantial inclusion of blacks as recipients of federal aid" (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 136). Indeed, as historian T.H. Watkins asserts, "by the middle of the decade [1930s] most African Americans had severed their old ties to the Republican party and joined the Democrats" (218).

It was, however, after the 1964 election that a vast majority of African Americans gravitated to the Democratic Party (Watkins 218). As Scarborough points out in his book *The Right Path*, from 1964 when Goldwater's "opposition to LBJ's civil rights legislation helped contribute to a massive falloff of support from African Americans" to the present day, "Republican nominees for president have rarely seen their support from African Americans rise above 10 percent" (49). As indicated, African Americans increasingly began to vote Democratic at the time of the New Deal but their near universal commitment to the party that had maligned them for so long had not yet fully materialized. In 1956, for example, Dwight Eisenhower received thirty-nine percent of the black vote and in 1960, Richard Nixon garnered thirty-two percent ("Election Polls"). The nomination of Goldwater in 1964 and his opposition to the Civil

Rights Bill produced a fundamental and structural change in American electoral politics as African Americans almost universally flocked to the Democratic Party despite the fact that the Republican Party still housed many supporters of civil rights advancement (Judis and Teixeira 56). In this election, President Johnson took ninety-four percent of the black vote as opposed to Goldwater's six ("Election Polls").

After the election of '64, Republicans have never been able to win more than fifteen percent of the African American vote (Fauntroy 5). This 'high-water mark' for Republicans, however, already dates back to the elections of 1968 with Richard Nixon and 1976 with Gerald Ford (5). In the first four presidential elections of the twenty-first century, the Republican ceiling of the black vote was eleven percent in 2004 (5). In 2000, Bush garnered eight percent of the African American vote; in 2008, John McCain recorded the lowest percentage of the black vote for the Republican Party in American history – four percent; in 2012, Mitt Romney fared only slightly better with six percent (5; "President Exit Polls"). The Democrats on the other hand have never dropped below eighty-two percent (1992) of the black vote since 1964 and have won an average of 88.15 percent of the African American vote in the thirteen presidential elections between 1964 and 2012 (Fauntroy 5). The absolute culmination for Democrats came in the historic election of 2008 when Barack Obama won an astounding ninety-five percent of the African American vote ("President Exit Polls").

As this discussion has illustrated, the disintegration of the Democratic majority - or the "collapse of New Deal Liberalism" in the words of Judis and Teixeira – was to a significant degree caused by the divide within the Democratic Party in regard to the issue of civil rights and subsequent accompanying legislation (most notably the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act) that Lyndon B. Johnson supported and pushed through Congress (17). While the Democrats expanded their clout and influence within the African American community, they had alienated white southern Democrats, a faction that had been critical to the survival of the New Deal majority coalition. These southern Democrats were generally speaking, as indicated earlier, staunch segregationists, but they had been supportive of FDR's New Deal policies. The Republicans, on the other hand, began to make significant inroads in the South, a region that had historically not been too friendly to the Party of Lincoln. At the same time, the GOP's up until then electoral core base – the northeast and "especially the Yankee and industrial bailiwicks of New England, upstate New York, Michigan and Pennsylvania" – started to trend to the Democrats, and the party's moderate and liberal 'northeastern establishment' wings that had been pulling the strings increasingly lost influence and political clout (Phillips 1-2). A new geographical core region of the Republican Party began to come together in the South, but, as

will be pointed out in the discussion below, also in the southwest and in particular the “middle-class suburbia” in that region (2). That trend, however, was not so much shaped by race relations as by the libertarian, laissez-faire economics, and anti-communist sentiment in the southwest.

This brings us to the second development that explains the rise of the Republican Party to political prominence and power from 1968 onwards and the precipitous decline of the Democratic Party to minority status in presidential politics after Lyndon B. Johnson’s resounding election victory in 1964. As briefly indicated earlier, this development is characterized by the leftward move of the Democratic Party during and after LBJ’s tenure in the executive branch and the Republican Party’s shift to the Right of the political spectrum which enabled the party to not only make inroads in the South, but also in the other part of the Sunbelt, namely the fast growing southwestern portion of the United States<sup>7</sup>. Just as the election of ’64 was important in regard to the issue of civil rights and the subsequent growth of political clout for Republicans in the South, the election of 1964 proved to be a pivotal moment with regard to the changing dynamics and polarization of both political parties as well. That is, the leftward shift of the Democratic Party and the rightward shift of the Republican Party that occurred in this period and in this particular election caused the parties to morph into much more ideologically unified blocs in which conservative Democrats moved away from their party to the GOP, a party that “[a] great majority of white southerners [had] hated ... for historic reasons,” while at the same time the northeastern liberal and moderate wings of Republican Party became increasingly marginalized and alienated from their party (Farber 87; Mackenzie and Weisbrot 351-352).

Starting with the shift to the Left of the Democratic Party, similar to the Republican Party, the Democratic Party was ideologically much more diversified than in the contemporary political era. One can describe it as a microcosm of the American electorate at large in which the different ideological philosophies were present in one party; liberals on the Left, moderates in the center, and conservative Democrats on the Right. Each of these factions vied for influence within the party, but, just as in the Republican Party, the moderates in the center largely controlled the party. Farber illustrates this point by invoking the 1960 election in which “most well-informed voters would have been hard pressed to explain how the moderate liberal Democrat John Kennedy differed from the moderate conservative Republican Richard Nixon on the major issues” (80). The political path to success prior to the ’64 election had been one of centrism with “[both] political parties [seeking] to control the broad center of American

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<sup>7</sup> The term ‘Sunbelt’ as a geographical entity will be defined and discussed later on in this chapter.

politics” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 41). However, despite the centrism of both parties “Democrats tended left and Republicans right,” but in general one can say that the two parties were centered in the middle of the political spectrum in which both were ideologically diverse in the sense that “each political party had a conservative faction and a liberal faction and numerous people in the middle” (41; Farber 80).

Despite the centrist course of the Democrats and the Republicans, in Congress conservatives from both sides of the aisle “usually dominated” as they had formed an alliance that was called the “conservative coalition” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 41; 57). This was a “loose and largely unorganized confederation of southern Democrats and conservative Republicans” that “[shared] common ground when it came to increased national defense spending or opposition to social legislation” (57; Matthews, *Tip and the Gipper* 64). As discussed earlier, southern Democrats had not always been opposed to social policies as the New Deal “had drawn significant support from that region” but they increasingly feared federal interference and top down political and social engineering, especially when it came to civil rights legislation, but also in regard to President Johnson’s Great Society programs that, like the New Deal policies, “benefitted people who were not in the middle class: racial minorities, the poor, the unemployed, the sick, and the old” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 41; 355). Chris Matthews, former aide to President Jimmy Carter and Speaker Tip O’Neill in the 1980s, recalls this ‘conservative coalition’ that was alive and well in the eighties in his memoir *Tip and the Gipper* as he writes about the “human geography” in the House that revealed a member’s political philosophy: “Up in the back and hugging the center aisle, and therefore closest to the Republicans, was ‘Redneck Row.’ That was home to the southern Democrats, the members who were the Speaker’s biggest worry; they were the conservatives who were now voting heavily for the Reagan program” (155-156).

With the election of ’64 alienating southern whites from the Democratic Party to the GOP, the party “not only lost its most reliable base of political strength, it also lost its ideological superego” in the sense that “[with] the South growing less and less relevant to political calculations in the party, the counterweight was gone and liberals could push further and further to the left” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 354-355). In other words, the balance within the party – a liberal, a moderate, and a conservative wing – was gone when the Democrats ‘lost the South,’ to put it in Johnsonian terms. Indeed, “[what] had been the party of the center left became for a time a party of the left” (355). It must be noted that as these southern Democrats in Congress and voters in the South abandoned their party and started voting for the Republican Party, some of them, such as Strom Thurmond, changed their party affiliation to the Republican Party, but

many of them remained registered Democrats. This gave the Republican Party in the 1970s and 1980s a significant amount of political leeway and maneuverability when they, except for Carter's tenure, occupied the White House despite the fact that Democrats controlled both chambers of Congress for the majority of the time.

Besides losing its ideological balance, the Democratic Party was increasingly perceived as a party that had lost its sight of the average middle-class American, a party that believed that government was the answer to every of society's problems, and that the government could effectively resolve those issues through social engineering. After Johnson's landslide victory in 1964, he used his political capital to tread into uncharted water by passing sweeping programs – collectively known as the Great Society – that sought to address and find solutions to a wide arrange of society's challenges such as poverty and race relations. In accordance with “[the] central idea of twentieth-century liberalism,” President Johnson was very much ingrained with the idea that “government could be a positive force in the lives of American citizens” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 360). However, “in the 1960s that basic idea inflated in liberal rhetoric into a much larger and less reliable conceit: that government action could alleviate poverty, eliminate bigotry, educate all the children, cure the sick, clean the air and water, protect consumers, and provide a golden age for the elderly” (360). This approach – “that every problem has a solution and that the government in Washington is most likely to provide that solution” – ultimately proved to be problematic as a rising number of Americans viewed “this liberal faith in the capacity of government to fix society's ills ... [as] arrogance,” especially because the expansion of government required a heavier financial burden on the part of taxpayers (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 359; 361).

Despite the effectiveness of many of the Great Society's programs and laws, LBJ “took liberalism beyond the existing parameters of consensus” (Morgan 64). That is, both the New Deal policies and LBJ's Great Society benefitted average middle-class Americans, but there was a sense among many Americans that LBJ's policies did not affect them and subsequently grew “resentful that the party of Roosevelt seemed no longer interested in their concerns” (64). It seemed that “[the] liberals in Washington were spreading their gospel and their works with other people's money,” that is, “the money of the working and middle classes” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 361). The earlier cited former Republican strategist to Richard Nixon, Kevin Phillips, sums up this problem for the Democratic Party in his book *The Emerging Republican Majority*: “The Democratic Party fell victim to the ideological impetus of a liberalism which had carried it beyond programs taxing the few for the benefit of the many (the New Deal) to programs taxing the many on behalf of the few (the Great Society)” (15).

It is imperative to reiterate that the Great Society did not, in reality, only benefit the poor, but also middle- and working-class Americans. The problem, though, was that “it was the middle class that was asked to spend a larger and larger portion of its earnings to pay the costs of these new programs” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 355). Mackenzie and Weisbrot continue to state that “[between] 1953 and 1975, families with median incomes experienced a doubling of the portion of their income going to taxes” (355). This financial burden helped shape the perception among many Americans that they carried the costs “on behalf of the few” who benefitted from LBJ’s policies, as Phillips stated (15). Naturally, the Republicans assisted in driving this message home, accusing the Democrats of being “‘tax and spend’ Democrats” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 355).

### The Republican Turn:

In 1968, Richard Nixon, with the support of the GOP, played a crucial role in this game of perception with the aim to enhance his party’s electoral footing and success. Nixon hoped “to build a Republican majority based on a new conservative coalition that accommodated the racial and cultural interests of the heretofore staunchly Democratic white South” along with “middle-class voters – white, suburban, and educated – living in the sprawling metropolises of the emerging and much broader Sunbelt” (Rosenzweig et al. 655; Cunningham 144). His attempt to mold “the so-called New Majority (comprising the Republican core and crossover Democrats, particularly white southerners, lower-middle-class suburbanites, and urban Catholics)” was to a significant extent rooted in magnifying and exacerbating existing divisions along economic, cultural, moral, and racial lines, among other things (Stanley 90). In order to realize their goals, Nixon and his allies, such as Pat Buchanan and the aforementioned strategist Kevin Phillips, created a twofold strategy: First, making inroads in the South by appealing to white southern Democrats who opposed the direction of the Democratic Party in regard to civil rights (the so-called Southern Strategy), and, second, “building on the theme of a solid American ‘majority’ fed up with protest” and the chaos that ensued in the 1960s (the so-called Silent Majority), especially as regards the civil rights movement, antiwar protests by students, and the rebellious hippie generation that questioned or outright rejected what had hitherto been the conventional social and moral norms (McGirr 214). A second important part of the Silent Majority strategy was to drive home the idea that LBJ’s policies and liberalism in general hurt the average American instead of helping them (Cunningham 130).

These two components are inextricably linked in that the latter component – the Southern Strategy – was part of the larger Silent Majority strategy. Aware of the social unrest of the 1960s, Nixon and his aides developed a political strategy and construct – the Silent Majority – that was aimed at appealing to a group of Americans (predominantly the aforementioned white southern Democrats and middle-class suburbanites in the Sunbelt) who, in the words of Nixon, were “the millions of people in the middle of the American political spectrum who do not demonstrate, who do not picket or protest loudly” (qtd. in Perlstein, *Nixonland* 277). The strategy proved to be timely and effective. That is, 1968 was perhaps the most tumultuous year in the already tumultuous 1960s: LBJ decided not to run for reelection, which prompted a heated primary season in the Democratic Party, Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis in April, which caused civil unrest and riots in cities across the U.S., and then in June one of the leading Democratic contenders, Robert Kennedy, was assassinated after he had won the California primary. Furthermore, violence broke out in Chicago during the Democratic convention between the police and antiwar protestors while supporters of different Democratic candidates in the convention hall were engaged in a contested convention.

Nixon seized the moment and called, with his Silent Majority strategy, for a return to normalcy. That is, he “spoke ... of the ‘forgotten man,’ the middle-class American who paid his taxes, the productive American who resented his money being wasted on excessive government programs for the ‘lazy’ and the ‘indolent,’ ” and the American who looked with great concern at the social unrest and instability that had engulfed the nation (McGirr 214). In his book *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*, Norman Mailer describes how Richard Nixon during his acceptance speech at the 1968 Republican Convention in Miami, Florida, advocated “law and order” and tried to appeal to the Silent Majority: “As we look at America we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame. We hear sirens in the night. We see Americans dying on distant battlefields abroad. We see Americans hating each other, fighting each other, killing each other at home. ... Did we come all this way for this?” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 352; Mailer 77). Nixon continued to say: “[We] hear: ‘... the quiet voice in the tumult and the shouting ... [the] voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans – the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators ...’ ” (Mailer 77). In effect, Nixon promised “to reestablish civility and order to an unraveling society” (Cunningham 130).

One of the central components of the Silent Majority strategy was to push the idea of ‘law and order,’ which gained traction among both white southerners and suburbanites in the Sunbelt

<sup>8</sup>. The term ‘law and order’ appealed to a broad range of Americans – especially the ones Nixon targeted in the burgeoning suburbs – but it was also a dog whistle, or code language, for white southern Democrats. By using the term ‘law and order,’ Nixon “drew upon a rhetorical frame rooted in Southern resistance to civil right” (Haney López 23). That is, “[from] the inception of the civil rights movement in the 1950s, Southern politicians had disparaged racial activists as ‘lawbreakers’ ” and “[by] the mid-1960s, ‘law and order’ had become a surrogate expression for concern about the civil rights movement” (23; 24). While the Democratic Party under the leadership of LBJ passed historic legislation in regard to civil rights, Nixon and the GOP emphasized ‘law and order’ in an attempt to win over white southern Democrats who increasingly viewed that their party and the federal government tried to enforce racial integration.

The ‘law and order’ language was not just appealing to white southern Democrats, but also to the people Nixon targeted with his Silent Majority strategy. As Cunningham argues in his book, “Nixon’s brilliance in 1968 was not that he manipulated southern white fears about race, but that he capitalized on the more moderate manifestations of those fears and did so most effectively in the peripheral South, the broader Sunbelt, and the rest of the nation” (145). This is not to say that Nixon’s Southern Strategy did not “[take] advantage of racial bigotries” (145). It very much did so, “[but] it [the Silent Majority] was a more moderate, suburban-oriented strategy distinct from Wallace’s or even Goldwater’s” (145). There was undoubtedly a racial component present in the Silent Majority approach, but it was much less explicit – e.g. ‘law and order’ – and thus able to transcend the South and make inroads in the areas Cunningham summed up, such as the Sunbelt suburbs. For white suburbanites, the term ‘law and order’ “played to ... fears of the black masses of the inner cities” and its violence that they had escaped by moving to the suburbs, which they saw “as ‘safe havens’ from the problems they associated with economic and racial diversity” (McGirr 204). Besides this racial component, the Silent Majority plan – or “suburban strategy” – also focused on liberalism and the role of government (Cunningham 144). As Cunningham states in his book *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt*:

“[A] ‘suburban strategy’ [was created] in which an insecure white middle class would be encouraged to defect to the GOP not simply because of its resolute, though more moderate opposition to federally enforced racial equality, but because of its opposition to liberalism

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<sup>8</sup> The term Sunbelt will be explained later in this chapter.

more generally, as well as because of its concurrent support for the politics of limited government, free-market capitalism, and ostensibly color-blind racial harmony.” (144)

All in all, one of the keys to the electoral success of Nixon and the GOP was to tailor the party’s message to specific groups of people. That is, by engaging in dog whistle politics – e.g. ‘law and order’ – they could simultaneously employ the Silent Majority strategy as well as the Southern Strategy without alienating one or the other. With the Southern Strategy, Nixon was able to attract people who saw another layer behind the ‘law and order’ term, and by using the term in combination with a focus on the failures of liberalism and government, Nixon was able to attract a coalition of voters that transcended the South. The political strategy employed to create a new Republican majority proved to be electorally successful and long-lasting, even though it was a cynical strategy in that it exploited the existing racial tensions and divisions amid the tumultuous 1960s during which the struggle for racial equality culminated. Up until the present – the decade of the 2010s – the South and suburban America continue to be vital parts of the GOP’s (geographic) coalition.

Now, the term ‘Sunbelt’ has come up a couple of times now, and while its meaning has been implied at various points, it should be explored a little further to drive home the point of its importance to the Republican Party. While the Democratic Party had moved to the Left in the 1960s – and also during the 1970s as will be illustrated later – and was increasingly perceived as a party detached from mainstream America for a variety of reasons, the Republican Party moved to the Right in this period and made inroads in the South and Southwest (the so-called Sunbelt), which proved to be, as then-Republican strategist Kevin Phillips already theorized at the time, fertile political ground for the Grand Old Party. Phillips was correct in his assessment, as the region would henceforth – from the 1960s onwards – be at the core of a winning electoral template for the Republican Party.

At the end of the 1960s, after Nixon’s election, Republican strategist Kevin Phillips foresaw the importance of not only the South but also the Southwest for the Republican Party when he wrote that “[as] of the present, another population shift – the huge postwar white middle-class push to the Florida-California Sun country (as well as suburbia in general) – seems to be forging a new, conservative political era in the South, Southwest and Heartland” (508). The geographical area that Phillips is referring to is also known as the ‘Sunbelt,’ a region in the “southern half of the continental United States that stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific and shared common economic interests in oil, agribusiness, defense, and technology” (see figure 1 in which the dark shaded part represents the geographic area of the Sunbelt)

(Cunningham 5). The term Sunbelt, while often invoked in the context of political discourses, is not unambiguous when one attempts to define it. Kevin Phillips' aforementioned definition is a usable definition but historian Sean P. Cunningham provides a more specific and less broad description that accounts for the vast differences – culturally, historically, and politically among other things – that exist between the various Sunbelt states. After all, the Sunbelt in its broadest definition entails a geographical region that spans from the East Coast all the way to California in the West.

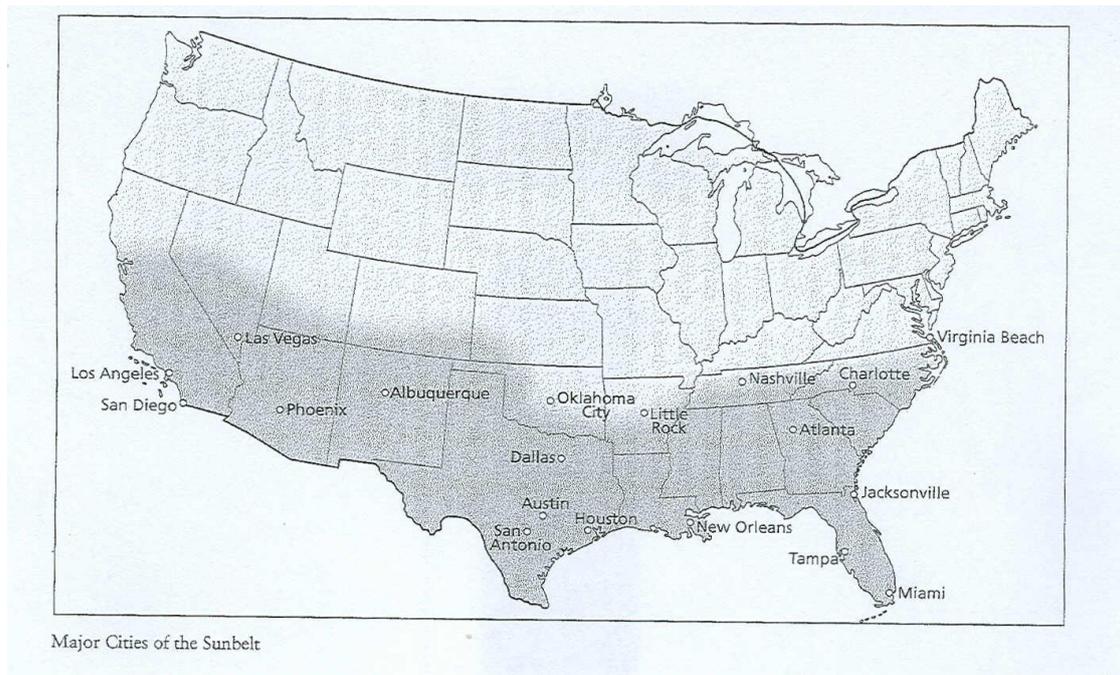


Fig. 1. The Geography of the Sunbelt. Cunningham, Sean P. American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt: Conservative Growth in a Battleground Region. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. p. 6.

In order to deal with these differences, Cunningham shifts the focus from the Sunbelt as a broad geographic entity to a focus on the similarities and interconnectedness between the many major metropolitan areas in this vast area, such as Los Angeles, Phoenix, Dallas, Houston, and Atlanta. Cunningham argues that rather than looking at the Sunbelt region from the perspective of a number of geographically connected states in the South and Southwest, the Sunbelt as a region can be better explained by focusing on “the similarities of its largest and most dynamic metropolitan centers” that share similar histories of growth and development in the post-World War II era (7). In other words, “the Sunbelt seems less like a vast region of connected states and more like an archipelago of metropolises that have experienced rapid growth during roughly the same decades as a result of roughly the same economic forces, populated by

individuals living in roughly similar suburban and exurban developments” (7). All in all, Cunningham’s specific approach enables one to identify similar patterns in terms of population growth, urbanization, suburbanization, and economic growth and development across the Sunbelt.

The primary reason why Republicans sought to expand their party in the Sunbelt was because of the significant population growth in the region and the political implications associated with it. After all, the more people, the more representation in Congress and the more votes in the Electoral College. “Demographic shifts [and growth],” as Lisa McGirr writes in *Suburban Warriors*, “... had made the South and West (the booming new areas of the Sunbelt and the new industrial frontiers of the South and the Southwest) increasingly more important – with the vote falling off in the older urban areas of the Northeast and the Midwest” (215). One of the foremost reasons that explain this growth was the attractiveness of the area in terms of its climate, space, and an economic vision based on laissez faire principles, among other things. As Timothy Stanley writes in his essay, the burgeoning Sunbelt was “... fueled by retirements, flight from urbanization, defense dollars, smaller taxes, and a low regulatory burden ...” whereas “the industrial Northeast was ossifying, its state governments crippled by crime, unemployment, and ballooning welfare budgets” (95). Republican strategists, such as Kevin Phillips, saw a significant opportunity to make inroads in the Sunbelt and thus alter the electoral playbook that had been in place since the onset of the New Deal coalition in the early 1930s. What was even better for Republicans, as Phillips argued, by targeting the proliferating Sunbelt they did not need to “negotiate with eastern elites” anymore “and that they would actually gain votes in other parts of the country by actively ignoring them” (95). The success of this political strategy in the Sunbelt – along with the Silent Majority and Southern Strategy – has been detailed earlier in this chapter.

Richard Nixon, in the context of the conservative ascendancy in the Republican Party from 1964 onwards and the developing conservative Republican majority that came to full fruition in 1980, seems like an odd man out because despite the fact that he was, as Timothy Stanley posits, “conservative by instinct,” he had always gravitated, for reasons of political pragmatism, to the center of the political spectrum (95). One prime example of this is, as discussed earlier, the 1960 election in which Nixon presented himself as a centrist Republican. There are, however, at least three compelling observations to make that suggest that Nixon’s presidency does fit within the conservative ascendancy in the GOP from Goldwater to Reagan and beyond, despite his image of being a more moderate Republican vis-à-vis his Republican contemporaries. First, historical trends are rarely linear, i.e. historical developments do not

usually go straight from one point to the other, but, instead, they are often characterized by periods of acceleration that are followed by periods of deceleration.

This does not necessarily mean that Nixon was not a conservative president, though. Instead, and this brings me to the second reason, Richard Nixon, as posited earlier, was a pragmatic and shrewd politician who looked at the Republican electorate of the 1960s and determined what the path to electoral success looked like for him. In 1968, this path differed vastly from that of 1960. Sensing that the party was changing – i.e. a powershift from the center to the Right – Nixon changed with it to make himself acceptable to conservatives in the party. As Rick Perlstein writes in *Nixonland*, “[nobody] else had the iron-assed will to do what needed to be done – to wait out the dozens and dozens of poker hands it would take before you had the cards you needed to *really* be able to collect the only bounty that mattered, in 1968” (64). This quote refers to the 1964 election in which Nixon threw his support behind Goldwater because he knew that he would need the conservatives in the party if he wanted to mount a successful presidential bid in the future. Conservatives had always been wary of Nixon due to his “close association with the Eisenhower administration, which they considered ‘me-too’ Republicanism,” but also because his politics always seemed to have been moderate of nature (McGirr 120). This was especially palpable in the presidential election of 1960 when his positions were closely aligned with those of Kennedy. However, as Stanley posits, “Nixon was a political pragmatist whose message shifted according to the context in which it was delivered,” a strategy that would ultimately enable him to align himself with the conservative ascendancy within the GOP (92).

The third reason revolves around the role Nixon, and aides such as Buchanan and Phillips, played in crafting and cultivating important parts of the eventual ‘Conservative Republican Majority,’ as Judis and Teixeira have termed it. Richard Nixon with the Silent Majority and Southern Strategy played an important part in transforming the Democratic Solid South and Sunbelt suburbs into Republican bastions that have been at the core of their base ever since. In *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Kevin Phillips specifically saw Richard Nixon playing a central role in a new Republican realignment: “When new eras and alignments have evolved in American politics, the ascending party has ridden the economic and demographic wave of the future: ... with Lincoln, the free-soil West and industrial North; ... and with Roosevelt, the emergence of the big cities and the coming of age of the immigrant masses” (553). “Now,” Phillips continues, “it is Richard Nixon’s turn to build a new era on the immense middle-class impetus of Sun Belt and suburbia” (553-554). Indeed, as Phillip’s quotes and this entire

discussion have illustrated, Richard Nixon played an important role in building and fostering a new electoral template for the GOP.

As Judis and Teixeira's scheme on page seventeen affirms, when the New Deal coalition broke up, there was not immediately a new realignment nor a new GOP majority. The new coalition that came to full fruition in the Reagan years had not been fully materialized at that time (the 1960s), as this realignment differed from the one in 1932 in the sense that this was, as laid out in chapter one, a 'secular realignment' in which new coalitions are formed gradually as opposed to sudden realignments, also referred to as 'critical elections.' In this transitional period, "a Republican realignment had not occurred, [but] the Democratic majority was already unraveling" and the contours of the new Republican majority were surfacing (Judis and Teixeira 20). What did not, however, help Republicans in the 1970s in their quest to build a new Republican majority was the turmoil on several fronts that had embroiled the nation. Inflation, the 1973 oil crisis and the Vietnam War were problematic for Nixon and the GOP, but it was the Watergate scandal that would eventually take up all the oxygen and ultimately led Richard Nixon to resign the presidency on August 9, 1974 (Rosenzweig et al. 685; Herring 811).

The problems for the Republicans were so grave in this period, especially in the wake of Watergate and Nixon's resignation, that various public figures predicted a downfall that the party would not be able to recover from. The historian Dominic Sandbrook elucidates this narrative by quoting Gerald Pomper, an "elections expert" at the time, who predicted "the decline of the Republicans to a permanent minority or even their replacement by a new party" (qtd. in Sandbrook 198). In addition to Pomper, "[conservative] columnist Robert Novak predicted 'the long descent of the Republican Party into irrelevance, defeat, and perhaps eventual disappearance' " (198). Retrospectively, these reactions may tell us a lot about the extent to which the New Deal coalition and its dominance was still on people's minds. In other words, these reactions might reflect the belief of the possibility that the Nixon presidency and the fragmentation of the New Deal majority was just a temporary break from what had been the norm since the 1930s. Indeed, as historian Doug Rossinow writes, "[many] Democrats had believed that the Nixon-Ford interregnum was just that, an interruption in the normal flow of politics, caused by the turmoil of the later 1960s" (30).

Sandbrook also observes this rationale in his essay when he discusses the internal reactions in the Carter Administration in the aftermath of Carter's election victory over President Gerald Ford: "[There] was an unmistakable sense of satisfaction, confidence, and even complacency" (199). After the election of 1976, political operative and pollster Pat Caddell wrote that "we find them [Republicans] in deep trouble. Their ideology is restrictive, they have few bright

lights to offer the public. ... The Republican Party seems bent on self-destruction” (qtd. in Sandbrook 199). Looking back, however, we now know that Nixon’s presidency was not a fluke. Rather, the conservative ascendancy and trend in the GOP that started in ’64 with Goldwater represented the beginning of a developing political realignment that Nixon subsequently embraced and facilitated.

Despite the problems haunting the GOP in the 1970s, the Democratic Party did not fare much better. The leftward move of the Democratic Party continued after 1964 into the 1970s, and in 1972, the Democrats nominated South Dakota senator George McGovern who was accused by Republicans of being a “tax and spend liberal” of the likes of Lyndon B. Johnson (Judis and Teixeira 119). McGovern believed in a pro-active federal government that could end some of society’s woes on issues ranging from the environment, civil rights, and consumer protection (118). His bid for the presidency turned out to be an utter disaster for him and the Democratic Party, losing to Nixon 60.7 percent to 37.5 percent in the popular vote and 520 to seventeen in the electoral college (Whitney and Whitney 577). The nomination of McGovern as the Democratic presidential nominee – and the continuing leftward trend of the Democratic Party for that matter – was partly enabled due to changes that had been made to the nominating process that allowed for greater influence of the Left wing of the party. These changes were made during the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago to appease the disgruntled liberal Eugene McCarthy delegates and supporters who vehemently opposed the way Johnson’s vice president Hubert Humphrey ‘stole’ the nomination as he received the presidential nomination without having competed “in a single primary or caucus” (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 353).

The full convention in Chicago back in ‘68, including the delegates for Humphrey, had voted for a measure that “[called] for the formation of a commission to ‘study the delegation selection processes in effect in various states’ and ‘recommend to the Democratic National Committee such improvements as can assure even broader citizen participation in the delegation selection process’ for 1972” (Perlstein, *Nixonland* 510). These changes proved to be consequential because in 1972, as Timothy Stanley states, “[during] its primaries, the Democratic Party welcomed into its ranks the cultural vanguard of the 1960s (including antiwar protestors, feminists, gays, and civil rights activists) and flirted with policies that were summed up as ‘amnesty, acid, and abortion’ ” (98). This slogan was brought into life by McGovern’s fellow Democratic senator Henry Jackson, who, along with a number of other Democrats, “believed that it [the Democratic Party] had been hijacked by McGovern and sixties New Leftists” (Judis and Teixeira 24; 119). Senator Jackson’s slogan, naturally eagerly seized and

used by Republicans, stuck to McGovern and reinforced the image that had been developing in the 1960s that the Democratic Party had lost its touch with ‘middle America.’

After Nixon’s resignation, Vice-President Gerald Ford served out the remainder of Nixon’s term and decided to run for a full term in 1976. On the Democratic side, Jimmy Carter presented himself as an alternative to the scandal riddled Nixon Administration and “promised no more Watergates and no more Vietnams” (Ambrose and Brinkley 280). Despite winning the election with fifty percent of the popular vote, Carter’s narrow victory was a little disconcerting for the Democratic Party given the fact that the political tide in the mid-1970s, following Watergate, the subsequent impeachment procedure, Richard Nixon’s resignation, and his pardon by Ford, was, to put it mildly, turned against the Republican Party. In other words, despite Pat Caddell’s aforementioned optimism about the Democrats and pessimism about the GOP, the fact that it was a close election in an anti-GOP environment should have been alarming to Democrats.

What is more, instead of Caddell’s viewpoint at the time, it is now in hindsight more plausible to suggest that Carter was a ‘moon’ president who “reflected the power of the sun,” i.e. a ‘Conservative Republican Majority’ that “created the ‘orbit’ in which both parties moved” (Rosenof 41). This argument is strengthened when one considers the differences between McGovern and Carter. Jimmy Carter “[presented] himself as a pragmatic, sober, realistic figure” who “[highlighted] his experience as a moderate governor in a southern state [Georgia], his work as a local Sunday School teacher, ... his commitment to faith and family, and his equally valuable status as a Washington outsider” (Scarborough 96; Cunningham 175). This strategy in 1976 – stressing his Southern ties and presenting himself as the opposite of McGovern – helped him to win back states in the Deep South that had not been won by a Democrat since JFK in 1960.

Now, notwithstanding the “continued economic decline [e.g. stagflation], unabated energy shortages, and public distrust of government” during his term that together created a “national malaise,” President Carter would have faced a tough reelection fight regardless when one takes the developing Republican realignment into account along with the ‘sun’ and ‘moon’ analogy (Norton et al. 837). Carter ended up losing in a landslide to Ronald Reagan: 50.7 percent to forty-one percent in the popular vote and a whopping 489 to forty-nine in the Electoral College (Whitney and Whitney 577). In political realignment circles, the election of 1980 is viewed as the coming of age of the Republican realignment, of which the seeds were planted in the 1960s. The era of the New Deal majority that had brought about tremendous progress and changes on economic, social, and racial fronts since the 1930s was over, and now, after a transitioning

period, a new Republican majority coalition had matured and would continue to be the 'sun' going into the twenty-first century.

#### The Coming of Age of the Conservative Republican Majority:

Ronald Reagan, former governor of California, represented a continuation of the conservative insurgency in the Republican Party that started in the 1960s, and culminated with his decisive win over Jimmy Carter in the presidential election of 1980. The path from Goldwater's defeat in '64 to Reagan's landslide victory in 1980 is remarkable and would have been unthinkable in the wake of 1964. Indeed, as Sandbrook posits, "when Barry Goldwater won the Republican nomination, most scholars dismissed his success as an embarrassing fluke" and after his defeat "[conventional] wisdom ... was that America had rejected not just a man but a movement" (Sandbrook 199; Farber 79). Goldwater and the policies that he advocated were in effect precursors of what was to come in 1980 when the Republican majority came of age. Specifically, Goldwater, as David Farber postulates, spread a message of economic libertarianism and "the need for self-discipline and religious faith" (85). As "an ardent anti-communist and a vehement critic of big government," Goldwater argued that the country should "reject the blandishments of big government and soft-on-communism liberals and instead 'return to faith in the flag, Bible, family, and self'" (Reynolds 437; Farber 85).

This brief synopsis is very much a reflection of Reaganism and the Reagan agenda in the 1980s. This agenda and vision "consisted of a few core components: an insistence that unfettered capitalism is both socially beneficial and morally good; a fierce patriotism that waves the flag, demands global military supremacy, and brooks no criticism of the United States; and a vision of society as an arena where individuals win or lose because of their own talents and efforts" (Rossinow 1-2). Now, the similarities between Goldwater and Reagan should not be too surprising because Reagan had been an ardent supporter of Goldwater's candidacy for president in '64, and served as "co-chair of Barry Goldwater's campaign in California" (Farber 170). In a televised speech – "A Time for Choosing" – Reagan voiced his support for Goldwater along with an "anti-tax, anti-big government" message (171). The core of the coalition that Reagan assembled in 1980 was a marriage between two broad groups of people that Goldwater had also targeted, and would post-Reagan remain at the core of the Republican coalition. That is, as Robert Mason holds, Reagan and the Republicans' "route to a majority involved a coalition between social conservatives and economic conservatives" (Mason 248). Reagan

found a receptive audience for his conservative agenda as “[public] opinion became more conservative during the 1970s” on both economic and social fronts (249).

To illustrate, in 1981 about sixty percent of respondents in a poll “agreed that ‘the best government is the government that governs least,’ ” up from about thirty-three percent in 1973 (249). Now, “this growth of antigovernment sentiment” was reflected in Americans’ increasing wariness of government spending, especially when it came to the funding of welfare programs (249). Specifically, a poll showed that in 1974 forty-two percent of Americans “[believed] that ‘too much’ was spent on welfare,” but in 1980 that number had grown substantially to fifty-six percent (249). Besides economic matters, there was also a conservative tendency discernible on social issues, which “[included] attitudes towards drug use, abortion, and the Equal Right Amendment” (ERA) (249) <sup>9</sup>. Two of the foremost aspects that explain and illustrate this burgeoning conservative sentiment and proclivity for conservative policy can be found in the growing distrust and frustration with government in the 1970s, and in the manifestation of a backlash (on the part of the so-called Silent Majority) against the counterculture in the sixties and seventies that challenged many of the country’s established societal and moral norms.

In the 1970s, the United States went through a series of problems that eroded public trust in government and its ability to solve problems. The country experienced the trauma of Vietnam, “it endured the oil embargo and the Watergate crisis, culminating in a runaway inflation, and the first presidential resignation” (Troy 29). In addition, Gerald Ford’s pardon of Nixon in the wake of Watergate did not help to rebuild public trust in the country’s political institutions either (29). Even though Jimmy Carter promised to rebuild the relationship between the American people and the government, declaring “I will never lie to you,” he, too, faced a plethora of economic challenges that only “worsened” a his term progressed (Farber 184-185). Challenges on the economic front included “growing trade deficits, high unemployment, inflation and slow growth (a.k.a., ‘stagflation’), declining productivity, and record-high energy prices” (185).

In addition to these economic challenges that eroded public trust in government, conservatives were also worried about the regulating role of government in the economy.

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<sup>9</sup> The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was an effort to “mandate women’s right to full equality under the Constitution” (Farber 121). This effort was vehemently opposed by social conservatives who believed that the ERA undermined ‘traditional gender roles’ and would ultimately “hurt, not help, women, their families, or American society” (121). Among the most prominent opponents of the ERA was Phyllis Schlafly, a leading figure in conservative circles who authored the book *A Choice Not an Echo* (1964) in which she made the case for Goldwater and conservative Republicans and railed against the liberal and moderate wings of the Republican Party (132-133).

Liberals believed “in the ability of the federal government to regulate and boost capitalism and to mitigate class differences in American life through economic growth and the welfare state,” but conservatives, on the other hand, did not share those sentiments because they believed that too much government interference undermined Americans’ (economic) freedom and entrepreneurial spirit, and it would make people dependent on the government (the ‘from cradle to grave’ mantra) (McGirr 150-151). During the era of the New Deal majority, the government had assumed an active role in public life, “boosting the American economy and resolving social and economic ills,” but, as discussed earlier, the tide of public support increasingly started to turn around during LBJ’s Great Society when these programs were seen as financial burdens on middle- and working-class Americans (149).

The sixties and seventies were times of “far-reaching social and cultural changes to which conservative women and men responded with deep ambivalence” (McGirr 150). What liberals viewed as expanding rights, equality, and giving people room to make their own choices in life, many conservatives interpreted it differently in the sense that they believed “that the liberal state fostered ‘social permissiveness’ by removing itself as a bulwark of ‘traditional’ morals and values” (149). To conservatives, individual rights and freedom, Christian morality and norms, and the autonomy of the individual states were under attack by liberals and their support of an activist government that attempted to bring about – or enforce, in the eyes of conservatives – change on a host of economic and social issues, such as government assistance to the needy, and gender, race, and personal issues (e.g. abortion) (150). What was truly at the core of the differences between liberals and conservatives was that liberal thought “was rooted in a secular rationalism and a faith in progress that supplanted an older emphasis within American political culture on a respect for tradition, religiosity, and a staunch puritanical moralism” (151). Liberals, as McGirr argues, “championed a new set of individual and personal freedoms” and were hesitant “with the state’s role as a regulator and guarantor of behavioral norms and virtues” (151). In other words, liberals supported a more secular worldview, which disgruntled conservatives who viewed this position as an act that “disparaged an older set of social and cultural norms [that] they cherished” (151). This reaction and revolt against the counterculture – and the liberal state that had helped to enable it, according to conservatives – manifested itself in the rise and significant influence of the New Right and the Christian Right (Religious Right),

two intertwined movements/networks that shared an agenda in support of social conservatism<sup>10</sup>.

All in all, “an antistatist libertarianism and a normative conservatism” characterized the burgeoning conservative trend in the 1970s (149). Another facet that contributed to the growing conservatism was the government’s inability to solve the country’s economic woes. All of these aspects combined illustrate that the country’s increasing conservative bent was, at least in part, a counterreaction to the roles that liberal thought and an activist government had played for decades in American public life. In his campaign in 1980, Reagan attempted to accommodate both groups to create a winning coalition for him and the Republican Party. Indeed, as Rossinow holds, “Reagan, like most conservatives, embraced libertarianism on many issues and moral traditionalism, enforced by government’s hand, on others” (15). In order to coalesce these two groups, Reagan and his team tailored their agenda to these two large groups that together became known – or referred to – as the so-called New Right<sup>11</sup>.

The New Right, according to Andrew Heywood, “is a broad term and has been used to describe ideas that range from the demand for tax cuts to calls for greater censorship of television and films” (88). It is essentially “a marriage between two apparently contrasting ideological traditions” because it, on the one hand, “promoted supply-side economics” (neoliberalism), and on the other hand, “social conservatism” (Heywood 88; Mason 255). The contradiction between the two groups lies predominantly in the fact that the supply-side part of the New Right supports “classical liberal economics” in which, supporters argue, the role of government should be relegated to the sidelines, whereas the social conservative component of the New Right were less hostile – or even supportive – of the idea of “government [inserting] itself in private affairs” (Heywood 88; Rossinow 15). Reagan, as indicated earlier, represented both components of the New Right in the sense that he supported the neoliberal “anti-statist doctrine” of small government and a “commitment to the free market,” but also showed a “devotion to conservative religious morals” and “moral traditionalism, enforced by government’s hand” (Heywood 89; Rossinow 41; 15). Despite the contradiction of the role of government, the two elements of the New Right shared a conservative agenda in the sense that, on the one hand, government’s role in the economy should be reduced and, instead, let Adam Smith’s “free-market theories” of supply and demand take care of economic growth and job

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<sup>10</sup> A prime example of a revolt against the counterculture and the ‘liberal state’ was the opposition to the aforementioned Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

<sup>11</sup> An elaboration on the New Right will be provided later on in this chapter.

creation (conservative neoliberalism), and on the other hand, assign to government the role of champion and “bulwark of ‘traditional’ morals and values” (social conservatism) (Heywood 88; McGirr 149).

In terms of the Reagan agenda, Reagan and the GOP embraced neoliberal economic policies that collectively became known as ‘Reaganomics.’ The policies were “based largely on supply-side economics, the theory that tax cuts (rather than government spending) stimulate growth” (Norton et al. 856). During the 1980 campaign, a time of economic hardship (inflation, stagflation, unemployment, slow growth), Reagan railed against government involvement in the economy because he believed “that U.S. economic problems were caused by intrusive government regulation of business and industry, expensive social programs, high taxes, and deficit spending” (856). The answer to the country’s economic woes, then, was to minimize the role of government involvement in the economy, deregulation, “[slashing] social programs,” and lowering taxes (856). In rejecting the Keynesian economic theory of government stimulation to incentivize job growth, Reagan with his supply-side theory believed that “rather than using a government stimulus to keep consumers employed and spending, ... the government had to make sure capitalists felt rewarded so that they would keep investing and taking the risks with their money, which would expand the economy – which in turn would provide jobs and keep consumers spending” (Farber 195). The best way to create such a favorable business environment for businessowners and job creators was to cut taxes because, as Reagan argued, that would “[restore] ‘individual initiative’ ” (194).

This message of lowering taxes and deregulation proved to be an effective way to appeal to two distinct groups of people. According to Judis, it was attractive to both “the blue-collar Democrats [Reagan Democrats] as well as to country-club Republicans” (qtd. in Mason 252). One of the core reasons why the supply-side rationale appealed to working-class Americans was because of the earlier mentioned idea that liberalism and LBJ’s Great Society had only burdened them with taxes to establish and maintain programs “for people who did not work” – “tax-funded welfare” (Norton et al. 853). Instead of paying for welfare programs of which they did not reap the benefits, Reagan’s “proposal for a phased 30-percent cut in federal marginal income-tax rates in all brackets” was a lot more appealing to working-class Americans (Rossinow 26). Similarly, Reagan’s idea to cut taxes also appealed to ‘country-club Republicans,’ as Judis terms it. This term hints at “economic conservatives” in the Republican Party who belong to the wealthier segments of society as businessowners, corporate leaders, and capitalists, among other things (Norton et al. 853). They were predominantly concerned with “deregulation and tax policies benefiting corporations, wealthy investors, and

entrepreneurs” (853). Reagan’s agenda of cutting taxes resonated well with these Republicans, and soon after taking office, Ronald Reagan, with the “Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981,” “reduced the tax scale for [the] wealthiest Americans from a top rate of 70 percent to 50 percent” (Farber 195).

Socially, Reagan’s agenda reflected the sentiment of social conservatives, such as the evangelical Protestants that were represented by the Moral Majority, and neoconservatives<sup>12</sup>. More specifically, Reagan “supported a constitutional amendment banning abortion; ... he called for restoring school prayer to the public schools; and he counseled abstinence ... to restless teenagers” (Judis and Teixeira 25-26). He was also “against ratification of the pending Equal rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution” (Rossinow 15). Reagan, in effect, “adopted the social agenda and rhetoric of the newly formed religious right” and did so by stressing, among other things, the issues described here as well as underlining the importance of the nuclear family, meaning the traditional image of a stable family consisting of a father, a mother, and children, all of whom play a specific role within the family (Judis and Teixeira 25-26). This was the “older ideal of the churchgoing American family in which the husband was the sole breadwinner, in which women knew their place [raising children and providing a stable and safe home], and in which children went bowling and to church socials” (26).

This marriage between Reagan and the GOP and evangelical Protestants had not always existed. It materialized in the 1980 election when Reagan, as stated above, “adopted” the agenda of evangelical Protestants (Judis and Teixeira 25). Despite forming the core of the Christian Right from 1980 onwards, evangelical Protestants had not always been politically involved, nor overwhelmingly part of one political party. However, in the 1980 election, evangelicals flexed their political muscle and rallied en masse behind Ronald Reagan. Prior to the election of 1980, there was no unified and large evangelical Protestant coalition and no political organizing coming from what later emerged as the Religious Right. The general reasoning for this was, as Jerry Falwell believed, “that ministers should save souls, not politics” (Farber 188). The Reverend Jerry Falwell from Lynchburg, Virginia is seen as one of the most prevalent individuals behind the electoral and political organizing force of the evangelicals. The coalescing of the Religious Right in American politics largely occurred under the auspices of the Reverend Jerry Falwell, but his role was not self-evident because, as said, “[in] the 1960s the Revd Jerry Falwell was adamant that preachers should keep out of politics” (Reynolds 492). However, “the student revolutions, the second wave of feminism, the civil and gay rights

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<sup>12</sup> Neoconservatism will be discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

movements, the national nightmare of Watergate, and the seeming loss of American prestige in the Vietnam War pushed many evangelicals to take politics more seriously” (Sutton 1). Falwell believed it to be his responsibility, “his religious duty as a minister ... to fight such perversions of God’s word” (Farber 188).

The 1980 election was the moment in which the protestant evangelical voting bloc (the Religious Right/social conservatives) became one of the core voting blocs of the Republican Party. As Daniel K. Williams notes in his book *God’s Own Party*, “pundits struggled to explain what had happened” during the 1980 Republican Convention because “the real power broker at the convention was neither a delegate nor a politician” but the Reverend Jerry Falwell, “a Baptist pastor from Lynchburg, Virginia” (1). During the convention, Falwell was able to play a significant role in the creation of the Republican Party’s (policy) platform. That is, he “ensured that the platform included endorsements of constitutional amendments to restore prayers in schools and prohibit abortion, as well as a denunciation of the Equal Rights Amendment, which the GOP had officially supported for forty years” (1).

The fact that Falwell was able to have such an influential role in Republican politics did not happen all of a sudden. Rather, “evangelicals constituted one of the country’s largest untapped voting blocs” and GOP party operatives “sensed an opportunity” to get them to gravitate to the GOP (Sutton 1-2). GOP operatives such as Richard Viguerie consulted with Falwell in 1979 to “discuss plans for organizing the growing number of conservative Christian grassroots activists” (Sutton 20). Afterwards, the Moral Majority was founded and Falwell worked hard, with his platform and large following as a national religious leader, to coalesce evangelicals/social conservatives and get them to vote for the GOP. He did not only urge people to vote, but he also attempted to activate and intensify a evangelical grassroots movement. That is, he “told Christians around the nation that they had a threefold mission: to get people saved, to get them baptized, and to get them registered to vote” (Sutton 21). Falwell’s Moral Majority came to “[represent] nearly 7 million people” in a mere timespan of a couple of years (21). Equally as important, the organization was successful in its effort to create an activist grassroots base of evangelicals and social conservatives who were receptive to Falwell’s message of “the dangers of secularism, [and] economic and cultural liberalism” (Cunningham 187). Specifically, as Sutton posits, “through church-based voter registration drives, it [the Moral Majority] succeeded in motivating hundreds of thousands of previously apolitical Christians to get to the polls, most often on behalf of the GOP” (21).

The Religious Right (Christian Right) was, however, broader than just the Moral Majority. Falwell’s organization was arguably the most prevalent one within the movement, but it “was

joined by dozens of other conservative religious organizations,” such as Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network (Farber 189). All of these groups together – the Religious Right – engaged in creating a grassroots movement of social conservatives in support of the Republican Party and Ronald Reagan. The coalescing of the Religious Right and the GOP’s adoption of its agenda proved to be successful for the Republican Party because in 1976, Jimmy Carter had “won 52 percent of their [evangelical] vote,” but in 1980, things turned around as Reagan won sixty-three percent of the evangelical vote and a whopping eighty percent in 1984 (Judis and Teixeira 24). Their gravitation to the GOP was so significant that “[by] the late eighties, the Protestant evangelicals had become the most important single group within the Republican Party in the South, while also contributing to Republican support in the Midwest and the plains states” (24).

Practically speaking, Reagan’s electoral path to the presidency was a continuation of the one set out by, among others, Goldwater, Nixon, Buchanan, and Phillips. More specifically, there was a strong focus on Sunbelt states because, just as Reagan’s predecessors, they saw political fertile ground in the South and the Southwest because of the significant population growth and an overarching proclivity for laissez-faire policies. In order to win those states, Reagan employed a strategy that was reminiscent of Goldwater and Nixon. This strategy involved walking a fine line between appealing to enough white southerners without alienating voters in other parts of the Sunbelt, especially the working- and middle-class suburbanites. Reagan, like Nixon, stressed states’ rights in order to accomplish that goal. As Rossinow states, “Reagan, like Goldwater, insisted that it [states’ rights] referred to an abstract constitutional principle and nothing else,” but by using the term Reagan “[made] a bold play for ‘George Wallace inclined voters’ ” (24). Reagan also targeted “the distressed industrial states of the North,” and in order to win those states, Reagan employed a familiar strategy in the sense that he painted liberalism and the Great Society as failures that hurt the average working-class American (Rossinow 23). Furthermore, while he “believed that some desperate people truly needed government assistance,” Reagan also believed, like many other conservatives, that welfare programs were handouts and “that far too many were simply taking advantage of taxpayers’ generosity” (Farber 180).

Besides signing into law neoliberal policies and supporting social conservative causes, one of the more significant aspects and legacies of Reagan and the Reagan era for the Republican Party is that it became a well-organized and broadly developed party with close connections – both on a financial as well as grassroots level – to organizations and groups outside the ‘official’ party. In essence, the party became more than just a party. That is, it became a party with a

grassroots movement and a financial donor base that consisted of individuals and groups that supported Reagan and the conservative agenda of the GOP. New Right groups (neoliberals and social conservatives) provided the party, on the one hand, grassroots activists and voters (such as the Religious Right with Falwell's Moral Majority), and on the other hand, "an extensive network of highly motivated rich businesspeople" (Farber 187-189). These wealthy people donated to Reagan and the party "through direct donations but more often through the sponsorship of political actions committees [PAC] and other independent political organizations" (187). As Farber observes, there was a major growth of PACs during the Reagan era – eighty-nine in 1974 and north of a thousand in 1980 – "almost all of which supported the Reagan campaign" (188). All in all, in the Reagan era the party became broader and more connected to organized outside forces that supported the president and the GOP.

All in all, Reagan's victory had long been in the making and reflected the electoral template that his Republican predecessors – Goldwater and Nixon in particular – tried to build and develop. Moving forward, this template/coalition with the two overarching ideologies of neoliberalism and social conservatism has remained at the core of the GOP going in to the twenty-first century. In his book *Morning in America*, the historian Gil Troy neatly sums up the coalition that rallied around Reagan's economic and social conservatism, his hawkish anti-communism, his denunciation of big government, and his support for a decentralized government with a focus on states' rights:

"Reagan's Goldwater-conservatism-with-a-smile would unite disparate constituencies: Protestant evangelicals infuriated by what they considered to be an immoral liberal minority's assault on American values; blue-collar Catholics frustrated that the Great Society did not help them as the New Deal had helped their parents; southerners estranged from the Democrats' civil rights agenda; neoconservative intellectuals alienated by the sixties' legacy and fearing Soviet expansion; corporate leaders dumbfounded by the Democratic addiction to big government and hostility to big business; homeowners crushed by the double whammy of an eroding dollar and soaring property taxes; and residents of the Sun Belt fed up with high taxes and burdensome regulations. The constituencies galvanized and mobilized in the 1960s and 1970s." (37)

Indeed, taking into account the analysis that this chapter has offered on the conservative ascendancy in the Republican Party from the days of Goldwater and Nixon, one can see that Goldwater and Nixon's electoral strategies and groups that they wanted to appeal to are at the core of the coalition that delivered Reagan the presidency in 1980. That is, in the 1980 election,

Ronald Reagan ticked off every group that the GOP had gone after since the days of Goldwater and Nixon in the sixties and seventies. Reagan, as Sean Cunningham postulates, “appealed to white, middle-class suburbanites” in the Sunbelt, “anticommunist, traditionalist, and libertarians who, like him, had cut their teeth in the Goldwater campaign of 1964,” southern whites “for whom the nation’s problems were still largely racial and cultural,” social conservatives who looked with great concern at the social and cultural changes of the sixties and seventies, and “blue-collar workers outside the Sunbelt” – the so-called Reagan Democrats – who predominantly resided in the industrial Midwest and “had once been core supporters of the New Deal and the welfare state, [but] now helped to tilt American politics against new taxes and social spending initiatives” because they believed, as Kevin Phillips put it, that welfare programs “[taxed] the many on behalf of the few” (Cunningham 205-206; Rosenzweig et al. 708; Phillips 15). Reagan’s rhetoric – or racial dog whistles – about “a ‘welfare queen’ massively defrauding the taxpayers” helped in cultivating the anti-welfare sentiment among middle- and working-class (blue collar) voters (Rossinow 8).

#### The Conservative Republican Majority in the Post-Reagan Era:

In the realm of the political realignment theory, the analogy of the ‘sun’ and the ‘moon’ vividly illustrates the difference between the majority party and the minority party in that the former “[creates] the ‘orbit’ in which both parties [move],” whereas the latter “[reflects] the power of the sun” (Rosenof 41). The previous discussion of Reagan makes it clear that during the 1980s – the Reagan era – the GOP found itself in the driver’s seat of American politics as the ‘sun’ party. In his book *The Reagan Era*, Doug Rossinow underlines this notion as well as he writes about how Republicans “[provided] the parameters of politics” and dictated the political agenda (Rosenof 41). More specifically, Reagan and “[conservatives] framed public debate in the 1980s, making the era’s politics theirs, as liberals had done in the 1930s and 1960s” (Rossinow 4-5). Indeed, as Rossinow argues, the Republicans “shifted American political debate onto Reagan’s chosen terrain, and Reagan’s liberal enemies found themselves primarily on the defensive” (2).

The 1984 campaign – the famous ‘Morning in America’ campaign – confirms this notion of the GOP as the era’s ‘sun’ party because Reagan, doubling down on the agenda he ran on in 1980, beat the Democrat Walter Mondale in a landslide (58.8 percent for President Reagan to Mondale’s 40.6 percent of the popular vote and 525 to thirteen in the electoral college) (Whitney and Whitney 578). In 1988, George H.W. Bush, vice-president under Reagan,

defeated the Democrat Michael Dukakis handily (53.4 percent for Bush to 45.6 percent for Dukakis in the popular vote and 426 to 111 in the electoral college) in “what many viewed as a third term for Ronald Reagan” (578; Cunningham 221). As Al From postulates in *The New Democrats*, the 1988 election was an “election that they [the Democrats] thought they would win” (14). After all, Bush senior was considered to be “a much weaker candidate” than Ronald Reagan as he, in the words of John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, “could not conceal his Eastern prep school pedigree [and] lacked credibility among the downscale Democrats who had backed Reagan” since his family background was completely different from Reagan’s who grew up in a poor family in Northwestern Illinois (26; Cannon 16). Another challenge for Bush was “to overcome his reputation as ideologically soft,” meaning that many conservatives believed that he was not conservative enough (Cunningham 222).

Yet Bush won in a landslide, leading Al From to the observation that the defeat had to be a wake-up call to Democrats as it “showed that the party’s losing streak would not end when Ronald Reagan left the White House. Democrats could no longer blame their electoral problems on a charismatic president” (14). Rather, From believed that this was a moment in which “Democrats had to face reality. Too many Americans had lost faith in the party’s ability to manage the economy, project mainstream values, and defend our country” (14). In the wake of defeat, a group of Democrats, under the auspices of Al From, joined forces and established the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), “an unofficial party organization of elected Democrats put together by a political entrepreneur [Al From] in 1985” with the aim “to move the national Democratic party [sic], in both perception and substance, toward the center of the political spectrum in order to break the Republican hold on the White House” (Hale 207). In early 1990, a relatively unknown governor from Arkansas, Bill Clinton, became the chairman of the DLC, succeeding Georgia Governor Sam Nunn (Judis and Teixeira 131). In the eyes of Al From, the Democratic Arkansas governor was the ideal person to run the DLC as he “saw Clinton as the DLC’s chance to have its own candidate and platform in the 1992 presidential race” (131).

The DLC’s desire to move the Democratic Party to the center of the political spectrum was already palpable just by looking at its rhetoric as they referred to themselves as ‘New Democrats.’ That is, “[the] prominent use of the phrases ‘New Democrat’ and ‘a different kind of Democrat’ by the Clinton campaign gave clear indication of its perception that the preexisting identity of the national Democratic party [sic] was a handicap that needed to be overcome for Bill Clinton to be elected president” (Hale 207). Presenting himself as a New Democrat – indeed, “a different kind of Democrat” – “was meant to suggest to voters a centrist candidate more attuned than his immediate predecessors [Democratic presidential nominees] to

the concerns and values of the white, middle-class voters who had deserted the party in its losing presidential campaigns in the 1980s” (207). Needless to say, Clinton launched a successful bid for the presidency in 1992 and became the first so-called New Democrat to occupy the White House. In the years after its inception in the mid-1980s, the DLC proved itself to be a potent force in the Democratic Party since it “gained the institutional capacity to draw prominent Democratic politicians into its sphere and to develop a centrist alternative for the party” (Hale 207).

What this discussion of the DLC illustrates is that Clinton’s defeat of George H.W. Bush in 1992 and his presidency in general do not undermine the notion of a Republican realignment. What it does illustrate is that the Democratic Party found itself in a minority position and in order to become more competitive the party gravitated more to the center and operated on Republican turf and its support for, among other things, neoliberal economic policies. In other words, as mentioned earlier, it is not a prerequisite of the realignment theory that the majority party – in this particular period the GOP – wins every election. Rather, setting the agenda and “the parameters of politics” is equally as important as this too reflects the balance of power that journalist Samuel Lubell articulated with his ‘sun’ and ‘moon’ analogy (Rosenof 41).

As we move into the twenty-first century with the (narrow) election of George W. Bush in 2000 and his reelection victory over John Kerry in 2004, Barack Obama’s two terms, and Donald Trump’s surprising victory over Hillary Clinton in 2016, things get, to put it mildly, a little complicated in terms of the realignment theory. Specifically, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the realignment theory is more effective as a retrospective thesis as opposed to an ex-ante thesis. In other words, it is impossible to state with certainty if we are in a Republican era, a Democratic era, or maybe a transitioning era, like the one between 1968 and 1980 when a Republican realignment was gradually developing – a ‘secular realignment.’ There are several questions that remain unanswered such as what to make of Barack Obama and his successor Donald Trump and how do they fit in the realignment theory? Are we still in the era of the Conservative Republican Majority? Did Barack Obama’s historic victory in 2008 usher in a new Democratic realignment? These are complicated matters and debates that are far from settled. In fact, there is a vivid debate in academia and journalism in regard to this issue.

While the realignment theory cannot with certainty predict a realignment or make unequivocal statements about the current political era, this does not necessarily mean that the theory is unusable when one attempts to look ahead into the future. With the help of the realignment theory in combination with other arguments and observations that have been put forth throughout this thesis, one can make cautious predictions about the current state of affairs

as well as the future. In chapter four of this thesis, I will try, with the help of the realignment theory as well as other factors, to make sense of the current political era and make some predictions about what could be ahead for the Republican Party and, since the two are tightly connected, the Democratic Party. One thing that I will give away here is that I agree with Judis and Teixeira's theory that the 'Conservative Republican Majority' is disintegrating (14). This disintegration is not because of changing alliances and defections, but rather, because of demographic changes. In other words, the coalitions have not changed significantly since the days of Reagan, but the demographic makeup of the country has.

In conclusion, this chapter has shed a practical light on the realignment theory as laid out in chapter one of this thesis. Various realignments have been identified and discussed with an emphasis on the electoral, political, and legislative implications. The importance of the realignment hypothesis is that it helps to explain and illustrate, among other things, how and why both parties have changed and evolved over the course of history, and how there is a perpetual dynamic between the two parties in the sense that party coalitions develop and disintegrate and, consequently, change roles as the 'sun' and 'moon.' This is an important aspect to keep in mind when looking at American political history because the majority party "[provides] the parameters of politics" and sets the political agenda (Rosenof 41). In other words, one cannot look at the history and development of one political party without also examining the other one because they are inextricably linked. The importance of the realignment theory to this thesis is not just the aforementioned, but also that it sheds a light on how seemingly ideologically divergent groups can come together and form a majority coalition, and, secondly, that it helps to illustrate how the current party coalitions (especially that of the Republican Party) have developed – the roots of the coalition – and what they look like in terms of their factional compositions <sup>13</sup>.

As mentioned a few times, the Republican electoral and coalitional template that delivered Reagan the presidency in 1980 – a broad coalition of neoliberals and social conservatives – has remained at the core of the party in the twenty-first century. The next chapter will dive into this coalition and distinguish various groups that one can put in one or the other (or perhaps both) category. In addition to identifying the different factions of the Republican Party, I will also discuss what policy priorities each faction has and what they look like in terms of their organization and infrastructure.

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter three will address the factional composition of the present-day Republican Party in more detail.

### Chapter Three – The Present: Dissecting the Coalition of the Contemporary Republican Party

Whereas the previous two chapters explored the political realignment thesis in both theoretical and practical terms from roughly the turn of the twentieth century until the present day with the aim to shed light on this recurring pattern in American politics and to examine the development of the nation's two major political parties within this theoretical context, this chapter will scrutinize and dissect the different factions that together make up the current coalition of the Republican Party. More specifically, this chapter will build on the previous one in that it will dissect the GOP's current political base with the goal to create a deeper understanding of the factional composition of the party. Some of the party's factions have been mentioned in the previous chapter, but this chapter will focus specifically on this issue and provide a comprehensive examination of the party's different wings.

The relevance of a meticulous analysis of the GOP's core factions is that it illuminates the complexities and divergent nature of the party. In other words, an in-depth examination of the Republican Party's composition shows that behind the broad political ideology that binds Republicans – neoliberalism and social conservatism – there is a constant tug of war between the factions of the GOP to pull the party in one direction or the other on matters of policy, political tactics, and the interpretation of conservative ideology. All of this underlines and strengthens the assertion that was made in the previous chapter that both major political parties in the United States are far from homogenous organizations, neither ideologically nor politically. Additionally, this analysis is also important for the reason that it is closely connected to chapter four of this thesis which deals with the future of the Republican Party. If one attempts to make any arguments and predictions about the future of the party, it is imperative to have some understanding of the factional composition of the present-day Republican Party and where the agreements and disagreements between the various wings are.

This chapter will have a twofold approach: The first part examines the debate surrounding the factional makeup of the Republican Party and the second part offers an in-depth analysis of the party's different wings based on my own factional model. Providing the factions of the Republican Party might seem straightforward, but academic literature and articles in the news media reveal that there is no definitive consensus as to how to categorize the GOP. Instead, there is a lively debate in both academia and journalism in regard to the composition of the GOP. It is my aim to, first, observe and examine this debate, and, second, present my own factional breakdown and, thus, contribute to this ongoing debate by offering my own analysis

of the Republican Party's different wings. The second part of this chapter will be presented by using a number of different elements that together will provide insight into the makeup and structure of the various factions. A faction will be introduced, followed by a short and concise history of how that group became part of the GOP, an analysis will be given of its structure/infrastructure in terms of, for example, its presence in Congress and external organizations, and, lastly, an overview of policy priorities and issues of particular concern to this group will be provided <sup>14</sup>. The different factions will not merely be discussed in isolation because there will also be an emphasis on the inter-factional dynamics and tensions on matters of ideology, politics – i.e. political strategy – and policy.

Starting off with the first part, in the previous chapter, it was argued a number of times that the Republican Party, at least since the days of Reagan, in essence is a party that consists of two broad ideological streams – neoliberalism and social conservatism. However, as already became clear in chapter two with the discussion of different groups in the party, this binary framework does not tell the whole story of the party's composition. More specifically, the Republican coalition is an amalgamation of different factions, all of which subscribe to neoliberal and/or social conservative principles, in which there is overlap as well as disagreement between the different groups. A couple of different factions have already been mentioned or discussed, such as the evangelical wing and libertarians. There are, however, more wings in the Republican Party, but, as will become clear, there is no universal agreement on which specific wings. That is, at first, a factional breakdown of the GOP suggested to me a reiteration of conventional wisdom, but it promptly became clear that conventional wisdom only goes so far. Instead of universal agreement on the party's factional configuration, there is an ongoing debate in both academia and journalism with respect to who and what factions are part of the GOP and which of the factions have the upper hand in terms of power and influence. Now, in pursuance of providing my own model of the Republican Party's factions, I will first look at a variety of sources that deal with this subject to acknowledge and observe the ongoing debate. Additionally, this observation will also allow me to place my factional breakdown within this debate.

One of the most persistent and omnipresent understandings of the GOP's factional make-up is to present the party as a dichotomy between the so-called 'establishment wing' and the

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<sup>14</sup> The historical discussions will generally be concise since the previous chapter already provided an in-depth examination of the Republican Party. The emphasis will therefore be placed on the factions/groups that have not – or only briefly – been discussed in chapter two.

‘anti-establishment wing.’ Figure 2 shows a schematic representation of this factional breakdown. This specific typology of two large overarching factions frequently serves as a framework in the journalistic realm to shed light on the divisions within the GOP with regard to policy, political strategies, and visions for the future of the party <sup>15</sup>. This binary model is workable on a certain level, especially in the era of the Obama presidency where the rise of the Tea Party movement has been used, predominantly in journalism, as a framework for political coverage dealing with internal divisions within the Republican Party. More specifically, it reflects two broad streams of political and tactical differences in the Republican Party. Whereas these two wings more often than not agree ideologically, they do, however, often disagree on how to achieve their goals.

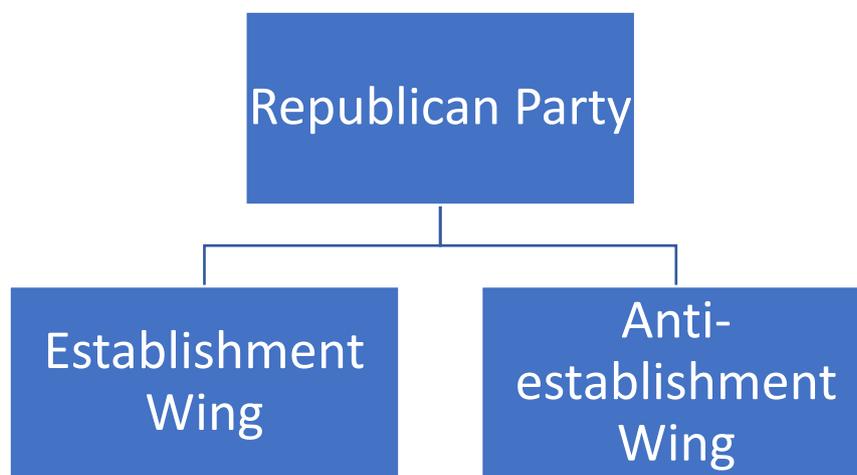


Fig. 2. The binary classification of the present-day Republican Party.

To illustrate the use of this binary model in journalism without already defining both wings, in the fall of 2013, establishment and anti-establishment Republicans were engaged in an intraparty battle whether or not to pass a continuing resolution to fund the federal government from October 1, 2013 onwards – which marked the starting date for the 2014 fiscal year – if it included resources for the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), also known as ‘Obamacare’ <sup>16</sup>. In addition to threatening to ‘close’ the government by denying a congressionally approved budget or continuing resolution, the anti-establishment

<sup>15</sup> Conservative commentator Rich Lowry’s article in the *National Review* (see works cited) is an illustration of the use of this particular framework.

<sup>16</sup> A so-called ‘continuing resolution’ is a temporary substitute for an annual budget (appropriations bill) “that [keeps] the current level of funding so that Congress has time to work out a longer term spending plan,” i.e., a budget (“Budgets and Continuing Resolutions,” par. 4).

part of the GOP in Congress was also willing to use the imminent ‘debt ceiling limit’ as a bargaining chip to “[defund] or [delay]” the implementation of the PPACA (Schaller, *The Stronghold* 282). Without raising the country’s debt limit – “the total amount of money that the United States government is authorized to borrow to meet its existing legal obligations” – the U.S. government would not be able to pay its bills, which would consequently trigger the U.S. “to default on its legal obligations” (“Debt Limit,” par. 1-2).

To the dismay of the establishment faction, the anti-establishment part of the GOP refused to listen to the establishment’s warnings of the dangers of their brinkmanship in regard to federal funding and the debt limit, and ‘shut down’ the government for sixteen days until a continuing resolution (part of the larger Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014) that did not “[defund] or [delay]” the Affordable Care Act passed both houses of Congress with minimal Republican support in the House of Representatives (eighty-seven yeas against 144 nays) (Schaller, *The Stronghold* 282; Weisman and Parker, par. 1-4). In addition to the continuing resolution, the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014, also encompassed a provision to raise the debt ceiling through early 2014 (Reeve, Bump and Ohlheiser, par. 8).

Using this binary factional model – establishment versus anti-establishment – to frame and capture what is going on in the Republican Party works quite well in the sense that it illuminates a major fault line that runs through the Republican Party. More specifically, in terms of policy and political ideology the establishment and anti-establishment wings were to a great extent in agreement – that is, the Affordable Care Act is an assault on freedom since it makes health coverage mandatory through the individual mandate provision in the law – but at the same time significant disagreement was palpable on political tactics. The establishment wing is generally, as opposed to the anti-establishment wing of the party, much more invested in protecting the party’s interests whereas anti-establishment Republicans generally put a greater emphasis on ideological purity, which means that they are less likely to compromise for the sake of their party’s interests or take into account how their desired political strategies affect the GOP electorally. Senator Lindsey Graham’s reaction after the passage the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014, aptly underlines this division in the party: “This package is a joke compared to what we would have gotten if we had a more reasonable approach” and “[for] the party, this is a moment of self-evaluation. We are going to assess how we got here. If we continue down this path, we are really going to hurt the Republican Party long term” (qtd. in Montgomery and Helderman, par. 28). Graham, along with other establishment Republicans, believed that the approach of the anti-establishment would result in nothing but (electoral) damage to the GOP,

whereas anti-establishment Republicans were prepared to move the nation to the brink to get Democrats to cave in to their demands.

Even though the use of this binary model has its limits, as will be pointed out below, it does succeed in broadly capturing the internal struggles the Republican Party is going through, especially in the Obama and Trump eras where this model lends itself to give the emergence of the Tea Party movement and the conservative House Freedom Caucus a place in political analyses. Additionally, journalists have a responsibility to make news accessible and by using this model they are able to present current political affairs in such a way without getting lost in the jungle of political intricacies. This all does not mean that journalists solely use this twofold model when writing about the GOP. Rather, different sections of the Republican Party are often discussed in articles as well: Evangelicals in Iowa during the coverage of the Iowa caucuses in presidential years, neoconservatives in the administration of George W. Bush, and libertarians who disagree with their fellow party members on matters of governmental reach. However, when it comes to covering the day to day political activities, the use of the binary model is very much prevalent in journalism. In other words, the establishment vs. anti-establishment dichotomy is a useful and effective tool to explain and present political news, especially for journalists aiming to inform the masses.

Now, the reason why the previous illustration of the use of the binary model in journalism was presented without having attached any definition to either term is because it is not abundantly clear who or what the ‘establishment’ or the ‘anti-establishment’ is. After having spent a considerable amount of time studying this scheme, it dawned on me that I had not encountered widely shared or conclusive definitions of the terms establishment and anti-establishment in the context of the contemporary Republican Party. Instead, more often the two groups and who belong to them were hinted at or described in news articles<sup>17</sup>. Due to the lack of specific definitions, the example above does not only give insight into the use of this model in journalism but it can also be seen as an element on my part to define and describe both terms.

Nicholas Lemann of *The New Yorker* writes in his article “The Long Decline of the Republican Establishment” that the term ‘establishment’ “is nearly impossible to define with precision, because the establishment is not a formally constituted entity” (par. 1). After having studied both terms – establishment and anti-establishment – I can only but agree with his assertion because the sources that deal with the term establishment – and anti-establishment for

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<sup>17</sup> John Dickerson’s column – “Rand Old Party” – in *Slate* (see works cited) underlines the assertion that both terms are often implied or described rather than defined.

that matter – are predominantly of a more descriptive nature rather than a prescriptive one. Working with this descriptive approach, based on different (news) articles, the establishment wing is generally understood as the governing wing, or put differently, the segment of the party that pulls the strings. In an interview with NPR, political scientist Marty Cohen is quoted as saying the following when asked to give some clarity to the broad term ‘establishment:’ “I tend to think of the establishment as a group of people that is consistently involved in party politics, whether they be elected officials, whether they be interest group leaders, whether they be radio personalities, . . . people who have consistently been involved in shaping the party” (Kurtzleben, par. 38). Another interpretation of the term establishment is that it can be seen as “an umbrella term” that is subsequently “used to describe people engaged in the political process and who support traditional Republican values like fiscal conservatism and limited government” (Mindock, par. 4). Mindock adds that this “can include several groups: major donors who have funded GOP candidates or super PACs, Republican activists and strategists, among others” (par. 4). Nicholas Lemann describes the term establishment in a broader context that reflects the spirit and rationale of journalist Richard Rovere, “the person mainly responsible for introducing into the American vocabulary the term ‘the establishment’ ” in the middle of the previous century (par. 1-2). Lemann posits that “[the] establishment was, and is, universities, foundations, the mainstream media, Wall Street, and those parts of government that deal with law, money, and diplomacy” (par. 2).

These three descriptions of the term establishment combined serve as an apt microcosm of the differing interpretations of the term. Despite these differences, there seems to be a common thread running through the various descriptions in the sense that they, as suggested earlier, implicitly or explicitly refer to the faction of the party that pulls the string, or one might also put it as the governing wing that has always been in the driver’s seat of the Republican Party. In other words, this is the segment of the GOP that is not only interested in passing conservative legislation but is also invested in the party’s well-being, interests, future, and equally important, maintaining the status quo and current balance of power in the party. In a way the term establishment in the context of politics already connotes a sense of (established) power and authority, perhaps even authority that seem to this ruling class as inherently vested powers, as opposed to the term anti-establishment which – especially with the Tea Party movement and the House Freedom Caucus in mind – hints at an insurgent force aiming to upend the status quo in the party, and thus, presenting a threat to the establishment wing.

Having provided a notion of what the term establishment wing entails in a political context, it is important to elaborate a bit more on the who and what. That is, the question of which

groups, organizations, and entities one can put under the umbrella of the establishment. The three earlier mentioned interpretations of the term establishment already give some indication of the groups that are part of this faction. However, in light of my pursuit in this chapter to map the major players and wings in the present-day Republican Party, it is important to add to these descriptions because they are a bit too broad to fit the purpose of this chapter. Hence, I would add to the preceding descriptions that the establishment wing of the Republican Party harbors the party elite – the governing wing – in the form of its leadership in Congress, different media outlets such as the *National Review* and *The Weekly Standard* with influential journalists and thinkers that have intellectual influence over the party's leadership, organizations such as the Republican National Committee (RNC) and the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), some major financial contributors to the party's establishment wing, think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Cato Institute, and interest and lobbying groups such as Grover Norquist's Americans For Tax Reform and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The establishment faction of the Republican Party, thus, entails more than merely a wing in Congress. Rather, the congressional wing is part of a larger apparatus – or network – that collectively is referred to as the establishment faction of the Republican Party.

All in all, the establishment faction of the GOP, thus, entails a vast swath of people, groups, and organizations that, as Marty Cohen aptly states, “have consistently been involved in shaping the party” (Kurtzleben, par. 38). This is the faction that has historically had the most sway over the party and its members because of the symbiotic relationship between the party's leadership in Congress – including organizations such as the NRC – and establishment supporting outside groups that together cooperate to preserve the status quo of a dominant establishment wing.

The anti-establishment wing is often synonymous with terms such as ‘grassroots,’ ‘anti-elite,’ and ‘outsiders,’ meaning Republicans and conservatives who are not part of the ruling class – the establishment – but see themselves as insurgents and disruptors of the status quo. One of the foremost differences between this faction and the establishment is that it has assumed the mantle of political populism: The idea of speaking on behalf of the ‘people’ and “to support the common people in the face of ‘corrupt’ economic or political elites” (Heywood 291). It likes to present itself as an organic grassroots, bottom-up movement of the ‘people’ as opposed to the elites of the establishment who rely more on their inner circle of special interests, advocacy groups, and donors.

Structurally, however, the anti-establishment faction shows similarities to the establishment faction in the sense that it, too, involves a mutually dependent relationship

between people in Congress and outside advocacy and interest groups. While it does not involve the party's congressional leadership, it does regard members of Congress who consider themselves anti-establishment outsiders. Two major caucuses in Congress – the House Freedom Caucus and the Tea Party Caucus – are arguably the most prevalent examples of the presence of anti-establishment forces in Congress. These groups feature members such as senators Ted Cruz (Texas) and Mike Lee (Utah) and House members such as Steve King (Iowa's 4<sup>th</sup> congressional district) and Joe Wilson (South Carolina's 2<sup>nd</sup> congressional district). These congressional caucuses do not operate in isolation, however. Rather, there is, similar to the establishment wing, a larger network of affiliated groups and organizations that together have come to represent the anti-establishment faction of the Republican Party.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank that under the auspices of its former president Jim DeMint transformed “from the intellectual backbone of the conservative movement to the GOP's bane,” is a prime example of an organization closely aligned to the anti-establishment faction of the GOP (Ball, par. 1). Traditionally a wonky and policy-oriented think tank, the Heritage Foundation has in recent years morphed into a “political hit squad” that targets and pressures Republicans who do not instantly subscribe to conservative ideological purity (Ball, par. 1-6; 11). Activist groups and advocacy organizations such as the Tea Party Patriots and FreedomWorks and political action committees (PACs) such as the Senate Conservatives Fund and the Our Country Deserves Better PAC, which founded the Tea Party Express, are also affiliated with the anti-establishment faction of the Republican Party. The mechanics of the symbiotic relationship between the congressional anti-establishment faction and anti-establishment groups and organizations outside of Congress are similar to that of the establishment wing: Politicians in Congress rely on these outside groups and organizations for financial resources and endorsements, and reversely, the outside groups depend in turn on politicians to advance their causes in the form of passing legislation favorable to their ideology and priorities. This all, parenthetically, somewhat detracts from claims of the anti-establishment of them being purely bottom-up and grassroots because this short account already shows that this faction, too, is organized in the form of interest and advocacy groups.

In recent years the anti-establishment wing of the GOP has become synonymous with the Tea Party movement, a political movement – not a political party – that emerged in 2009 in the wake of Barack Obama's election and at the time of the economic crisis and the Great Recession in response to, though not exclusively as will be pointed out below, exploding federal deficits and in their eyes excessive government spending, among other things. The Tea Party should be seen as an umbrella term for different groups and organizations of conservatives that in terms

of fiscal issues “organized around opposition to President Obama’s policies for addressing the fiscal crisis” and rallied around the ideas of “limited government and lower taxes,” along with the aforementioned issues of government spending and deficits (Arceneaux and Nicholson 700). Being closely associated with the anti-establishment, the Tea Party movement invokes connotations similar to the ones attributed to that Republican faction: Grassroots, bottom-up, anti-elite, and outsiders. The Tea Party movement is also considered the antithesis to the Republican establishment class in the sense that it, too, strikes a populist tone by making the argument that it champions the needs and interests of ‘the people’ as opposed to the elite that has time and again abandoned its representative duties for special interests.

One of the most prevalent instances of government spending that was troubling to people who affiliated themselves with the Tea Party was the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (EESA), which, among other things, “established the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP),” a program that aimed “to purchase ‘troubled assets’ from institutional investors” (“2008 Emergency,” par. 1). The EESA and its TARP component “authorized the United States Treasury to spend up to \$700 billion to purchase trouble assets both domestically and internationally” (par. 3). These kinds of painful and costly policies aimed at stabilizing the American and global financial system and economy during the economic crisis of 2008-2009, along with fast growing deficits and an accumulating debt, played a significant role in the emergence of the Tea Party movement. Another costly law that caused great consternation among Tea Partiers was the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) that President Obama signed into law, “one of the largest discretionary spending bills in U.S. history ... [that] allocated a total of \$787 billion, consisting of \$212 billion in tax cuts, \$267 billion in entitlement programs, and \$308 billion in discretionary projects awarded through contracts, grants, and loans” (Boone, Dube, and Kaplan 376). This law was intended “to appropriate funds ‘for job preservation and creation, infrastructure investment, energy efficiency and science, assistance to the unemployed, and State and local fiscal stabilization’ ” (376). These two acts along with other measures to stabilize and stimulate the economy during the economic crisis and the ensuing Great Recession proved to be major catalysts for the emergence of the Tea Party movement and opposition to Barack Obama and Democrats.

However, the Tea Party is as much anti-Obama and anti-Democratic Party as it is anti-Republican establishment. There are at least two reasons that explain their anti-Republican establishment attitude: The first reason is the idea that the establishment – the elite class – does not represent the American public properly but, instead, merely cares about its own interests and orbit of establishment organizations and financial contributors that collude in order to gain

or stay in power. In other words, this argument boils down to a large degree to the notion of political favoritism – or nepotism – among the Republican ruling class while, in the process, neglecting the needs and desires of the American people. The second argument pertains to the idea that the establishment wing of the party compromises too much on its principles and conservative ideology. This particular conflict that one can summarize as a struggle between ideological purity versus a more pragmatist attitude has for decades been one of the core issues that has caused internal divisions within the party. The issue here is not that the two wings have radically different ideologies, but they often do differ, as posited earlier, on politics and strategy. Whereas the establishment and anti-establishment often share similar policy goals, the former is less prone to consistently enforce concessions from their political opponents through unconventional methods such as pushing the nation to the (financial or political) precipice to achieve their goals<sup>18</sup>. Rather, the establishment is – with exceptions – more willing to make compromises and, thus, make incremental progress towards achieving their goals.

As suggested, this all does not necessarily mean that establishment Republicans' views are always radically different than the views of many anti-establishment rank and file Republicans. Or, alternatively in a more politically cynical fashion, popular ideas and theories among anti-establishment Republicans may also be floated, albeit not necessarily exactly word for word, by the establishment and party leaders to appease their conservative base. Whether it is a form of appeasement or a genuine shared belief, the reaching out of the establishment to the anti-establishment wing is frequently palpable. One prime example of this agreement – intentionally or genuinely – can be seen in the Romney campaign during the 2012 presidential election when “he ran on a platform of Conservatism Classic: tax cuts, budget cuts, deregulation, free trade – all lightly seasoned with some concessions to the base regarding stricter immigration enforcement” (Frum, “The Great Republican Revolt” 53). This suggests that the Romney campaign thought it was imperative to talk about “stricter immigration enforcement” – that is, throwing a bone to the base – in order to coalesce a sufficient percentage of the anti-establishment segment of the party behind him to get through the primaries successfully and to maintain the support of this wing through the general election season (53).

Additionally, the “ ‘moocher’ analysis,” as Jonathan Alter describes it, is another example of existing agreement between the two overarching branches of the Republican Party (363). That is, Mitt Romney rationalized his 2012 election loss by “[zeroing] in on the ‘gifts’ that Obama handed out” and promised to the American people (363). This line of argumentation is

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<sup>18</sup> See the example of the 2013 government shutdown as an effective illustration of this argument.

also palpable in the anti-establishment and Tea Party wing, as recent research has illustrated<sup>19</sup>. Specifically, this notion of ‘gifts’ and ‘handouts’ goes right to the idea of “makers” and “takers,” as the current Speaker of the House Paul Ryan has asserted numerous times (Miller, par. 1). These two terms refer to the widely accepted theory in Republican circles that the United States is composed of, on the one hand, people who work and have earned their government benefits and entitlements and, on the other hand, people who do not work, exploit the system, and unfairly and undeservingly rely on government benefits (Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 32-33). “This distinction,” as their research finds, “between ‘workers’ and ‘people who don’t work’ is fundamental to Tea Party ideology” (33). These conservative Tea Partiers unsurprisingly “identify themselves as productive citizens” who, according to a Tea Party supporter from Massachusetts, do “not [look] for a handout” but “for a pay out for what I’ve paid into” in regard to government programs such as Social Security (33).

Moreover, this idea of ‘moochers’ and ‘sponges’ who “are undeserving of government assistance” has been a powerful concept that has been floating around for decades in both overarching wings of the GOP (Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 32). In the 1980s, for instance, Ronald Reagan talked about “the ‘welfare queen’ in Chicago who had ‘eighty names, thirty addresses, twelve social security cards’ and whose ‘tax-free income alone is over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars’ ” (Judis and Teixeira 25). With this type of rhetoric, Reagan implicitly divided the country into the two previously mentioned camps; the “makers” and the “takers” (Miller, par. 1). Furthermore, Reagan’s ‘welfare queen’ analogy also carried a racial component – a prime example of dog-whistle politics – and contributed to the idea that white working class Americans – Reagan’s base – “were the workers, the tax payers, the persons playing by the rules and struggling to make ends meet while brazen minorities partied with their hard-earned tax dollars” (Haney López 59).

In the process of studying this binary model, I went through different stages that can aptly be summarized as the classical dialectical process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. At first, given its omnipresence in political news coverage, the establishment vs. anti-establishment bifurcation seemed like an appropriate model to analyze the GOP with – especially with the previously discussed emergence of the Tea Party movement in mind – but it did not take too long before issues emerged that proved to be problematic. One problematic issue in particular relates to the fact that while the Tea Party movement definitely has grassroots and bottom-up

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<sup>19</sup> The article “The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism” by Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin (see works cited) deals with this topic.

elements – “[at] the grassroots level, Tea Parties are small, loosely interrelated networks, assembled at the initiative of local and regional organizers” – it must be noted that “[a] small set of nationally operating Republican elites, many of whom have been promoting a low-tax, anti-regulation agenda since the 1970s, have played a key role in local and regional Tea Party efforts” (Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 28; 26).

More specifically, grassroots activism most certainly plays an important role in the Tea Party movement, but these “Republican elites” – in other words the establishment class – also play an important role in the movement in that they have seized and subsequently helped to channel the anger and concerns at the grassroots level in regard to the nation’s fiscal situation into a dogma of “low-[taxes] [and] anti-regulation” in order to realize their long-held beliefs (26). Thus, while the bifurcated scheme elucidates the existence of major rifts between the two wings, perhaps most notably the idea of ‘the elite vs. the people,’ reality shows us an image of mutual dependency, at least when it comes to organizational efforts at the grassroots level. This interdependent relationship between the two factions manifests itself through the financial dependence of grassroots Tea Party organizations on the aforementioned “Republican elites,” and, reversely, the reliance of these establishment Republicans on grassroots activists to put pressure on Congress to pass laws that deal with easing regulations, taxes, debt, and deficits, among other issues (26).

A second issue in regard to this model is that while it makes for informative pundit talk and horse-race coverage, it is rather two-dimensional as it fails to do justice to the complex nature of the party’s (factional) composition. In other words, this scheme has some merit but it misses nuance and fails to reflect the intricacies and diversity that exist within the Republican Party at large. The result of this bifurcation is that it suggests the existence of two monolithic and homogeneous camps, but when one digs deeper it becomes clear that reality is more complicated. Instead of presenting the party as a dichotomy, a more detailed factional model with multiple wings that combined constitute the contemporary GOP can illustrate the complexities, agreements, and disagreements that exist within the party in regard to, for example, policy, ideology, and political strategy.

Despite the problems that emerge when scrutinizing the binary model in-depth, it remains a valuable tool to analyze the GOP with, even though it is not, among other things, an all-encompassing model that necessarily accounts for subtle nuances and intra-factional intricacies. It can serve as a starting point – hence the synthesis – to map some of the major fault lines that run through the Republican Party. While these rifts are often more complex and nuanced than the bifurcated scheme suggests, they do get to the heart of the divisions in the GOP. That is, on

issues ranging from styles of politicking, ideology, purity, and strategy, to name but a few, the binary schematic representation of the contemporary Republican Party lends itself well to present a broad overview of the areas of disagreements in the party. This is also one of the core reasons why this model is frequently utilized in journalism because it allows journalists to report on the state of affairs in the Republican Party in such a way that it broadly reflects the intraparty dynamics. Now, this argument may seem like a direct contradiction of one of the aforementioned arguments against this model, but when it comes to the practice of informing the masses through the media, the use of the binary model usually suffices in conveying the essential information without overwhelming news consumers with a barrage of details and complexities. On an academic level, however, the use of this model is generally speaking less desirable, though, as posited, it can be a good starting point to build on.

As argued above, a more detailed and multifaceted model is required to gain a more in-depth insight into the present-day Republican Party. The examination of the factional composition of America's political parties is something that has occupied more than a few scholars, journalists, and other individuals involved in the study and observation of American politics. Most models that are offered show at least some similarities and overlap with other concepts, even though different terms may be used, but there are also some noticeable differences between the various models that have been put forward. Harry Enten of CNN is a close observer of the Republican Party and has come up with a model he calls the "Republicans' Five-Ring Circus" (Enten, par. 2). It divides the contemporary GOP in five distinct factions: A moderate wing, establishment wing, Christian conservative faction, libertarian wing, and a Tea Party faction. This model is particularly interesting for the reason that he has incorporated the binary model – establishment and Tea Party – in his more detailed blueprint of the party's factional composition.

In their article, Miller and Schofield offer a binary model as they divide the Republican Party into a faction of "economic conservatives" and a faction of "social conservatives," something they subsequently describe as "a marriage of convenience" (439). Stanley and Niemi have conducted an exhaustive examination of the composition of both parties' coalitions in a slightly different way compared to other studies. Instead of dividing the party into more conventional factions such as a fiscal conservative column or a social conservative bloc, the authors, all based on data from the National Election Studies (NES), looked at specific demographics – or as they put it "[coalitions] with a given group characteristic" – and the degree to which they should be seen as part of the Republican coalition (182). The results of their analysis show that "Catholics, southern whites, and regular church-goers are now a significant,

perhaps dominant part of the party,” with twenty-five percent, thirty-two percent, and forty-two percent respectively (182; 184). Additionally, Stanley and Niemi report that “white Protestant fundamentalists have managed to hold their own at about a fifth of the party adherents,” which gives the Republican Party “a formidable religious force” (182).

*The Atlantic*’s Norm Ornstein offers, similar to Stanley and Niemi, a factional model that is more unconventional in the sense that he offers a composition that divides the party into five different wings, namely “a House party, a Senate party, and a presidential party” but also a “Southern party and a non-Southern one” (par. 3). Ornstein, thus, maps the GOP’s different factions with an institutional and geographic context in mind. Taegan Goddard of *The Week*, on the other hand, presents the present-day Republican Party as “a three-ring circus” (par. 1). In his article, Goddard postulates that “Ronald Reagan was the first candidate to unite the three wings of the modern Republican Party: Christian conservatives, national security hawks, and the Wall Street establishment” (par. 3).

This brief overview of differing factional models merely shows a fraction of the ongoing debate in academia and journalism as regards the GOP’s factional make-up. It is my believe that each model, at least the ones that I have encountered in the process of writing this thesis, is useful to gain a more in-depth understanding of the present-day Republican Party. These models mostly differ because of different approaches and angles the authors take in their research and writings. For instance, Norm Ornstein’s model puts a heavy emphasis on America’s political institutions – the legislative and executive branches of government – while Stanley and Niemi take a different approach by looking at specific demographics to identify the party coalition of the GOP. Because the specific make-up of a factional model is dictated to a large degree by distinct emphases and angles authors take, I have composed my own model to fit the purpose of this thesis. That is, one of the aims of this thesis is to look at the future of the Republican Party in the context of the political realignment theory and where I believe the party is heading to. With this aim in mind, it is imperative to provide a detailed factional model that maps all the important groups that are part of the present-day Republican Party. Figure 3 shows my model of the GOP’s current coalition in which I have laid out all the different actors that play an important role in the contemporary Republican Party. This includes factions, such as the neoconservative wing, that do not have a large voting base or constituency but, through other ways and means, still have an influential role in the party.

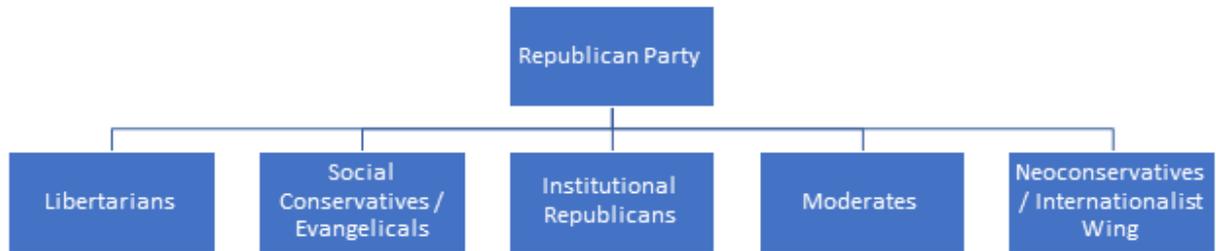


Fig. 3. A detailed factional model of the contemporary Republican Party.

Now, it should first be noted that this model differs from many other models in the sense that it does not look solely at specific voting blocs and demographics – for instance evangelicals, the white vote, and certain age cohorts – because it aims to generate a broader perspective of the party that transcends the tendency to put the emphasis on certain voting blocs. My factional composition is devised with the intention to capture specific voting groups, important groups/coalitions in Congress, and organizations with strong ties to the party such as think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute – in other words the structure/infrastructure of the each faction. This holistic, threefold approach – voting groups, Congress, and (outside) organizations – enables me to generate a more comprehensive image of the dynamics in the modern Republican Party with all of its influential actors.

Because such an exhaustive and inclusive approach would result in a model of such a magnitude that it would be impossible to fit it on one page, and thus making it difficult to comprehend, I have come up with a concise factional configuration in which each faction can be considered an overarching entity that harbors different groups or organizations that operate in that particular niche – or wing – of the party. For instance, the libertarian wing of the GOP includes a congressional wing of Republicans with libertarian philosophies, voters who hold libertarian views, but also organizations such as the Cato Institute. This specific approach keeps the scope of the model limited but it does, by virtue of the overarching terms, include the most important groups that play a role in shaping the party. During the process of discussing the different factions, it will become clear that there are significant differences between them, not only in ideology and support for specific policies, but also in terms of their structures and dynamics. Some wings, for instance, are more reliant on a large voting base whereas others do not have such a constituency but are, instead, more present in the intellectual realms of academia and journalism.

Before discussing the content of the factional model, a note of caution must be made first. That is, while this model with its different components suggests the existence of clearly

confined and unambiguous blocs within the party that are detached from each other, reality is a little more nuanced in that there is a significant amount of fluidity and overlap between the various groups. It is imperative to be aware of the fact that the model serves as a tool that enables one to systematically analyze the composition of the Republican Party, but is limited in the sense that there are exceptions and overlaps between the various segments. A moderate Republican, for example, can also be part of the internationalist wing of the party, and a social conservative can also be part of the wing of institutional Republicans. The discussion on the factional make-up of the modern Republican Party will illuminate this observation at times. The factional scheme that I have created should, thus, be seen as an imperfect instrument, but in order to get some grip on reality one must be able to generalize to a certain extent if one wants to make any sense of the dynamics in the party.

As stated in the introductory paragraphs of this chapter, the discussion and examination of each faction include several different elements. That is, an introduction of a particular faction, followed by a short history – if it has not already been done in the previous chapter – and a discussion of some of their policy priorities. In addition, I will also examine the structure/infrastructure of each wing in terms of how each faction is organized – e.g. outside organizations, think tanks, financial contributors, and its presence and clout in Congress. Instead of discussing each element separately, I will attempt to combine the different elements and discuss them simultaneously. Finally, it must be noted that it is impossible in this thesis (for reasons of available space) to discuss every faction exhaustively, so what I have tried to do is to pick and subsequently discuss some of the most important and prominent aspects of each faction in order to provide insights into the different wings of the Republican Party.

#### The Moderate Wing of the Republican Party:

The moderate wing of the Republican Party has historically been the most dominant faction up until the 1964 election when the party nominated Barry Goldwater for the presidency (see chapter two). This wing has produced presidents of the likes of Theodore Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Richard Nixon, all moderates and centrists and on some issues even liberal leaning presidents. As indicated in chapter two, the differences between the GOP and the Democratic Party were relatively small pre-1964 with the Republicans occupying the center right on the political spectrum and the Democrats the center-left. Goldwater's rise in 1964 did not come out of thin air, however, since there had always been a more conservative faction within the GOP, but it had not been able, up until the mid-1960s, to successfully combat the

dominant moderate wing. After the electoral debacle of 1964, the moderate wing of the GOP started to incrementally lose influence while conservatives within the party increasingly gained prominence, although it must be noted that this was not a straight and linear development.

Since the more conservative Republicans continued to wield more power over the years after 1964, moderate Republicans were increasingly pushed to the peripheries of the GOP in terms of both quantity – the number of Republican voters and congressional Republicans identifying as moderates – and quality – the ability to influence the policymaking process. As the geographical center of gravity of the Republican Party moved from the Northeast of the country to the South and the Southwest in the second half of the twentieth century, as Kevin Phillips accurately predicted in the late 1960s, the party's ideology changed with it (Phillips 1-2). Moderate and sometimes even liberal Republicans from the Northeast were increasingly outnumbered by Republicans from the South and the Southwest who held more conservative beliefs on a myriad of issues such as the scope of the welfare state and taxes.

In contemporary times, the moderate wing of the Republican Party is easily overlooked because much of the attention, especially in the media (in particular cable news), is devoted to the more conservative elements of the party. Much of the media's attention goes out to conservative individuals, groups, and organizations – preferably ideological firebrands – such as Representative Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), Donald Trump's campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, the Tea Party, and the House Freedom Caucus, and in the process, it seems as though the moderate wing gets drowned out. However, as will become clear below, the moderate wing of the GOP still has a considerable amount of influence in the party, even though the party has moved away from being a center-right party over the past decades.

Now, what does the term moderate in this context exactly entail? Nate Silver of *FivethirtyEight* describes the term as a group of Republicans that “take some explicitly centrist positions on both economic and social policy” (Silver, “How Viable” par. 10). They do not necessarily view government influence as inherently detrimental to economic growth, nor an undermining force in the liberty of people. Rather, in the old tradition of centrist Republicanism, moderates see a limited role to play for government in the sense of having some sort of a welfare structure (social security, Medicaid, and Medicare) and they are generally speaking more supportive – or, at least not rejecting altogether – of stem cell research, same-sex marriage, and abortion (Lucas and Deutchman 5). In terms of fiscal issues, moderate Republicans support “a strong libertarian fiscal platform” in combination with a focus on “fiscal responsibility” (5). This emphasis on ‘fiscal responsibility’ manifests itself, for example, through their support of “a balanced budget commitment” (5).

Now, the term ‘moderate’ should be qualified a bit because it is a relative term. While moderate Republicans hold more centrist views on a host of different issues, they are by no means Democrats, or as conservative Republicans pejoratively say ‘RINOs’ – ‘Republican in Name Only.’ While they see a role for government to play, their economic policies, for example, are rooted in libertarian economic thought. Similarly, while moderates support some form of a welfare state, they do not agree with the Democratic position to implement a so-called ‘public option’ – “a government-run health-insurance plan that could compete with private insurers” to lower premiums across the board – in the nation’s health care system (Foran, par. 1). The Republican Main Street Caucus, one of the centrist Republican caucuses in Congress, even describes itself as conservative<sup>20</sup>. When this caucus was founded, a statement was released in which the caucus stressed a commitment to “strong, conservative principles related to economic and national security policy” (qtd. in Eaton, par. 5) All in all, when we talk about the moderate wing of the GOP, it is imperative to bear in mind that while they hold moderate and centrist positions, their ideological proclivities are predominantly more aligned with other more conservative factions of the GOP than with the ideological platform of the Democratic Party.

The philosophy of economic libertarianism is to a significant extent in agreement with the economic philosophy of the libertarian wing of the Republican Party. There are, however, differences to observe in this respect because moderate Republicans are “skeptical about ... economic extremism” that is often associated with people and groups in the libertarian wing of the GOP (Lucas and Deutchman 4). To be clear, every faction in the contemporary Republican Party is supportive of limited governmental influence in the economic realm, but moderates are less inclined to full-throatedly support an economic philosophy of *laissez-faire* in which governmental influence in the nation’s economy is opposed. The reason for opposing a pure form of *laissez-faire* is not just a matter of ideology but also a more practical political motivation because if there is one overarching political characteristic that moderate congressional Republicans share is that they represent states and districts that could go either way in elections. States like Maine and Nevada, and congressional districts in many suburban areas, such as Orange County, California, are places in which the majority of voters do not en masse adhere to libertarian *laissez-faire* philosophies. Thus, in order for Republicans to win and represent swing states and swing districts, some form of political moderation is warranted. Usually these politicians are already more moderate to begin with, but political survival requires them to constantly gauge the overall sentiment in their respective states or districts.

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<sup>20</sup> The Republican Main Street Caucus will be discussed later on this chapter.

One of the core reasons why the quantity as well as the quality of the moderate wing of the GOP has been diminishing is because of the fact that the party has increasingly grown more conservative. That is, as Nate Silver postulates, “[the] Republican Party is dependent, to an extent unprecedented in recent political history, on a single ideological group,” meaning conservatives (Silver, “Why the Republicans Resist Compromise” par. 2). The consequence of this gravitation towards conservatism is that “the terms ‘Republican’ and ‘conservative’ are growing closer and closer to being synonyms; fewer and fewer nonconservatives vote Republican, and fewer and fewer Republican voters are not conservative” (par. 2). The party is, thus, increasingly becoming more homogeneous in terms of ideology, which in turn has important implications for the moderate faction of the party. The consequence is that as the party – voters and politicians – becomes more conservative, the political clout of the moderate wing diminishes when it comes to the ability of having a seat at the table and influencing policy.

Figure 4 has been created by Nate Silver and visibly illustrates the increasingly ideologically homogeneous trend in the Republican Party. Until 2002, with the exception of the ‘Republican Revolution’ of 1994, Republicans who voted in U.S. House races were about evenly split in terms of ideology between conservative and moderate, although Republicans who identified as conservative consistently outnumbered people who identified as moderate. However, with the dawn of the twenty-first century, this relative balance has grown more and more asymmetrical. In 2010, moderates only made up thirty percent while conservative identifiers ballooned to sixty-seven percent. Silver’s chart (fig. 4) is a striking visual representation of the shrinking presence of moderate Republicans.

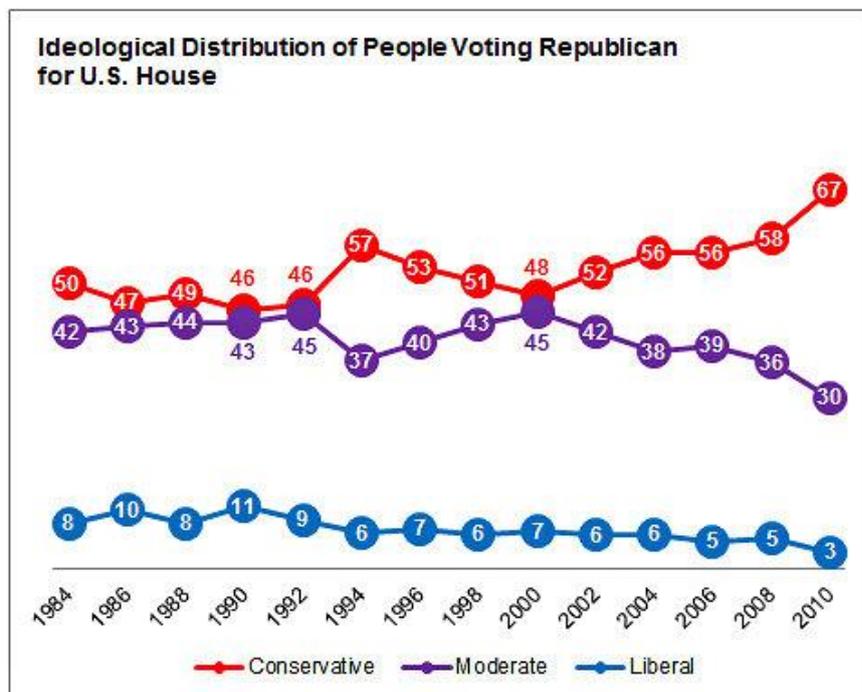


Fig. 4. Ideological Distribution of People Voting Republican for U.S. House. Silver, Nate.

“Why the Republicans Resist Compromise.” The New York Times. 7 July 2011. The New York Times company. 28 February 2018 <<https://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/07/why-the-g-o-p-cannot-compromise/>>.

More recent polling suggests a continuation of this asymmetrical trend of a diminishing moderate presence in the GOP and a growing cohort of Republicans who describe themselves as conservative. Figure 5 presents the results of a 2014 poll that illustrates this particular movement within the contemporary Republican Party. The poll – conducted by Third Way (a centrist Democratic think tank) and the Benenson Strategy Group, headed by Joel Benenson, Hillary Clinton’s chief campaign strategist in the election of 2016 – finds that thirty-seven percent of polled individuals identify as ideologically moderate, “a significant chunk of the electorate” (Diggles and Erickson Hatalasky, par. 4). However, when one digs deeper into that thirty-seven percent number, the poll finds that forty percent of those moderates “are self-described Democrats and a nearly identical number are Independents (39%)” (par. 4). Republicans, on the other hand, only make up twenty-one percent of that cohort of moderates (par. 4). The authors rightly note that “[this] asymmetry significantly impacts the [ideological] make-up of the party coalitions” because, as figure 4 shows, a breakdown of ideology by party affiliation illustrates that a whopping seventy-two percent of voters who identify as Republican describe themselves as conservative, whereas only twenty-six percent view themselves as moderate (par. 4). Democrats, as figure 5 shows, are more evenly divided with liberals and moderates walking in lockstep.

**Ideological Breakdown of the Parties**

	All	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Liberal	21%	38%	2%	18%
Moderate	37%	37%	26%	48%
Conservative	42%	25%	72%	34%

Fig. 5. Ideological Breakdown of the Parties. Diggles, Michelle, and Lanae Erickson Hatalasky.

“The State of the Center.” Third Way. 15 May 2014. Third Way. 2 April 2018 <<https://www.thirdway.org/report/the-state-of-the-center>>.

This all does not mean that moderate Republicans are on their way to extinction, even though their presence continues to decline, as the charts above illustrate. There are still potent

moderate forces in the political realm, most notably the so-called Tuesday Group, a Republican congressional caucus, and the Republican Main Street Partnership (RMSP), an organization outside of Congress with strong ties with the Tuesday Group. Members of both the caucus and the RMSP generally share one common characteristic: They hail from states and congressional districts that are not staunchly conservative parts of the United States. These Republican politicians are mostly from the West Coast, the Midwest, and the Northeast, all regions that are centrist or leaning more towards the Democratic Party. Prominent members of the Republican Main Street Partnership include people such as Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine), Representative Barbara Comstock (Virginia's 10<sup>th</sup> congressional district, the D.C. suburbs), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Florida's 27<sup>th</sup> district, Miami area), and Peter King (New York's 2<sup>nd</sup> congressional district, Long Island/suburban New York City).

The Tuesday Group was formed in 1994 “when a group of moderate Republicans came together ... after the mid-term elections” of that year when the GOP regained control of the House of Representatives for the first time in a generation (Lucas and Deutchman 3). A number of representatives “started an informal discussion group to consider and strategize about the role that centrist politicians had in this new age of the Republican majority” (3). The reason for this was the fact that the 1994 midterm election, also referred to as the Republican Revolution of 1994, was a conservative wave that would inevitably change the dynamics in the Republican Party. As Lucas and Deutchman assert in their article, the outcome of the midterm election “raised the concerns of those centrist Republicans who feared that Republican control would bring a dramatic shift to the Right” (3).

Lucas and Deutchman continue to state in their article that “[the] Tuesday Group served as a caucus for pragmatic and centrist Republicans to come together to share ideas and show support for fellow moderate Republicans” (3). At the core of their convictions are “economic libertarianism and social pragmatism,” as pointed out earlier in this discussion of the GOP's moderate wing (3). What this amounts to, economically, is a belief in the economic theories of Adam Smith – neoliberalism and free market principles – which will be discussed in more detail in the part on the libertarian wing, and on social issues, a belief in compromise and moderation rather than strictly adhering to strict “traditional conservative ... social theory” (Heywood 88). This belief in Smith's free market theory is not an embrace of laissez-faire economics, however, but a belief in a free market with some regulations to eliminate some of the system's excesses. From a political perspective, their focus on “economic libertarianism and social pragmatism” makes sense because they represent centrist districts that are less receptive to conservative red-meat rhetoric and policy stances (Lucas and Deutchman 3). Specifically, many moderate

Republicans represent districts – often suburban district (e.g. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Carlos Curbelo from the Miami area) – that in terms of partisan leanings are about evenly split. Showing unbridled support for laissez-faire economics and focusing too much on social wedge issues, then, does not make a lot of political and electoral sense for these Republicans. Irrespective of whether or not they harbor the same ideological sentiments as the majority of their constituents, these centrist Republicans know all too well the political dangers of drifting too far to the Right.

The Republican Main Street Partnership was “formed in 1996 to serve as the external and political operation of the Tuesday Group, giving them an infrastructural foundation in the political process” (Lucas and Deutchman 4). Because the caucus and the RMSP are closely linked, members of the Tuesday Group are often also part of the RMSP. The website of the Republican Main Street Partnership states that there are more than seventy congressional Republicans who are part of this organization that together “share a commitment to conservative, pragmatic government as well as compassion in our communities and character in our national leaders” (“Mission,” par. 1). The terminology – the use of the word conservative in its mission statement – is indicative of the conservative trend in the party. Rather than describing themselves as moderates, they use conservative pragmatism to describe themselves.

Policy wise, RMSP members are predominantly focused on economic policy. Social issues are hardly mentioned on their website and are mostly framed within an economic context. For instance, the RMSP supports the establishment of “ ‘Opportunity Zones’ in distressed communities [that] will allow investors and entrepreneurs to grow businesses and create jobs in areas that need them most” (“RMSP 2017 Policy Agenda,” par. 9)<sup>21</sup>. Instead of expanding welfare programs to help the economically distressed, RMSP members advocate that the government creates the right conditions – “Opportunity Zones” – for the private sector to step in and create jobs (par. 9). Other issues of concern for the Republican Mainstreet Partnership are “Corporate and Individual Tax Reform” and “Regulatory Reform” (par. 3-4). What this comes down to is creating “[a] simplified tax code, with reduced rates for both businesses and individuals” and repealing “[the] most damaging and job-killing government regulations” (par. 3-4). What their agenda implies is that the right economic policies and conditions will take care of most problems that the country faces. Thus, rather than expanding the role of government in the form of more welfare programs, RMSP members believe that creating a favorable business

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<sup>21</sup> This source can be found in the works cited under the title “Republican Main Street Partnership 2017 Policy Agenda.”

climate with low taxes and less regulation will help to improve people's lives across the board. Despite the fact that social issues are framed within an economic context, other social issues such as same-sex marriage, adoptive right for same-sex couple, the legalization of recreational use of marijuana are not mentioned on their website. This only reinforces the idea that centrist Republicans are mostly preoccupied with economics rather than social issues.

More recently, in the fall of 2017, the RMSP extended its clout in the moderate wing of the GOP by “[forming] an official Capitol Hill caucus,” the so-called Republican Main Street Caucus (Eaton, par. 1). The webpage on this caucus, which was added to the RMSP's website after its inception, confirms the earlier made observations about the ideology, policies, and positioning of the GOP's moderate wing. To illustrate, it stresses political pragmatism instead of ideological purity: “It is time to get past partisan bickering and ideological rigidity. Our goal is to find areas of commonality and pass legislation to affect real positive change for our constituents” (“Main Street on the Hill,” par. 3). Additional confirmations of the caucus' pragmatist position is that caucus members call themselves “the Governing Wing of the Republican Party” and that they stress the importance of “[working] across the aisle to develop pragmatic solutions” (par. 4; 6). Despite positioning themselves as reasonable pragmatists and centrists, they do make sure to stress their conservative background: “All of our members share a commitment to conservative, pragmatic government” (par. 4).

Having discussed the marginalization of moderate Republicans in their party, they do still hold significant sway in the party. One practical example of the lasting influence of moderate Republicans is the effort by the Trump Administration to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, Barack Obama's signature health care law that was enacted in March 2010. While much of the attention in the repeal debate was devoted to the conservative Freedom Caucus, moderate Republicans – the Tuesday Group – were a force to be reckoned with. As opposed to their more conservative counterparts in the party, moderate Republicans were not on board with the efforts to repeal the law as they “argued that the measure went too far in diminishing health care coverage for people” (Fram, par. 5). In the end, the House bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act narrowly passed with critical support of Tuesday Group members who were instrumental in passing the bill, but only after changes had been made to the bill's language to make it politically easier to digest. Still, as Fram writes, twenty Republican lawmakers, “[fifteen] of those ... in the Tuesday Group” voted against the final bill (par. 5).

The influential role of the GOP's moderate faction in this debate is a role that moderates see for themselves in general. That is, being the “voice for the calls for moderation,” they offer a counterbalance to the conservative factions and see themselves as the protectors of the party:

“Because our members represent swing districts (or even majority-Democratic districts), they provide the margin that has enabled the Republican Party not just to control the House but to hold its largest majority there in over 80 years” (Lucas and Deutchman 2; “Majority Makers,” par. 1). In other words, they believe that they are the key to the party’s success because they keep the party’s majority intact by virtue of winning swing districts on a political platform of moderation and pragmatism. A GOP that is becoming too conservative, then, will hurt the party because those very swing seats that are critical to the party’s majority will become unattainable if it shifts further to the Right. Hence, the moderates’ appeal to the other factions of the GOP to make the party a broader and more inclusive party with room for ideological and policy differences. Their appeal for creating a bigger tent aims to combat the what they see as a “too narrow a definition of what a ‘true’ Republican” is in the GOP’s other factions (Lucas and Deutchman 4).

All in all, the moderate faction of the GOP, while often overlooked, still has a significant presence and role in the party. The Tuesday Group, the RMSP and its recently established caucus are – infrastructure wise – among the faction’s most prominent organizations. While championing neoliberal economic policies, the moderate wing of the Republican Party is decidedly more centrist on social issues and “breaks from the party line more strongly than on economic policy” (5). Generally speaking, the emphasis of moderate Republicans is put on economic issues – e.g. balanced budgets and tax cuts – while social issues are either downplayed or framed within an economic context. While neoliberal and libertarian economic thought are prevalent, there are noticeable differences palpable with, for example, the libertarian wing of the GOP. As opposed to a pure form of laissez-faire economics, moderates still see a role for government in playing a regulatory role in the economy.

#### The Libertarian Wing of the Republican Party:

The libertarian wing of the Republican Party is arguably the odd man out in the party for a variety of reasons. From a political perspective, the libertarian wing is least committed to the Republican Party despite the fact that it constitutes an important segment of the party, and from a policy and ideological perspective, libertarians quite often hold views that are antithetical to the reigning consensus in the party, especially on matters of the role and reach of government and social policy. These differences between the libertarian wing and the other wings of the party create significant tensions at times, as will be illustrated below. Despite these anomalies, however, the libertarian wing forms an intrinsic part of the modern Republican Party and has,

similar to the other wings, established a well-organized infrastructure with politicians, constituents, think tanks, and lobby groups.

What does libertarianism exactly entail? According to Heywood, “[libertarianism] refers to a range of theories that give strict priority to liberty ... over other values, such as authority, tradition and equality” (86). Libertarians “seek to maximize the realm of individual freedom and minimize the scope of public authority, typically seeing the state as the principal threat to liberty” (86). In a nutshell, libertarians are thus predominantly concerned with individual rights, liberty, and the scope and reach of government. Because they believe that government has the potential of trampling and oppressing Americans’ liberties, libertarians advocate a small and weak government on all fronts – economically, on social policy, and in terms of national security. Herein arguably lies, as will be demonstrated later on, one of the major fault lines between the libertarian wing and the Republican Party at large. In line with other Republican wings, libertarians believe in a limited role for government, but they are generally more undiluted in their support for a small government, unlike their counterparts in other factions who on various issues find themselves supporting positions that contradict their allegiance to the principle of small government.

In terms of the presence of libertarians in the American electorate, a 2013 study conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) on libertarianism in the United States finds that “consistent libertarians make up just 7% of the American public, with an additional 15% who lean libertarian” (Jones, Cox, and Navarro-Rivera 7). These figures are the result of a series of questions the researchers used in their interviews with voters “to determine how many Americans hold relatively consistent libertarian views” (6). The results are integrated in a figure that the researchers call the “Libertarian Orientation Scale,” a scale that by virtue of specific questions determines libertarian leanings among voters (6). Besides their model, PRRI researchers also asked respondents “a self-identification question” as to whether or not “they identified with the label ‘libertarian’ ” (8). The study finds that “[when] asked directly about the term, slightly more than 1-in-10 (13%) Americans self-identify as libertarian” (8). The PRRI’s report states that an interesting discrepancy emerges when one compares the ‘Libertarian Orientation Scale’ with the “self-identification question” in the sense “that self-identified libertarians exhibit a significantly less consistent ideological orientation than either libertarians or libertarian leaners who were identified with the scale” (8). Put differently, self-identification data does not necessarily provide figures that are in line with libertarian ideology.

As stated, of all the factions that together make up the modern Republican Party, the libertarian wing is the least committed to the GOP. The findings in the PRRI’s report underline

this observation as only forty-five percent of libertarians view themselves as Republican and a more than significant thirty-five percent of libertarians have no partisan affiliation at all (12). Despite their relatively soft allegiance to the GOP, libertarians do hold conservative views that are to a large extent in line with the Republican Party. Twenty-two percent of libertarians identify as “very conservative” and an additional thirty-five percent identify as “conservative” (11). Thirty-nine percent describe themselves as ideologically “moderate” (11). This soft allegiance manifests itself regularly during election cycles when libertarian candidates are running against both Democrats and Republicans in general elections. The most recent example is former New Mexico governor Gary Johnson who ran in both 2012 and 2016 as the presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party, a relatively small party compared to the Democratic Party and the GOP, but able to attract a sizeable amount of votes, sometimes even millions, as was the case in 2016 when Johnson won 4,489,221 votes, or 3.28% of the popular vote (“Official 2016” 3).

In terms of influence, libertarian ideas have played, and continue to do so, a significant role in shaping the Republican Party’s economic platform. These ideas pertain to a significant extent to theories about the role and scope of government in the economy, i.e. what role government should or should not play in this dimension. The libertarian philosophy is to a large extent a reflection of the theories of the influential eighteenth century economist Adam Smith, who is “viewed as the father of market economics” (Heywood 52). Adam’s hypothesis of free market economies, “[the] principle or policy of unfettered market competition, free from government interference,” resonates strongly among libertarians (50) <sup>22</sup>. This *laissez-faire* approach to economics and government is not just a libertarian tradition but rather one of the fundamental unifying elements within the Republican Party <sup>23</sup>. The concept of *laissez-faire* economics has evolved since the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, but the underlying principle of less government and an organic free market has remained at the core of libertarians and the Republican Party at large. At the time, the prevailing zeitgeist dictated that government “should simply leave the economy alone and allow businesspeople to act however they please,” which consequently resulted in unregulated working environments without, for example, “limits to the number of hours worked and any regulation of working conditions” (50-51). Upton Sinclair’s

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<sup>22</sup> Although a proponent of free market theories, Adam Smith was not an absolutist in this regard as he was “aware of the limitations of *laissez-faire*” (Heywood 50).

<sup>23</sup> Despite the party-wide commitment to economic ideas espoused by Adam Smith, there are some differences between libertarians and other factions of the Republican Party, as will be pointed out later.

novel *The Jungle* (1906) famously brought the downsides of laissez-faire attitudes to the attention of the American people.

Looking at the twentieth century, this free market and laissez-faire philosophy is conceivably most visible in the 1920s – the Roaring Twenties – and the 1980s under Ronald Reagan, two eras that were economically defined by, among other issues, a strong emphasis on free market principles, attempts to minimize government involvement in the economy, and a belief that deregulatory policies would accelerate economic growth, create jobs, grow wages, and increase prosperity for all. In the 1920s and early 1930s, a string of Republican presidents – Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover – and members of their respective administrations “believed that the government could best aid business by cutting taxes and minimizing federal intervention in the economy” (Rosenzweig et al. 338). President Coolidge’s statements that “[the] chief business of the American people is business” and “that business was ‘one of the greatest contributing forces to the moral and spiritual advancement of the race’ ” are indicative of the spirit at the time when it came to the question of how to deal with the economy (337-338; Watkins 26). With the onset of the Great Depression, Herbert Hoover believed that “[the] key to recovery ... was restoring business confidence, which meant keeping the budget in balance and avoiding any direct effort to regulate business or stimulate consumer demand” (Rosenzweig et al. 405). After defeating Hoover in a landslide in 1932, FDR did the exact opposite of what his predecessors believed in with his New Deal program, and from that moment, laissez-faire economics were pushed to the background for decades.

Since the 1980s, “faith in the free market has been revived through the rise of neoliberalism” (Heywood 51). Neoliberalism is often used interchangeably with the term ‘market fundamentalism,’ “[an] absolute faith in the market, reflecting the belief that the market mechanism offers solutions to all economic and social problems” (52). The Republican Party with Ronald Reagan as its standard bearer believed that government was the main culprit of the economic woes of the 1970s and that government interference in the economy and in general had detrimental effects on economic growth and the social fabric of the country. Hence, President Reagan and congressional Republicans “promised to ‘roll back the welfare state’ that had allegedly sapped the animal spirits of Anglo-Saxon entrepreneurs and thus return to pure nineteenth-century capitalism” (Piketty 98). This philosophy has manifested itself through policies that have come to be known as “supply-side economics” or ‘Reaganomics’ (Farber 195). The rationale of this credo is that “rather than using a government stimulus to keep consumers employed and spending, ... the government had to make sure capitalists felt rewarded so that they would keep investing and taking risks with their money, which would

expand the economy – which in turn would provide jobs and keep consumers spending” (195). One concrete display of this world view is the proposition that cutting taxes for ‘job creators’ incentivizes job growth, which consequently leads to more spending, and hence more production, which ultimately leads to more job growth. This is the theory of the rising tide that lifts all boats, or, trickledown economics, as Democrats pejoratively call it – the hypothesis that creating favorable conditions for job creators naturally leads to increased prosperity for everyone.

As this short history has shown, libertarian economic intellectual legacy goes back a long time and is universally embraced in the Republican Party. This is not to say that the libertarian faction is solely responsible for establishing and safeguarding the party’s economic philosophy, but there is no doubt that the libertarian economic tradition in the Republican Party with its emphasis on free market principles and a limited government has been, and continues to be, one of the driving forces behind the GOP’s economic agenda. There are, however, some striking differences between the libertarian wing and the GOP’s other factions. While the economic theory of John Adams is universally accepted in the Republican Party, the libertarian wing finds itself regularly at odds with the other factions on the issue of the role of government. Neoliberal policies, of which the key ingredients are cutting taxes, deregulation, and lessening the influence of government, have strong support in the party but libertarians tend to have, generally speaking, more absolutist proclivities in this regard.

Two examples that illustrate this assertion can be found on the policy wish list of Ron and Rand Paul, the latter of whom arguably is the standard bearer of the libertarian wing of the GOP. In 2009, Ron Paul published the book *End the Fed* in which he made the case for the abolishment of the Federal Reserve, arguing that the Fed is “immoral, unconstitutional, impractical, promotes bad economics, and undermines liberty” (qtd. in Moyer, par. 2). Abolishing the institution would, among other things, “‘end inflation’ ” and “‘build prosperity for all Americans,’ ” Paul argued (qtd. in Fox, par. 6-7). In his run for the U.S. Senate in 2010, Rand Paul “[supported] changing the federal tax code to get rid of the Internal Revenue Service [IRS]” and advocated abolishing “the Sixteenth Amendment that created the federal income tax” (Alford, par. 2). Too much government influence and interference was at the core of his reasoning, as evidenced by his own federal budget for the 2014 fiscal year in which he defends his positions: The Sixteenth Amendment, Paul argues, “makes it quite clear that its intent is to allow the federal government to collect taxes to fund operations and services provided by the federal government,” but it “does not suggest, however, that the government shall ... distribute welfare, redistribute wealth, and distort the allocation of resources” (qtd. in Matthews, “This is

what Rand Paul” par. 11). These kinds of policy stances elucidate some of the differences on economic policy between libertarians and other wings in the party because proposals like these do not receive widespread support in the other factions of the GOP. That does not mean, however, that Republicans from other factions are necessarily very supportive of the Fed and the IRS, but they tend to take less absolutist laissez-faire positions.

The libertarian faction distinguishes itself more profoundly from the other wings on social policy. Broadly speaking, the modern Republican Party is grounded on the one hand in the belief in Adam Smith’s “free-market theories” and, on the other hand, support for “traditional conservative ... social theory, especially its defence of order, authority and discipline” (Heywood 88). While libertarians, as illustrated above, share their commitment to free market principles with the GOP’s other factions, they often take positions on social issues that are antithetical to what most other Republicans believe. The website of the Libertarian Party illustrates this tension aptly by stating that “[libertarians] strongly oppose any government interference into their personal, family, and business decisions. Essentially, we believe all Americans should be free to live their lives and pursue their interests as they see fit as long as they do not harm another” (“About the Libertarian Party,” par. 3). This mission statement highlights a rift between the libertarian faction and the other Republican factions, most predominantly the social conservative/evangelical wing of the party and neoconservatives<sup>24</sup>. As discussed earlier, the counterculture of the 1960s, which for evangelicals “signified declining family values and the nation’s move away from its moral foundations,” served as a catalyst for evangelicals to organize politically and focus on the “nuclear family,” “moral and social issues,” and “maintaining or restoring what is seen as ‘Christian culture’ ” (Sutton 14; Heywood 302). The evangelical and libertarian philosophies on social issues are difficult to reconcile given that the libertarian views stress the importance of individuals “[making] their own moral choices,” while evangelicals view this as “permissiveness” that leads to “social fragmentation or breakdown” (Heywood 92).

Two studies on libertarianism in the United States by Pew Research Center and the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) corroborate to a degree this notion of libertarians emphasizing personal freedom on matters of social policy. The Pew study reports that sixty-seven percent of people who identify as libertarian think that “[homosexuality] should be accepted,” as opposed to sixty-two percent of the American people as a whole, and sixty-five percent of libertarians support the legalization of marihuana, eleven percent more than the

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<sup>24</sup> See the discussion on the neoconservative wing for an examination of neoconservative social policy.

public at large (Kiley, par. 10-11). Additionally, the PRRI reports that seventy percent of libertarians support “physician-assisted suicide,” as opposed to seventy percent of “[white] evangelical Protestants” who oppose this (Jones, Cox, and Navarro-Rivera 23).

Having discussed all of this, it must be noted that libertarianism in practice is usually not as unadulterated as its principles might suggest. Put differently, while libertarian ideology tends to emphasize absolutist views on the role of government in the economy and the private realm, reality suggests the existence of certain gradations of libertarianism, i.e. some individuals who identify as libertarian hold more pure views than other libertarians. The study by Pew confirms this postulation as it finds that a sizeable chunk of libertarians – forty-one percent – believe that “government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest” and thirty-three percent oppose the legalization of marihuana (Kiley, par. 8; 10). The PRRI’s study on libertarianism in the United States also confirms this with polling data on the minimum wage that shows that thirty-five percent “of libertarians support a minimum wage hike” and forty-one percent “favor making access to abortion services more difficult” (Jones, Cox, and Navarro-Rivera 20). The PRRI accounts for this phenomenon by distinguishing in their “Libertarian Orientation Scale” between people who are libertarian or who harbor libertarian proclivities, the so-called ‘leaners’ (8).

Besides economic and social issues, libertarians are also focused on other aspects such as national security and the role and scope of government in this dimension. As stated earlier, one of the reasons why libertarians support a small and limited government has to do with the fact that they “typically [see] the state as the principal threat to liberty” (Heywood 86). This particular rationale – the government as a threat to civil liberties – is the main reason why they vehemently opposed the “USA Patriot Act,” which was passed by Congress in the wake of 9/11 and viewed by libertarians as an intrusive law that enabled the development of the ‘surveillance state’ (Rosenzweig et al. 797). The Patriot Act was “a sweeping expansion of federal prosecutorial power” that “extended government power to monitor telephone and e-mail communications and authorized federal officials to seize, without search warrants, financial, medical, computer, and library records” (797). Libertarians argued that this law – which also “created a new crime category called ‘domestic terrorism’ ” – was “too expansive and administratively pliable” and would allow the government to trample people’s civil liberties and undermine privacy (797). Thus, libertarian thought does not only apply to economic and social issues, such same-sex marriage and legalized soft drugs, but also extends to issues such as national security and the inherent dangers they see in a powerful government.

Having discussed the libertarian views on economics, social policy, and the relationship – or friction – between the state and people’s civil liberties, it is important to refer back to the earlier discussed Tea Party. In discussing the phenomenon of the Tea Party, I indicated and illustrated how this movement rallied around (fiscal) issues such as taxes, deficits, opposition to excessive government spending, and support for a limited government. As this discussion on the libertarian wing has shown, the issues that rallied the Tea Party are at the core of libertarian economic thought and concern. Now, these similarities are not a coincidence because, as Gerald Russello writes in his essay, “the clear drivers of the early stages of the Tea Party were libertarian, that is, the movement reflected the desires of those seeking to reduce government spending and programs” (42). Other research corroborates this observation of the libertarian trait in the Tea Party. Arceneaux and Nicholson postulate in their essay on the Tea Party movement that “Tea Party supporters are committed to the libertarian themes emphasized by the movement’s leaders, such as limiting the size of government and lowering taxes” (701).

Infrastructure-wise, libertarians and libertarian organizations have played a significant role in the organization and financial backing of the Tea Party movement. That is, the movement gets its financial “resources from a small number of very conservative business elites, whose policy concerns primarily involve reducing government oversight and regulation and shrinking or radically restructuring broad social entitlements in the United States” (Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin 28). The roots of one particular group in the Tea Party movement, the Tea Party Patriots (TPP), can be directly traced to Charles and David Koch, two wealthy libertarian businessmen who have been involved in national politics and the Republican Party since the 1980s when they founded the political pressure group Citizens for a Sound Economy, which was later divided into two groups – FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity (28). Both of these organizations play an important role in organizing and funding the Tea Party movement. While “[giving] the impression of an entirely grassroots, volunteer-run organization,” the Tea Party Patriots organization “is very closely intertwined with FreedomWorks,” which underlines the observation that “organizations [financially] promoting the Tea Party are most closely tied to pro-business conservatism” (28-29). Williamson, Skocpol and Coggin note in their essay that “FreedomWorks was crucial to the group’s [TPP] original launch and was a primary funder for their national rallies” (28). They even “retained control over significant aspect of TPP messaging” in the early stages of the organization (28).

While being significantly involved – both financially as well as organizationally – in the Tea Party movement, the infrastructure of the libertarian wing of the Republican Party extends beyond just the Tea Party. The libertarian faction has a significant infrastructure in terms of

think tanks and pressure/interest groups. Prime examples are the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, the earlier mentioned Americans for Prosperity, Young Americans for Liberty, which is a student-led libertarian grassroots organization, the Republican Liberty Caucus, a libertarian political pressure group, and Reason Foundation, which is a libertarian think tank. Reason Foundation also runs a monthly magazine called *Reason*.

In conclusion, this discussion of the libertarian wing of the Republican Party has shown that this wing forms an integral part of the GOP, but also that it simultaneously finds itself at odds with other factions on numerous issues. In terms of economic policies, libertarians favor, similar to the party's other factions, neoliberal policies, but they often hold more absolutist positions. On social issues, libertarians differ from other factions as well, especially the social conservative/evangelical wing. This discussion has also shed light on the importance and influence of libertarians on the Tea Party movement. This influence ranges from the presence of libertarian ideology in the movement to the financial aid of libertarian individuals and groups.

#### The Neoconservative Wing of the Republican Party:

Neoconservatives constitute an important part of the contemporary Republican Party. This faction is often overlooked in the context of dissecting the factional coalition of the GOP because it does not have a natural constituency in the sense of a voting base in the party, but also because its role and influence is often analyzed within a foreign policy framework as opposed to being treated as a faction with distinctive ideas about domestic policy – both socially and economically<sup>25</sup>. Whereas neoconservatism is nowadays mostly associated with assertive foreign policy views, it is in reality more comprehensive in the sense that it “is a combination of economic liberalism, social traditionalism, and democratic interventionism” (Mudde 589). However, despite the fact that this wing contains more than merely a foreign policy agenda, it must be noted that this association with foreign policy is not entirely unfounded since, as will be pointed out, there has historically been a strong focus on this issue, especially in recent decades.

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<sup>25</sup> As illustrated earlier in this chapter, many factional models of the GOP focus mostly on voting blocs (e.g. libertarians and moderates), but my own model aims to be broader than a model based on voting blocs. That is, the aim is to identify and subsequently examine groups that play an influential role in the party. This transcends voting blocs and includes groups – such as neoconservatives – that do not necessarily have a base in terms of voters.

Neoconservatives – also abbreviated to neocons – can be defined as “an elite group of intellectuals disenchanted with liberalism” who during the Cold War were “often characterized by strong Cold War anticommunism,” and who in the post-Cold War era continued to harbor hawkish foreign policy views (Mason 259). As Brandon High argues in his essay, “[the] neoconservative movement arose from two groups” (476). “The first group,” as High posits, “was made up almost entirely of ex-Marxist Jewish intellectuals” and became known as the so-called “‘New York Intellectuals’ ” with influential individuals such as Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell (476). They had never been part of the Republican Party or conservatism – in fact, they “would have called themselves liberals until at least the early 1970s” and formed “an important part of the Democratic coalition” – but they increasingly found themselves at odds “with the Democratic Party in the late 1960s and 1970s” (High 478; Critchlow 24). Irving Kristol, who Barry Gewen of the *New York Times* calls “the godfather of neoconservatism,” exhibited this disaffection with liberalism and the Democratic Party when he famously “defined a neoconservative as a liberal who had been ‘mugged by reality’ ” (par. 4).

These intellectuals and academics “swung to the right in reaction against America’s perceived failure to stand up to communism abroad and radicalism at home” (Reynolds 562). They viewed that the Democratic Party was complicit in both of these aspects. Specifically, the Democratic Party had shifted further to the Left with the nomination of George McGovern in 1972, who “beat back the challenge of a trio of Cold War liberals” (Hubert Humphrey, Edmund Muskie, and Henry Jackson), they “found themselves questioning many of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society ideas,” and agitated “against the ideas and values of the 1960s” (Critchlow 25; Gewen, par. 5; Heywood 92). This agitation “was defined,” as Heywood postulates, “by a fear of social fragmentation or breakdown, which was seen as a product of liberal reform and the spread of ‘permissiveness’ ” (92). The concern of neoconservatives with the two aforementioned aspects – “communism abroad and radicalism at home” – reflects the extent to which “the domestic and foreign policy aspects of neoconservative thinking” are connected (Reynold 562; Heywood 94). That is, “a concern about the nation and the desire to strengthen national identity in the face of threats from within and without” (94). Put differently, the United States does not only face external threats – e.g. communism during the Cold War – but also internal threats that hurt the societal fabric of the nation, such as “the counterculture of the 1960s ... [with] its political radicalism and its animus against authority, custom, and tradition” (Ball and Dagger, par. 1).

Now, as Brandon High writes, “[the] second group of neoconservatives were originally apparatchiks of the Democratic party” and were “[in] contrast to the New York Intellectuals ...

primarily concerned with foreign and defence policy” (481). While the first group of neoconservatives “did not reject every change in American society since FDR’s inauguration” – they were “New Deal Democrats” as Gewen states – they were concerned about LBJ’s Great Society and its “regulatory impulses” (High 478; 479; Gewen, par. 5). The second group of neoconservatives, however, “[like] their mentors, Senators Jackson and Moynihan, ... favoured the continuation of Great Society policies at home and a hardline anti-communist foreign policy” (High 481). Indeed, as David Farber posits, “most ... were moderate on social matters. But on foreign policy issues they were resolutely in the camp of hard-liners” (246). Their hawkish foreign policy ideology was informed by the belief “that the United States had the right to act unilaterally against any and all international threats, and, even more, that the United States had a world-historical mission to spread the virtues of liberty” (246).

This ‘mission’ was not just in the interest of a particular nation or region, but also of the United States itself, meaning that “it is in the interests of the United States ... to promote the development of democratic regimes abroad, in as much as democracies ... do not wage war against one another” (Ball and Dagger, par. 9). Now, in order “to promote [those] American interests,” “[the] military might of the United States should be employed around the world” (par. 9). Seeing the United States as a “ ‘benevolent global hegemony,’ ” neoconservatives theorize “that US hegemony should be preserved through a kind of ‘new’ imperialism, which has three key features” (Heywood 95). Firstly, as Heywood hypothesizes, “the USA had to build up its military strength and achieve a position of ‘power beyond challenge’, both to deter its rivals and to extend its global reach” (95). The second aspect involves the objective “to spread US-style democracy throughout the world” and the third feature revolves around the support for “an assertive, interventionist foreign policy that sets out to promote liberal-democratic governance through a process of ‘regime change’, achieved, if necessary, by pre-emptive military strikes” (95). The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as Heywood notes, “were clearly guided by neocon assumptions and beliefs” (95). Influential neoconservative thinkers Bill Kristol (Irving Kristol’s son) and Lawrence Kaplan exhibited their belief in this “ ‘new’ imperialism” when they wrote that “[when] it comes to dealing with tyrannical regimes like Iraq, Iran and, yes, North Korea, the U.S. should seek transformation, not coexistence, as a primary aim of U.S. foreign policy. As such, it commits the U.S. to the task of maintaining and enforcing a decent world order” (Heywood 95; qtd. in Nye 62). This quote vividly illustrates the presence of the aforementioned aspects, such as spreading democracy and championing an assertive foreign policy.

Having discussed the faction's history, it becomes clear that there is an emphasis on foreign policy in this wing, especially in the second group of neoconservatives. However, while foreign policy is at the core of the neoconservative faction, it is imperative to mention that there is more to this wing than international relations alone. Similar to other Republican factions, neoconservatives support neoliberal economic policies, but they are not "wholehearted advocates of free-market capitalism" in that they are "wary of capitalism's excesses" (Ball and Dagger, par. 7; Douthat and Salam 76). This neoconservative view on economics is tied to a social element, namely the idea that pure unbridled laissez-faire economics "can create conditions that cause class conflict, labour unrest, and political instability" because "[unregulated] capitalism ... creates great wealth alongside dire poverty," i.e. it produces and enables the development of a wide chasm between the rich and the poor (Ball and Dagger, par. 7). This is the reason why neoconservatives are in favor of placing "a social 'safety net' ... underneath society's less-fortunate members" and, among other things, "support the graduated income tax" (par. 7).

This is not to say that neoconservatives stand shoulder to shoulder with Democrats when it comes to social issues and welfare programs. While they do see the need for a safety net, they simultaneously believe that it has its limits and downsides. The reasons for their reluctance are similar to that of other factions of the GOP as they believe that "social welfare programs can and often do create dependency and undermine individual initiative, ambition, and responsibility" (par. 8). Fearing a culture of dependency, neoconservatives believe that the nation's social safety net "should ... provide only temporary or short-term assistance" and that the government with the help of social programs should ensure "equality of opportunity" instead of "equality of outcome" (par. 8). Thus, while the government can offer a helping hand to the people through the nation's safety net, neoconservatives believe that this extended hand should be limited in order to prevent people from becoming too dependent on government assistance.

On other social issues, neoconservatives subscribe to "social traditionalism," which on several fronts echoes the social conservative/evangelical faction of the Republican Party (Mudde 589). Heywood argues that neoconservatives are concerned with "law and order and public morality" and "believe that rising crime, delinquency and anti-social behaviour generally are a consequence of a larger decline of authority that has affected most western societies since the 1960s" (93). As asserted earlier, back in the 1960s, neoconservatives such as Irving Kristol already expressed their concerns about society and the counterculture and the way in which it questioned authority and ripped apart traditional social norms. Neoconservatives believe in the

idea of the “degeneration” of society – which began in the 1960s – and argue, in line “with religious conservatives,” that this “is due in part to the declining influence of religion in people’s lives” (Ball and Dagger, par. 4-5). While most neoconservatives support “the separation of church and state,” they do see religion as an important factor in society as it “is a kind of social cement, holding families, communities, and countries together” (par. 5).

Notwithstanding the faction’s belief in neoliberal economic policies and social conservatism, there are tensions between this wing and other wings of the Republican Party. More specifically, the neoconservative wing “[has] always been met with reservation (and even outright hostility) by the larger conservative movement” (Mudde 589). One of the main reasons that explain this tension is that neoconservatives in the eyes of other factions are not sufficiently committed to the principle of limited government. The assertive and aggressive foreign policy along with “the second generation’s belief in regime change ... informs the suspicion towards these ‘big government conservatives’ within the broader [conservative] movement” (589). Additionally, as discussed, neoconservatives also tend to hold a different and more lenient view on social welfare programs.

Now, I have asserted a number of times that the neoconservative wing does not have a natural voting base. Indeed, rather than having a base of voters that organize on the grassroots level and go to the polls (such as evangelicals who, for example, rally around anti-abortion and religious freedom), the neoconservative wing is much more of a top-down faction in which “a group of intellectuals” with distinct views on the economy, social issues, and foreign policy aim to shape the party and move it into a certain direction (Farber 201). Infrastructure wise, neoconservatives have “[developed] a network of pressure groups and think-tanks” such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), which “for thirty years [has been] the premier neoconservative think-tank” and the Hudson Institute (High 484-485). However, there is also a media presence in the form of *The Weekly Standard* which was founded by, among others, Irving Kristol’s son, William – Bill – Kristol. Another influential neoconservative organization, The Project for a New American Century (PNAC), was established in 1997 “by leading neo-cons William Kristol and Robert Kagan [sic]” “in response to President Bill Clinton’s cautious, multilateral foreign policy stance” (Farber 246). PNAC members “championed a far more aggressive use of America’s massive military power to eliminate American enemies and to spread American ideals across the planet” (246). Among its members were a substantial number of individuals who, after Clinton’s presidency, “were appointed to high-level positions in the [George W.] Bush administration,” such as Paul Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld, and played an important role in the formulation of the administration’s foreign policy (Hook 273).

In terms of its influence in the Republican Party, neoconservatives have in recent years taken a backseat in the wake of the elections of Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012, and Donald Trump in 2016. They “enjoyed their heyday in the early days of Bush’s presidency, particularly after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, which produced strong domestic support for a ‘muscular’ response and a surge in defense spending,” but towards the end of the George W. Bush era it was evident that the administration’s so-called ‘war on terror’ had not produced the results that its neoconservative architects had promised (Hook 72) <sup>26</sup>. More specifically, in contrast to the invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003 – Operation Iraqi Freedom – which was “a textbook operation,” the post-invasion stage was anything but a smooth process as the number of casualties and the financial burden of the war grew rapidly (Herring 951). In addition, the expectation that “Iraqis would embrace ‘liberation’ with joy, that stability would emerge quickly, and that few U.S. troops would be required to secure the country” was unfounded (Norton et al. 895). All of this together along with the “administration’s lack of preparation for the nation’s reconstruction and internal security, prompted one observer to proclaim ‘the end of the neoconservative moment’ ” (Hook 72).

In conclusion, the neoconservative wing is more than a faction that solely focuses on foreign policy. While foreign policy is certainly at the core of the neoconservative wing, neoconservatives also have specific ideas about economic and social policy. Neoconservatives exert a significant amount of influence on the GOP by virtue of their influential and extensive organization and infrastructure, as evidenced by organizations such as PNAC and a number of think tanks. While neoconservative foreign policy has taken a backseat after the George W. Bush era, they are still very much present in the party and continue to pressure Republicans to support a muscular and assertive foreign policy. While Donald Trump as a presidential candidate in 2016, to the dismay of neoconservatives, expressed his desire to become less involved in world affairs, his recent appointment of John Bolton – who was a PNAC member – as National Security Advisor (2018) gives the neoconservative faction once again an opportunity to directly influence foreign policy in the administration.

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<sup>26</sup> The ‘war on terror’ was a foreign policy strategy in the Bush Administration in which “the United States would use its military might to crush not only the terrorists who were responsible for the attacks [9/11], but also any government that supported those groups or individuals” (Rosenzweig et al. 795). The Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Terrorists bill institutionalized the ‘war on terror’ as it “gave President George W. Bush sweeping authority to use ‘all necessary and appropriate force’ against those ‘responsible’ for the attacks on 9/11” (Illing, par. 2). However, as Illing writes, “[over] time ... the authority granted by this bill [had] been extended to include terrorists – or suspected terrorists – in other parts of the world” (par. 4).

## The Institutional Wing of the Republican Party:

While trying to map the GOP's different wings and illustrate how each fills in a particular niche in the party, I decided not just to focus on voting blocs, but rather provide a comprehensive analysis of all the major actors that play a prominent role in the party. One of those important actors that should not be left out is the institutional wing of the Republican Party. Similar to the neoconservative wing, the institutional wing of the Republican Party does not have a natural constituency or voting base like the evangelical and social conservative wing. Rather, it is more of a top-down faction as opposed to a bottom-up faction, as will be pointed out below. Despite not having an electoral base that empowers the faction, the institutional wing is able to exert a significant amount of influence because of its leading position in the party.

How can we define or describe the institutional wing? The institutional wing comes closest to the faction of the party that in the discussion on the binary factional model – establishment versus anti-establishment – was defined as the establishment wing. Nate Silver of *FiveThirtyEight* has defined an establishment Republican as “someone who exerts power or authority as a member of the Republican ‘team’ – as opposed to an outside activist or agitator who is seeking to rebuild the party from its foundations” (Silver, “How Viable” par. 13). This to me is the essence of the institutional wing of the Republican Party. That is, the people in the GOP – the party's leadership – who pull the strings and look to preserve the current power structures and status quo while fending off Republicans who seek to change course and move the party into a direction they deem undesirable. What this means, among other things, is that institutional Republicans are not only interested in passing conservative legislation, but also in looking after the wellbeing of the party as an organization and ensuring its electoral viability. In other words, one of the primary goals of the institutional wing is to protect the party as an institution and to determine what path or direction is in the best interest of the party.

In light of the use of the term establishment wing here, which I have changed into institutional wing in my own factional model of the GOP, it must be noted that I was critical of the binary model – establishment versus anti-establishment – earlier in this chapter. One of my criticisms revolved around the idea that the binary model lacks depth and appreciation of the complex nature of the factional composition of the Republican Party. While I continue to stand by this view, I also believe that the use of the establishment wing is appropriate in the context of my own factional model because it is part here of a more elaborate factional breakdown of the GOP. More specifically, whereas the establishment versus anti-establishment model exists of only two factions, I have identified and examined more factions to illustrate the complexity

of the party's makeup. The establishment wing, then, can be used here as part of a larger and more nuanced factional model that attempts to identify all the major actors that play an important role in the party. As this discussion will illustrate, the establishment wing – or institutional wing – cannot be left out of a discussion of the GOP's different factions because it plays an important role in shaping, influencing, and directing the Republican Party.

I have deliberately chosen not to use the term 'establishment' because it is often associated with notions that are not necessarily entirely accurate. One of those associations is that the establishment has become synonymous with moderate Republicans. While it is true that there are certainly moderate Republicans in the establishment wing, it should not be seen as the unifying characteristic of the establishment – or institutionalist – wing of the Republican Party. Rather, one of the defining traits, as suggested above, is the goal to preserve the current power structures in the party, which allows them to play a significant role in shaping the party and moving it into a certain direction. This common goal is shared by both moderate as well as conservative Republicans in the establishment wing. To illustrate, the current Republican majority leader in the U.S. Senate, Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), is very much part of the institutionalist wing, as will be pointed out below, but one would be hard-pressed to label him a moderate Republican. One prime example that illustrates this is McConnell's support to repeal the Affordable Care Act – Obamacare – while more moderate Republican senators, such as Susan Collins (R-Maine) and John McCain (R-Arizona) wanted to make changes to the existing law instead of outright repealing it. The establishment wing of the GOP, in other words, should not be confused with the moderates or the moderate wing of the party, because the two are not the same.

A second reason why I prefer the term institutional Republican over establishment Republican is because they are often portrayed as being driven purely by self-interest and self-preservation. While this observation has some merit – after all, every politician is to an extent driven by the ambition to hold on to their seat – it is not entirely accurate. This is the faction that is preoccupied with preserving and protecting the party as an institution, hence the term institutional wing. While supporting conservative causes and policies, the institutional wing is intent on keeping the party electorally viable by making sure that the party does not veer too far to the Right. Put differently, institutionalists, thus, try to find a balance between a conservative agenda without alienating too many voters. Instead of demanding ideological purity, institutionalists try to figure out what is in the best interest of the party and make sure that they serve as a check on the most conservative elements of the party, such as the House Freedom Caucus. Again, this should not be seen in the light of institutional Republicans being

moderate, but more in the sense of them being pragmatic and carefully assessing the electoral landscape. Nate Silver echoes this point as he describes institutionalists “as reliably conservative without being dangerous or extreme” (par. 13).

In terms of ideology and policy positions, it is difficult to exactly lay out where this wing stands because, as stated earlier, this wing harbors moderate as well as conservative Republicans. One common denominator among institutionalists, however, is the aim to keep an eye on the wellbeing and electoral viability of the party while also pushing a Republican and conservative agenda. One can describe this as a constant balancing act to keep the party, on the one hand, acceptable to the larger voting public, and, on the other hand, keep the rank and file of the Republican Party satisfied. Indeed, as Silver asserts, institutional Republicans “are natural coalition builders, seeking to satisfy (or at least pacify) the other Republican constituencies” (par. 14). Thus, while there may be ideological differences between moderates and conservatives in this faction, they share an overarching commitment to the party’s wellbeing. With this in mind – party viability and satisfying the rank and file – it might be argued that this wing of the party reflects the two broader traits of conservatism that have defined the Republican Party since at least the days of Ronald Reagan – neoliberal on economics and socially conservative – but, at the same time, it always makes sure to keep an eye on the bigger picture and the state and direction of the party. Nate Silver’s earlier discussed quote of institutionalists being “reliably conservative without begin dangerous or extreme” goes to the heart of this balancing act (par. 13).

Now, having broadly described the institutional wing and what it is focused on, it is imperative to zoom in on the issue of who actually belongs in the institutional wing of the Republican Party. In short, institutional Republicans can generally be seen as the people who are in control of the party, both legislatively and organizationally. That is, they occupy leadership positions in Congress such as Speaker of the House, the Senate majority leader, and chair important congressional committees, such as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee. This particular observation – the leadership positions institutionalists have – explains to a great degree why this wing of the party is so powerful and influential without having a voting base. Occupying the most important posts in Congress and the party allows institutionalists to exert a significant amount of influence on the legislative agenda and the party’s direction. Indeed, as former Speaker of the House in the 1990s, Newt Gingrich, stated, “ ‘When you are Speaker you get to set the agenda. [Y]ou get to decide what legislation is up’ ” (qtd. in Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee 164). The task of “[setting] the chamber’s agenda and schedule – determining what each chamber will debate – is perhaps the

single most important prerogative of the Speaker and Senate majority leader” (164). That is, “[scheduling] legislation is a basic task that must be managed for the institution [Congress] to function at all, but leaders also act strategically in their party’s interests as they make these decisions” (164). In other words, one of the core reasons why institutional Republicans occupy such a prominent position in the party is because this wing controls the most important (institutional) positions that determine to a large degree the direction of the party and what legislation is prioritized.

The aforementioned does not only apply when the party is in the majority in the House and Senate, but also when it finds itself in a minority position. Indeed, when the party is in the minority, institutional Republicans continue to play a significant role in shaping and directing the party. More specifically, “[congressional] leaders help to organize their party by selecting partisan colleagues for standing committees, revising party rules, choosing other party leaders, and appointing party committees” (165). What this means in practical terms is that institutional Republicans by virtue of their position in the party’s leadership have a significant hand in organizing and setting up the party, regardless of whether the party finds itself in a majority or minority position in Congress. With these described abilities and authorities, institutional Republicans are in the position to appoint likeminded people to important positions and committees in the party.

In addition to pulling the strings in Congress and occupying senior positions, institutional Republicans also exert a significant amount of influence on the Republican Party through other means. More specifically, organizations such as the Republican National Committee (RNC), the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), and the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) are all part of the broader infrastructure of the institutional wing. Now, these organizations are also part of the Republican Party at large, but they are, similar to the institutional wing in Congress, especially concerned with shaping and directing the party in order to ensure electoral viability and success. In essence, one of the primary goals of the three organizations that are mentioned here is to look for the right balance. That is, similar to institutionalists in Congress, these organizations try to find the right balance between a conservative agenda that is acceptable to the rank and file of the party but also acceptable to the public at large. The way these organizations influence the party is by, among other things, endorsing candidates who they think are viable and acceptable, and providing them with financial support to get them through the primary and the general election.

Now, having examined the institutional wing of the Republican Party, it has become clear that this faction is different in various ways compared to other factions of the Republican Party.

First and foremost, this wing does not have a voting base in the electorate, but finds and exerts its influence through its leadership position in the party and its control of organizations such as the National Republican Committee (RNC). Secondly, this wing does not necessarily have a strict and uniform ideology on policy questions. Rather, the uniformity can be found in this wing's preoccupation with looking after the party's wellbeing and determining what policies are in the best interest of the party as an institution. While championing a conservative agenda, institutional Republicans always keep an eye on the Republican Party as an institution to ensure that it remains electorally viable and competitive.

#### The Social Conservative/Evangelical Wing of the Republican Party:

The last faction in my model is the social conservative and evangelical wing. As opposed to the earlier discussed neoconservative and institutional wings, this particular wing finds its strength from the bottom-up as opposed to from the top-down. This is segment of the Republican Party that is deeply rooted in grassroots activism and consists of a patchwork of different individuals, groups, and organizations – predominantly evangelical Protestants – that together support and champion a strong socially conservative agenda. From James Dobson's Focus on the Family to Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority to Pat Robertson's Christians Broadcasting Network to Tony Perkin's Family Research Council, the Republican Party's platform on social policy has since the 1980s been shaped and influenced to a great degree by a large social conservative movement that is comprised of a large voting base – the grassroots and rank and file of the GOP – and prominent leaders and their organizations. Besides the grassroots activity and different organizations, the social conservative wing also exerts a significant amount of influence in the Republican congressional conference through individual politicians and caucuses, such as the Republican Study Committee.

Before moving on, it must be noted that there is a reason why I have decided to name this wing the social conservative/evangelical wing. While my focus in this particular discussion will be on evangelical Protestants, this wing contains more than just evangelicals. Rather, there is also a significant presence of conservative Catholics in this faction (Heywood 303; Fowler et al. 91-92). Similar to the evangelicals, conservative Catholics have not always been a reliably Republican voting bloc. In fact, they "had once been loyal members of the New Deal coalition" but they broke away from the Democratic Party when it "[became] a more secular party by embracing culturally liberal stances on abortion, feminism, and gay rights" in the 1960s and 1970s (Williams 7). Despite the conservative Catholic component in the social conservative

faction of the Republican Party, my focus will be on the evangelicals because they “were at the heart of the new Christian mobilization” in the 1970s and 1980s and they form the most important religious voting bloc in the Republican Party, “routinely providing some three-quarters of their votes to Republican presidential candidates” (Freedman 125; Fowler et al. 97). With this ‘mobilization’ Freedman refers to the development of the Religious Right (Christian Right), a broad coalition of “dozens of ... conservative religious organizations” that shared a collective commitment to social conservative policies (Farber 189).

As was discussed in the previous chapter, evangelical Protestants have not always been at the core of the Republican coalition <sup>27</sup>. Prior to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, evangelicals had not been committed to one party or the other. In fact, in 1976, Jimmy Carter received a majority of the evangelical vote. However, as Heywood holds, “Ronald Reagan’s willingness to embrace this agenda [social conservative agenda] in the 1980s meant that the new Christian right became an important component of a new Republican coalition that placed as much emphasis on moral issues as it did on traditional ones such as the economy and foreign policy” (303). This gravitation of evangelicals to the Republican Party has had important implications for the party. Indeed, as Fowler et al. postulate, “[the] old Republican Party was an alliance of business interests and mainline Protestants, but the new GOP also relies heavily on its ‘values constituency,’ which is composed primarily of evangelicals” (96). Some of these ‘values’ will be laid out later in the examination of the policy priorities of the social conservative wing.

Now, prior to diving into this policy analysis of evangelical Protestants, it is important to briefly address a term that is frequently used to describe evangelical Protestants, ‘born-again Christians.’ The term ‘born-again’ refers to “a once-in-a-lifetime conversion” - the “ ‘born-again’ experience” – and subsequent devotion to Jesus Christ (Fowler et al. 32). Indeed, as religious scholar J. Gordon Melton holds, “[it] is an experience when everything they have been taught as Christians becomes real, and they develop a direct personal relationship with God” (100). One prime example of a ‘born-again’ Christian is Jimmy Carter. During the campaign of 1976, Carter elaborately talked about his “ ‘born-again’ experience,” which “excited evangelicals partly because they had been searching for a born-again candidate to carry out a ‘Christian’ agenda, and partly because they were proud of the new respectability that Carter’s candidacy gave born-again Christianity” (Fowler et al. 32; Williams 125). As Rick Perlstein

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<sup>27</sup> A more in-depth and detailed historical account of evangelical Protestants and their gravitation to the Republican Party can be found in chapter two of this thesis.

writes about Carter's 'experience,' " 'I [Carter] had a personal spiritual experience that is difficult to explain to people who have never had such an experience,' he said in an Associated Press article ... ; he accepted Christ as his personal savior, and that day his life began anew" (Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge* 649). Indeed, it was as though he was reborn with a strong and renewed faith in Jesus Christ.

Nowadays mostly associated with conservatism and the Republican Party since the 1980 election, evangelical Protestantism is one of the "four dominant Christian traditions in the United States – Catholicism, ... mainline, and African American Protestantism" being the other three traditions (Fowler et al. 31). The share of Americans who identify themselves as evangelicals is more than substantial, as evidenced by a major Pew Research Center poll from 2015 <sup>28</sup>. Asked about their religious affiliations, 70.6 percent of respondents identified as Christian: 46.5 percent Protestant, 20.8 percent Catholic, 1.6 percent Mormon, 0.8 percent Jehovah's Witness, 0.5 percent Orthodox Christian, and 0.4 percent reported professing some other branch of Christianity (Smith et al. 20-21). A record 22.8 percent of Americans described themselves as being unaffiliated, up from 16.1 percent in 2007 (20-21).

Now, when one breaks down the Protestant bloc into separate branches in this Pew poll – evangelicals, mainline Protestants, and African American Protestants – evangelicals make up a significant 25.4 percent of Americans, whereas the share of self-identified mainline Protestants come in at 14.7 percent of the population, and African American Protestants comprise 6.5 percent (Smith et al. 21). In other words, evangelical Protestants "make up a clear majority (55%) of all U.S. Protestants" and they constitute the largest bloc of people in the United States in terms of religious affiliation as about one in four Americans identify as evangelical Protestant (20). This fifty-five percent figure is up from a reported fifty-one percent in 2007, but this is predominantly due to the sharp decline among mainline Protestants "from 18.1 percent in 2007 to 14.7 percent in 2014" (20).

Evangelical Protestants comprise a significant portion of the contemporary Republican coalition. Data from another Pew report from April 2015 shows that an astonishing sixty-eight percent of evangelicals identify as Republican while twenty-two percent identify as Democrat ("A Deep Dive," par. 31). This number, according to Pew, has shot up significantly in recent years because "[since] 2007, the percentage of white evangelical Protestants who lean Republican has increased 10 points, while the share who lean Democratic has declined nine points" (par. 31). Looking at exit polls from recent elections, the importance of evangelicals to

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<sup>28</sup> This poll was executed in 2014 but the results and analysis were published in May 2015.

the Republican Party becomes evident. In the 2008 election, white evangelicals made up a significant twenty-six percent of voters of whom seventy-four percent voted for Republican presidential nominee John McCain while Barack Obama only received twenty-four percent (“Exit Polls 2012”). In 2012, the evangelical vote was even more lopsided than four years earlier. According to the *Washington Post’s* 2012 exit poll, the evangelical vote constituted again twenty-six percent of the people who voted in the election, seventy-eight percent of whom voted for Mitt Romney whereas President Obama took in only twenty-one percent (“Exit Polls 2012”). In the election of 2016, Donald Trump managed to exceed Romney’s 2012 numbers as he took in a whopping eighty percent of the evangelical vote to a mere sixteen percent for Hillary Clinton (“2016 Election Exit Polls”). All in all, the sheer number of evangelical Protestants in the United States – about one in four Americans – combined with its loyalty to the Republican Party illustrates the importance of the social conservative/evangelical wing to the party.

Now, when it comes to some of the major issues that are of particular concern to evangelical Protestants, social and moral issues are at the core of the social conservative/evangelical wing of the Republican Party. Indeed, as Fowler et al. postulate, “[unlike] the electorate as a whole, evangelicals rank the nexus of abortion and family values as more important than economic issues” (98). The roots of the evangelical concern with social issues go back to the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of the counterculture and the leftward shift of the Democratic Party (96-97). Issues such as “the sexual revolution, newly legalized abortion, women’s rights, and gay rights” and divorce were at the center of evangelical concerns because these issues were interpreted and seen as “the spread of ‘permissiveness’ ” (Fowler et al. 96; Heywood 92). These issues would cause a “social fragmentation or breakdown” of society, but it would also affect the traditional ‘nuclear family’ and family values (Heywood 92). The struggle on the part of evangelicals to “[maintain] or [restore] what is seen as ‘Christian culture’ ” by opposing the aforementioned issues is also referred to as the so-called ‘culture wars’ (302).

The ideology and reasoning of evangelicals in the 1960s and 1970s is still prevalent in the 2010s. Indeed, evangelicals and the Religious Right are agitating against “what it perceives as an increasingly immoral environment in the United States that is disturbingly hostile to Christianity” (Fowler et al. 203). There is a wide arrange of different issues that evangelicals feel deeply about – and agitate against – such as, among other things, “secular public schools, vulgar popular culture, interfering government edicts, ... [and] collapsing family values” (203). Other issues of concern include legalized soft drugs, same-sex marriage, and the earlier mentioned abortion. All of these different issues go back to the idea of permissiveness, the

undermining of a traditional Christian culture in the United States and a “concern about moral relativism and secular humanism” (Steensland and Wright 710).

Despite the fact that “a strong element of cultural conservatism clearly is behind the evangelical-Republican marriage,” “many contemporary evangelicals [also] vote Republican for economic reasons” (Fowler et al. 98). However, it is imperative to reiterate and stress the fact that the evangelical “political engagement is driven more by social issues than by economic and foreign policy concerns” (Steensland and Wright 709). In their essay, Steensland and Wright posit that “[studies] find that evangelical Protestants are either similar to or less conservative than mainline Protestants on issues relating to government social spending on poverty or efforts to address inequality” (709). The authors bring up a study that was conducted by Felson and Kindell who argued “that levels of education shape patterns of economic conservatism among evangelicals” (709). In other words, rather than the evangelical background being the main force of influence on the economic views of evangelical Protestant, economic views among evangelicals are influenced more by education levels.

More specifically, “[better]-educated evangelicals are consistently conservative in their economic views whereas less well-educated evangelicals are not” (709). What explains this difference? As Steensland and Wright write, Felson and Kindell “attribute this pattern to better-educated evangelicals being more politically attentive and thus bringing their economic views into alignment with the positions of the Republican Party to avoid cognitive dissonance” (709). Having said all of this, one might say that on economic issues evangelicals seem to be largely on the same page as other Republican factions, but there are some differences among evangelicals that, as Felson and Kindell argue, might be ascribed to education levels.

Now, since the economic views of evangelical Protestants are to a large extent similar to the GOP’s other factions, one might not find a whole lot of friction on economic issues between the evangelical wing and the party’s other wings. That is a different story when it comes to social issues. On matters of social policy, the social conservative/evangelical wing can be described as the polar opposite of the libertarian wing. Libertarians tend to put a heavy emphasis on individual liberty and allowing people to make their own choices while evangelicals are worried about permissiveness and society’s social fabric. Despite these significant differences, the evangelical wing shows quite a bit of agreement with the social views of neoconservatives.

The focus on the nuclear family and the concern about permissiveness are aspects that are shared by both evangelicals as well as neoconservatives<sup>29</sup>.

In terms of the infrastructure and organization, the evangelical wing of the Republican Party finds its strength both in Congress as well as outside of Congress. Different individuals and caucuses in Congress focus on issues that evangelicals are particularly concerned about. Two examples are the House Freedom Caucus and the Republican Study Committees, two congressional caucuses in which social conservatism forms an important basis, along with neoliberal economic policies. However, the influence of the evangelical wing is not limited to Congress. As stated earlier, the evangelical wing consists of a large network that collectively is referred to as the Religious Right or the Christian Right, “an umbrella term that describes a broad coalition of groups primarily concerned with moral and social issues” (Heywood 302). Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority “became the emblem of the broader Religious Right,” as Freedman asserts, but there many other organizations with deep ties to the grassroots and rank-and-file Republicans, such as Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council (124). One of the most important reasons why these organizations in the Religious Right are so influential is precisely because of their connections to the grassroots of the Republican Party. Indeed, “the Religious Right [has] helped to mobilize grassroots support for the Republicans” since the days of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, and has since then continued to do the same (137).

In the examination of the libertarian wing of the Republican Party, I made the connection between that particular wing and the Tea Party, which emerged in the early days of Barack Obama’s presidency. Indeed, as Arceneaux and Nicholson postulate, “[consistent] with the conservative label, Tea Party supporters are committed to the libertarian themes emphasized by the movement’s leaders, such as limiting the size of government and lowering taxes” (701). However, in addition to the influence of libertarian thought on the Tea Party, there is also a social conservative component present in the movement. More specifically, “Tea Party supporters are also very conservative on abortion and gay marriage,” positions that are more in line with the social conservative wing than the libertarian wing (701).

When talking about “the intersection of the Tea Party and the religious right,” the *Guardian*’s Sarah Posner, writes that “the Tea Party movement is driven in no small measure by religious fervor, and that religious-right political elites have deliberately injected themselves into the movement, both as a matter of common cause and political expediency” (par. 2). Citing

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<sup>29</sup> See the examinations of the libertarian and neoconservative wings in this chapter for more examples of agreements and disagreements between these wings and the social conservative/evangelical wing.

a poll by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), Posner writes “nearly half of respondents who consider themselves part of the Tea Party movement are also part of the religious right, and of the 81% of Tea Partiers who identify as Christian, 57% consider themselves part of the religious right” (par. 1). Another analysis by Pew Research Center finds that “most people who agree with the religious right also support the Tea Party” (Clement and Green, par. 3). Additionally, polling numbers in this Pew study show that evangelical support for the Tea Party is significant. More specifically, as figure 6 from Pew shows, in late 2010 and early 2011, forty-four percent of evangelicals supported the Tea Party movement, a significantly higher percentage than any other religious group. Thus, in addition to libertarian thought and influence in the Tea Party, the movement also has a strong connection with the Religious Right and the social conservative/evangelical wing of the Republican Party.

**Support for Tea Party Among Religious Groups**

*Opinion of Tea Party*

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No Opinion/Haven't Heard/Refused</b>	<b>N</b>
Protestant	31	21	48	2,523
White evangelical	44	8	48	994
White mainline	30	26	44	941
Black Protestant	7	37	56	371
Catholic	29	23	48	1,011
White non-Hispanic	33	22	45	798
Jewish	15	49	35	103
Unaffiliated	15	42	43	720
Atheist/Agnostic	12	67	20	206
Nothing in particular	16	32	52	514

Among Registered Voters. Combined surveys from November 2010 through February 2011.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Fig. 6. Support for Tea Party Among Religious Groups. Clement, Scott, and John C. Green. “The Tea Party and Religion.” Pew Research Center. 23 February 2011. Pew Research Center. 20 June 2018 <<http://www.pewforum.org/2011/02/23/tea-party-and-religion/>>.

In closing, the social conservative/evangelical wing of the Republican Party is crucial to the party’s (electoral) success. About a quarter of the American public is evangelical Protestant and they vote overwhelmingly for the Republican Party. In 2016, about eight in ten evangelicals voted for the Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. The evangelical wing is predominantly preoccupied with social and moral issues. That is not to say that they do not care about economic issues, but this analysis has illustrated that there is a clear emphasis on social

and moral issues. Evangelical Protestants believe that “the spread of ‘permissiveness’ ” negatively affects the social fabric of the nation and undermines traditional (Christian) values (Heywood 92). The Religious Right with its strong ties to the grassroots – the rank-and-file of the GOP – has been crucial to the success of the Republican Party since the days of Ronald Reagan. Falwell’s Moral Majority is perhaps the most well-known example of a Religious Right organization, but there are many more organizations in the Religious Right, such as Focus on the Family.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an in-depth analysis of the factional composition of the contemporary Republican Party. After a careful study, I came to the conclusion that a universally accepted model of the GOP’s factions does not exist. Different approaches and angles academics and journalists take, explain the differences between the models. Because of my specific angle in this chapter, I came up with my own model of the factional composition of the Republican Party. That is, in terms of my model, my intention was not just to focus on voting blocs but also on other actors that play an important role in the party, such as the institutional Republicans and neoconservatives. Prior to presenting my own factional breakdown of the GOP, however, I first engaged in a discussion that laid out the ongoing debate in academia and journalism in regard to the party’s factional composition. Various interpretations were presented, with a particular emphasis on the binary model – establishment vs. anti-establishment. What this chapter has shown in addition to the lively debate about who and what wings belong in the GOP, is that the Republican Party is a broad coalition of different groups that broadly agree on two issues: neoliberalism and social conservatism. However, despite this overarching agreement, there are significant differences and tensions between the various wings. In fact, the libertarian wing might not even be considered socially conservative. An additional observation in this chapter is that each wing consists of a broader network and infrastructure. This network involves different aspects such as think tanks, congressional caucuses, and financial contributors.

The next and final chapter will focus on the future of the Republican Party. The previous chapters dealt with the past (chapter two) and the present (chapter three), but what about the future of the party? With the help of the realignment theory and the various arguments that have been put forth so far in this thesis, I will give my cautious take on what I think might happen in the future.

## Chapter Four – The Future: A Cautious Exploration of the Future of the Republican Party

This thesis deals with the past, present, and future of the Republican Party. So far, the past and present have been discussed elaborately in chapters two and three. Chapter two dealt with the historical development of the Republican Party – and in the process the Democratic Party – since 1900 within the context of the political realignment theory, and chapter three focused on the current factional coalition of the Republican Party. The final chapter of this thesis will be about the future of the GOP. More specifically, in this chapter I will make a cautious prediction about what might be ahead for the party in the future. My arguments will be based on the political realignment theory and findings/observations that have already been put forth elsewhere in this thesis, but I will also introduce a couple of new arguments and observations that have not been discussed yet.

As indicated in the introduction of this thesis, this final chapter will be shorter than the previous two – the past and the present – because my aim here is not to provide a definitive and conclusive answer to the issue of the future of the Republican Party, but, rather, create an opening for a dialogue and debate, and contribute to the ongoing debate surrounding the future of the party. Making political predictions is a challenging job and I do not claim to possess the answers, but I do believe that I am in the position to offer some insights about what the future might hold for the GOP, and thus, contribute to the debate within academia and journalism in regard to the future of American politics and the Republican Party. With the help of the political realignment thesis and other factors, I will share my take on the possible future of the Republican Party.

In chapter two of this thesis, I presented a scheme devised by Judis and Teixeira that showed the history of political realignments in the United States. As I mentioned in that particular chapter, this scheme largely reflects the consensus among experts in regard to the occurrences of realignments. However, this widespread consensus ends after the “Conservative Republican Majority” that began in 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan (Judis and Teixeira 14). Many academics and journalists have written and theorized about the era after the realignment of 1980 in an attempt to make sense of the current political era and the future. Surveying this debate, it quickly becomes clear that there is a lively debate about the future of American politics and the Republican Party.

Many, or even most, questions, though, remain unanswered. This includes questions such as whether or not we are still living in the era of the ‘Conservative Republican Majority’ or if

Barack Obama's election in 2008 signified a Democratic realignment or, reversely, if Donald Trump's 2016 election victory signaled a new Republican realignment. One of the main reasons why so many questions remain unanswered is because we are living in this moment right now and we do not have a certain distance that allows us to put the current era in a larger historical perspective. This particular notion, then, explains why different individuals have come up with different analyses and outlooks since the time of the realignment of 1980. The following few paragraphs illustrate this debate about what to make of the post-Reagan era.

In the wake of Mitt Romney's loss to Barack Obama in 2012, former Republican Congressman from Florida and influential commentator, Joe Scarborough, wrote in his book *The Right Path* that "the national Grand Old Party [is] seemingly on a glide path to ideological and demographic irrelevance as a presidential force" (xii). This observation by Scarborough in the aftermath of the 2012 election is astounding when one looks back at what was being said about the future of American politics during the days of George W. Bush's presidency (2001-2009). In Judis and Teixeira's *The Emerging Democratic Majority* from 2004, they state that in the early 2000s, "[some] political strategists argue that what is most likely over the next decade is a new Republican Majority" (145). Bush's main political strategist, Karl Rove, was one of the people who predicted this after the close election of 2000 (145). When, as Scarborough writes, Bush won reelection in 2004 with a surprisingly more comfortable margin than the polls prior to the election had predicted – most polls had Bush and Kerry even on election day – "[many] began privately concluding that Karl Rove was right – that the Republican Party might just be headed to a permanent majority, echoing what so many had said in the media forty years earlier about the Democrats, when LBJ won his landslide victory" (Scarborough 161).

Four years later in 2008, but especially after the reelection of Barack Obama in 2012, the narrative had completely altered, as evidenced by Scarborough's aforementioned quote. Now it was the Republican Party that was in deep trouble because, similar to Democrats in 1988, Republicans in 2012 thought that they could have and should have won the election. Instead, Obama won in a landslide in the electoral vote count and with comfortable margins in the popular vote. Furthermore, the discussion about a potential new Republican majority had completely evaporated and, in exchange, there was talk of a new Democratic majority coalition<sup>30</sup>. Fast forward to 2016, and talks of a Democratic realignment were subdued with the election of Donald Trump and, instead, questions were put forward whether or not – with Trump's

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<sup>30</sup> Ross Douthat's "The Obama Realignment" in the *New York Times* is an example of the talk about a Democratic realignment following Barack Obama's reelection victory in 2012. (See works cited).

successful performance in the Midwest in mind – “Trump’s election was an aberration or a major realignment of the parties” (Khalid, par. 6). Taking all of this into account, if there is one common thread to be detected, it is that there is talk of a political realignment every four years, regardless of who wins the presidential election.

Now, the aforementioned is not intended to chastise or criticize people who are engaged in this debate about the future of American politics because it is an interesting and important discussion to be had. Instead, what this brief survey has shown is that since at least the 2000s, there is a lively and ongoing debate surrounding the future of American politics. Going back to Judis and Teixeira’s scheme of political realignments throughout American history, they argue that the realignment of 1980 – the ‘Conservative Republican Majority’ – started to disintegrate in 1992, and that a new Democratic realignment and majority would come to fruition in the first decade of the twenty-first century – between 2004 and 2008 (14). I believe Judis and Teixeira offer a compelling case of this disintegrating Republican majority coalition and a future Democratic majority, although I am not sure whether this Democratic majority has already arrived or if it still is in the developing stages. When it comes to the GOP, specifically, I believe that despite Donald Trump’s victory in 2016, the Republican Party will have an increasingly hard time winning future presidential elections. Additionally, I also think that his win in 2016 obscures some of the challenges that lie ahead for the Republican Party.

I realize that after the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and previous midterm elections in 2010 and 2014, in which Democrats lost significantly, it might sound odd or even implausible to argue that a new Democratic majority is forming or that it already has materialized. However, throughout this thesis several arguments have come up that explicitly or implicitly address this issue of recent Democratic losses. One argument is that it is not a prerequisite of a majority coalition to win every election. A second observation is my suggestion to adjust the realignment thesis by separating the executive and legislative branches. By doing so, several interesting patterns and observations can be extracted, such as the earlier discussed “structural advantages that Republicans enjoy in House and Senate elections” and a “Democratic advantage in both the national popular vote and the Electoral College” in terms of presidential elections (Abramowitz 28). While these “structural advantages ... appear to guarantee the party’s [GOP] continued competitiveness in congressional elections for several more election cycles,” the

story appears to look different on the presidential level (28)<sup>31</sup>. The political realignment theory can help in making this case.

Judis and Teixeira argue that the disintegration of the Conservative Republican Majority began in 1992. They have a good reason to pick that specific year because of the presidential election that took place in that year. In the election of 1992, George H.W. Bush was defeated by the DLC candidate Bill Clinton. As discussed at the end of chapter two, the election of Bill Clinton was an affirmation of the Republican majority since the Democrats nominated a centrist – and on some issues even conservative – candidate. This goes back to the analogy of the ‘sun’ and the ‘moon,’ in which the ‘sun’ party “[creates] the ‘orbit’ in which both parties [move]” (Rosenof 41). The sign of the disintegration of the Republican majority, however, did not come from Clinton’s victory over the incumbent president. Rather, the signs of disintegration began with the candidacy and strong performance of Ross Perot, the independent candidate in 1992. Indeed, as Judis and Teixeira posit, “[one] indication that a realignment is imminent has been the rise of third parties that defy the existing political consensus” (16). In that year’s presidential election George H.W. Bush was defeated handily, amassing only 168 electoral votes and 37.5 percent of the popular vote (Whitney and Whitney 578). However, Bill Clinton did not pick up the remaining 62.5 percent of the popular vote. Instead, Clinton was able to win the presidency with only forty-three percent of the vote while Ross Perot garnered a truly impressive 18.9 percent of the popular vote (578).

Had it not been for Ross Perot, George H.W. Bush would probably have won reelection. Ross Perot, as Judis and Teixeira write, “claimed to be nonpartisan, but almost all of his closest aides and a large majority of his backers were former Republican voters” (28). Indeed, the National Election Study (NES) reported that “over 70 percent of Perot voters had voted for Bush in 1988,” and a poll that was conducted after the election stated that “62 percent of Perot backers said they had not only voted for Bush in 1988 but also for Reagan in either 1980 or 1984” (28). The sign of the disintegration of the Conservative Republican Majority was similar to the one in 1968 when the New Deal coalition started to break up. More specifically, “[just] as Wallace [in 1968] had represented a dissident faction within the Democratic Party, Perot represented a dissident outlook among Republicans and among renegade Democrats who had previously voted for Reagan and Bush” (28).

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<sup>31</sup> See chapter one for a more in-depth analysis of the Republican Party’s “structural advantages” in congressional elections (Abramowitz 28).

There are more reasons than the election of 1992 that suggest to me that the Republican majority has ended or, at least, has reached its limits. Presidential election results since 1992, reveal the limits of the Republican majority in that the party has only won the popular vote with a majority of the vote in 2004, and averaged 45.11 percent in the popular vote in those seven elections, along with an average of 223.85 electoral votes (Whitney and Whitney 578; “Popular Votes”). In the same period, Democrats fared significantly better, averaging 48.72 percent in the popular vote and a sizeable average of 312.85 electoral votes (“Popular Votes”). Moreover, in the three presidential elections Republicans have won since 1992, two – in 2000 and 2016 – ended up as ‘minority’ wins, meaning that Republicans lost the popular vote while surpassing the 270 electoral vote threshold. Meanwhile, in the six presidential elections between 1968 – the year of the disintegration of the New Deal majority coalition – and 1988, Republicans ended up winning five elections with an average popular vote of 52.38 percent and a more than impressive electoral vote average of 416.83 (“Popular Votes”). These averages for Republicans since 1992 do not look promising and suggest to me that the Conservative Republican Majority, of which the foundations were laid in the 1960s with Goldwater, Nixon, and political strategists such as Kevin Phillips, has ended or has reached its limits.

When I talk about the ‘limit’ or ‘end’ of the Conservative Republican Majority, I am not talking about a disintegration in the sense of a changing factional composition of the party. What is meant, instead, is that the electoral reach and dominance of the Conservative Republican Majority has reached its ceiling. Put differently, what once was a majority coalition – the ‘sun’ party in American politics – has since 1992 devolved and declined to the point that it struggles to be successful in presidential elections. This decline is not due to a radical transformation of the party’s factional makeup. More specifically, the different wings of the Conservative Republican Majority that, as laid out in chapters two and three, started to coalesce and develop in the 1960s and reached its full potential in 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan, have remained at the core of the present-day Republican Party. Thus, what is meant with the ‘limit’ or ‘end’ of the Republican majority is that the party is holding on to its different wings – such as the libertarian and social conservative/evangelical wings – but that it no longer represents a majority coalition.

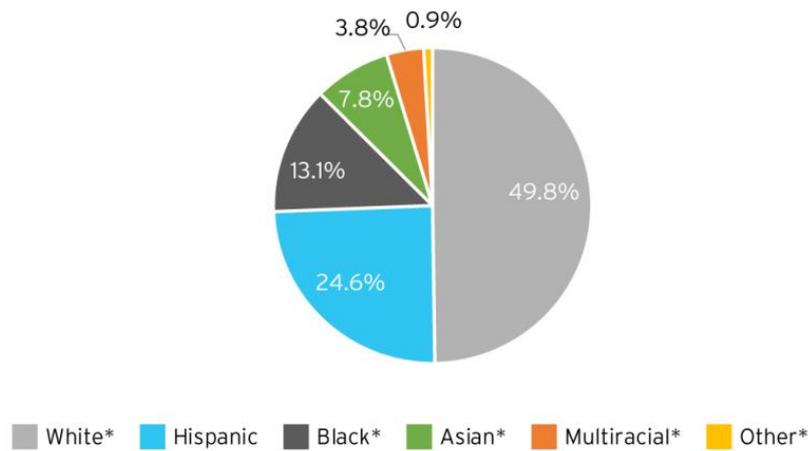
An explanation for the decline of the Republican majority coalition is the changing demographic nature of the country. This observation is also one of Judis and Teixeira’s main reasons why they foresee a realignment and a Democratic majority. Just as the seeds of the Conservative Republican Majority were planted in the Republican election debacle of 1964, the roots of a potential Democratic majority go back to a similarly unlikely election – 1972. This

election is in terms of the popular vote to this day the largest victory in the history of the Republican Party and the third largest in American political history in general, only falling behind Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936 (60.8 percent of the popular vote) and Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 (61.1 percent) (Whitney and Whitney 577). In 1972, Richard Nixon beat George McGovern 60.7 percent to 37.5 percent in the popular vote and 520 to seventeen in the electoral college (577). Despite McGovern's landslide loss, Judis and Teixeira write that "[perhaps] it is time to reappraise the McGovern campaign – not as a model of how to win presidential elections, but as an election that foreshadowed a new Democratic majority in the twenty-first century" (37).

Indeed, the rough contours of the present-day Democratic Party became visible in 1972. Specifically, "several groups that would become important components of today's Democratic Party made a clear statement during that election" (37). McGovern performed well among minority voters, "winning 87 percent of their vote," he also "showed unforeseen strength among working women," he did well among young people and students, winning "college communities that had once been Republican," and he also "did astonishingly well among highly skilled professionals" (37-38). In fact, McGovern "did better among these voters than he did among blue-collar workers," who had formed one of the central pillars of the New Deal majority (38). Now, while these voting groups were not large enough to deliver McGovern the presidency in 1972, their significant growth since that election – and "the growing diversity and social liberalism" in the U.S. in general – poses a threat to the Republican Party's electoral chances while it offers Democrats a tangible template for a future Democratic majority (Abramowitz 19).

Indeed, as Abramowitz posits, "the growing diversity and social liberalism of the American electorate represent a long-term threat to the viability of an overwhelmingly white and socially conservative Republican Party, especially in presidential elections" (19). The long-term challenges for the GOP in this regard should not be underestimated because the demographic diversification of the country will continue over the next decades. To illustrate, by the year 2050, "[according] to US Census Bureau projections, Latinos will make up one-quarter of the national population" (Barreto and Segura 13). Combine that with other minority groups – African Americans and Asian Americans for example – and it becomes clear that the U.S. population will get increasingly diverse and increasingly less white over the next decades. In fact, Census Bureau estimations "project that the nation will become 'minority white' in 2045" (see figure 7) (Frey, par. 1).

FIGURE 1

**Racial profile of U.S. population, 2045**

Source: William H Frey analysis of U.S. Census population projections released March 13, 2018

**B** Metropolitan Policy Program  
at BROOKINGS

Fig. 7. Racial Profile of U.S. Population, 2045. Frey, William H. “The US will become ‘Minority White’ in 2045, Census Projects.” *The Brookings Institution*. 14 March 2018. The Brookings Institution. 8 July 2018 <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/>>.

However, this growing demographic diversity is already palpable when one looks at recent American political history. As Abramowitz points out, “between 1992 and 2012, the nonwhite share of the American electorate increased from 13% to 28%” and it is expected that it “will continue to increase at an average rate of about two percentage points every four years for the next several decades” (19). If these projected trends hold in the future, the Republican Party’s chances of winning presidential elections will become increasingly challenging. Bruce Gyory, voting trends expert, asserts that “[outside] the Deep South, whenever the White vote in a state or nationally shrinks to 75% or less of the total vote, and the Democrats can carry 75% or more of the aggregate minority vote (Black, Hispanic, Asian and biracial voters), the Republicans have no margin for error” (Gyory, “Lecture I” 2). Gyory calls this the “Double 75 Rule” (2). In 2012, when Barack Obama defeated Mitt Romney relatively comfortably (51-47 in the popular vote and 332-206 in the electoral college), the white vote constituted seventy-two percent of the electorate, while Obama won the combined minority vote with seventy-nine percent (“President: Full Results;” “How Groups Voted in 2012”). In 2016, when Donald Trump narrowly defeated Hillary Clinton (48.5-46.4 Clinton advantage in the popular vote and a 306-

232 Trump win in the electoral college), the white vote came in at seventy-one percent, while Clinton won the combined minority vote by just over seventy-three percent (“Presidential Results;” “Exit Polls [2016]”). The results from 2012 and 2016 seem to confirm Gyory’s “Double 75 Rule” (2). That is, in 2012, the two conditions of Gyory’s theory were met, and Obama enjoyed a comfortable victory, and in 2016, the two conditions were not met, and Trump narrowly carried the election. Despite Trump’s win, the 2016 election should, just as the election of 2012, be a warning sign for Republicans because if the aforementioned demographic trends hold, the road to the White House for Republicans will become more challenging.

Put differently, as Abramowitz asserts, “[unless] Republican leaders and strategists can find a way to expand their party’s appeal beyond its shrinking base of older white conservative voters, the GOP is likely to experience a continued decline in its electoral fortunes [in presidential elections] in a nation that is becoming increasingly diverse and socially liberal” (29). Bruce Gyory views this “demography gap” as the “political blind [spot]” of the Republican Party (“Lecture I” 1-2). However, it is not as though Republicans are oblivious to the changing nature of the country. To the contrary, in the wake of Mitt Romney’s loss in 2012, the Republican National Committee (RNC), under the auspices of its then-chairman Reince Priebus, weighed in when it “commissioned a postelection task force to examine the [election] results,” the results of which were published in March 2013 in a report that carried the title “Growth and Opportunity Project” (Schaller, *The Stronghold* 4). In this report, informally referred to as the GOP’s ‘autopsy report,’ the Republican leadership stated that even though the Republican Party does well on the state level in terms of governorships and state legislatures, “the federal wing ... is increasingly marginalizing itself, and unless changes are made, it will be increasingly difficult for Republicans to win another presidential election in the near future” (Barbour et al. 4). With ‘changes’ the RNC was hinting at, among other things, improving the party’s standing among voters outside its base, such as African Americans and Hispanics. The report continued by stating that “[unless] the RNC gets serious about tackling this problem [the party’s demographic challenge], we will lose future elections; the data demonstrates this” (Barbour et al. 12).

Now, earlier in this chapter I asserted that Trump’s 2016 victory obscures some of the challenges that lie ahead for the Republican Party. What I specifically mean by that is that the demographic makeup of the coalition that delivered Trump the presidency does not reflect any of the RNC’s aforementioned post-2012 election recommendations. He lost the nonwhite vote by margins similar to Romney, but he performed well among white voters, especially white working-class voters. The potential danger for the GOP is that the 2016 victory might induce a

sense of complacency in the sense that the urge to reach out becomes less immediate since they were successful in the last presidential election without significantly improving among nonwhite voters. Figure 8 shows Trump’s strong performance among white working class voters (also referred to as non-college educated white voters), but it also shows Hillary Clinton’s strong performance among other groups/races that were at the heart of George McGovern’s coalition in 1972, and that are projected, as will be pointed out, to continue to grow in the future – African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and college-educated whites, or, to use Judis and Teixeira’s term, “highly skilled professionals” (38).

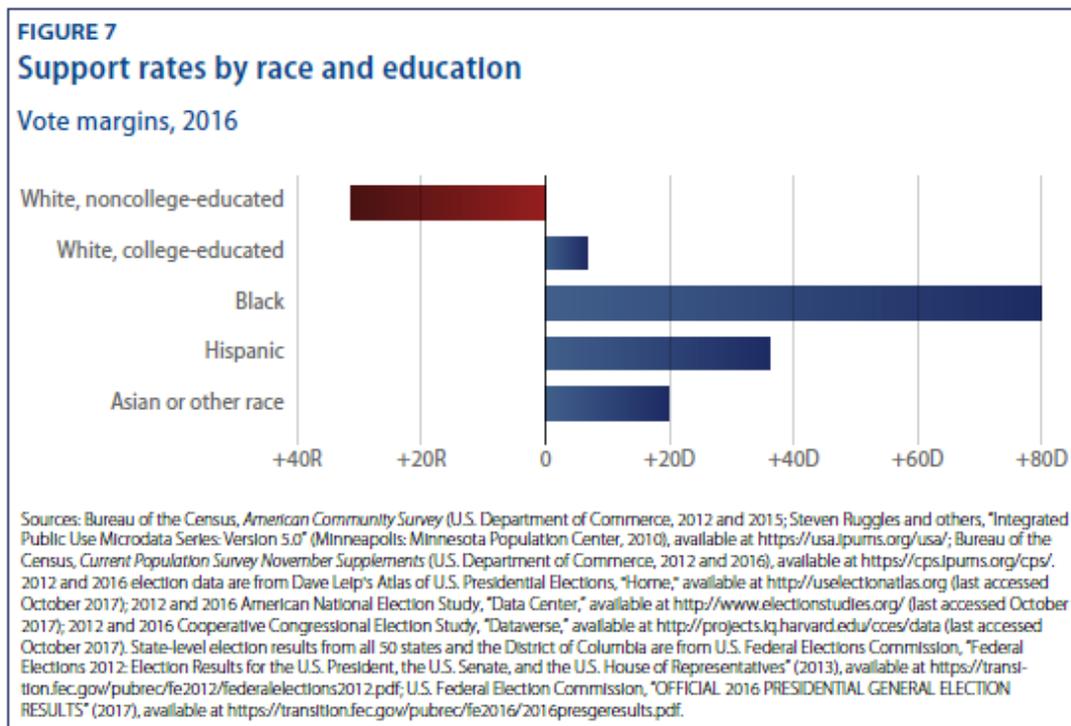


Fig. 8. Support Rates by Race and Education. Griffin, Robert, Ruy Teixeira, and William H. Frey. “America’s Electoral Future: Demographic Shifts and the Future of the Trump Coalition.” Public Religion Research Institute. 14 April 2018. 9 July 2018 <<https://www.ppri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/States-of-Change-2018-Americas-Electoral-Future-3.pdf>>. p. 22.

While it is true that the GOP was successful in the 2016 election, it remains to be seen if the party can stay successful in the long-term in presidential elections without making some of the changes that the RNC report from 2013 called for. Figure 9, adopted from a collaboration between the Center for American Progress, the Brookings Institution, the Bipartisan Policy Center, and the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), suggests that the Republican Party cannot rely indefinitely on white working-class voters pushing the party’s presidential

nominees towards the finish line. More specifically, “[as] recently as 1980, whites without college degrees comprised about 70 percent of all EVs [eligible voters] – dominating politics nationally and in most states” (Griffin, Teixeira, and Frey 23). However, “[rising] educational attainment rates and the racial diversification of the electorate have created downward pressure on this group, which constituted just about 46 percent of EVs in 2016” (23). As figure 9 shows, the percentage of non-college educated white voters is about to drop even more in the future. Indeed, compared to the 2016 election, “it should drop another 9.5 points as a percent of EVs by 2036” (23). Griffin, Teixeira, and Frey also note that “[this] change is important because of sharp divides in the behavior of whites based on their educational status. In particular, whites without a college degree are notably more likely to vote Republican than other racial groups” (23). This particular observation seems to confirm Abramowitz earlier mentioned notion of a “shrinking base” (29).

**TABLE 1**  
**Composition of EVs: 2016, 2020, and 2036**

	2016	2020	2036
White, noncollege-educated	46%	44%	37%
White, college-educated	22%	23%	22%
Black	12%	13%	13%
Hispanic	12%	13%	18%
Asian/other	7%	8%	10%
18–29	21%	21%	20%
30–44	24%	24%	24%
45–64	34%	33%	29%
65+	21%	22%	27%

Sources: Projections based on data from Ruy Teixeira, William H. Frey, and Rob Griffin, “States of Change: The Demographic Evolution of the American Electorate, 1974–2060” (Washington: Center for American Progress, American Enterprise Institute, and Brookings Institution, 2015), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/progressive-movement/report/2015/02/24/107261/states-of-change>; Ruy Teixeira, John Halpin, and Rob Griffin, “Path to 270 in 2016: Can the Obama Coalition Survive?” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2015), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2015/12/17/127403/the-path-to-270-in-2016/>; U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. See Steven Ruggles and others, “Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, U.S. Census Data for Social, Economic, and Health Research, 2008–2013 and 2016 American Community Survey: 1-year estimates,” available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa>.

Fig. 9. Composition of Eligible Voters: 2016, 2020, and 2036. Griffin, Robert, Ruy Teixeira, and William H. Frey. “America’s Electoral Future: Demographic Shifts and the Future of the Trump Coalition.” Public Religion Research Institute. 14 April 2018. 9 July 2018 <<https://www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/States-of-Change-2018-Americas-Electoral-Future-3.pdf>>. p. 6.

While, as figure 3 shows, the percentage of non-college educated white voters is projected to drop over the coming decades, other racial groups that are more friendly towards the Democratic Party – college educated whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans – are projected to grow substantially when combined. That is, it is estimated that by 2036, the nonwhite share of the electorate and college educated whites will increase by a combined ten percentage points. What this means in practical terms is that the electorate will become more diverse and that, as a consequence, it is likely that the Republican Party at some point has to address its “political blind [spot],” to use Gyory’s terminology (“Lecture I” 1). In the short-term, the GOP could, as Sean Trende of *RealClearPolitics* argues, “actually resuscitate itself by doubling down on its current, white-dominated electoral coalition,” but the question is “whether his [Trende’s] strategy of maximizing white voter turnout is in the Republican Party’s best long-term interest” (Schaller, *The Stronghold* 5-6). Indeed, as Schaller postulates, “[just] because it’s possible to pull the electoral equivalent of an inside straight, that doesn’t make it a smart bet” (6).

Taking this entire discussion on the changing demographic nature of the country into account, I believe that the Republican path to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue will become increasingly challenging in the future. The story for Republicans on the congressional level, however, is different because of a variety of “structural advantages” that have been discussed at length in chapter one of this thesis (Abramowitz 28). As far as the Democratic Party is concerned, I believe that because of the societal changes they have an opportunity to become the new majority party, at least in presidential elections. In other words, a new Democratic political realignment might be on the horizon. This potential realignment would seem to be a ‘secular realignment’ instead of a ‘critical realignment.’ More specifically, ‘secular realignments’ are gradual processes in which “the emerging majority party ... [among other things] [increases] its sway over its own voters, whose ranks have typically increased through birth, immigration, and economic change” (Judis and Teixeira 14). If there is going to be a Democratic realignment, it seems, based on the demographic trends in the country that I have laid out, that this Democratic majority will emerge as a result of these future and long-term changes in society instead of one ‘critical’ election such as the one in 1932. In other words, the coalition that George McGovern stitched together in 1972, has grown, and will continue to grow, to such an extent that that it might well result in a new Democratic majority coalition.

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that the disintegration of the Conservative Republican Majority did not refer to a changing factional composition of the party. Rather, while the party has hold on to its different wings (see chapter three for a factional model), it

was argued that the electoral reach of the Republican majority coalition seems to have reached its limits. Despite maintaining its different wings, Republicans should look with caution to a specific region in the country that has been, at least since the days of Richard Nixon in the 1960s and 1970s, a vital part of the geographic coalition/template of the Republican Party – the Sunbelt. Sean Cunningham notes in *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt* that “[although] still an influential epicenter for conservative political activism at the regional, state, and local levels, the Sunbelt of the early twenty-first century [seems] increasingly ripe for greater political contestation and competitive balance” (257).

Indeed, various Sunbelt states that have been traditionally Republican-leaning states seem to be trending more towards the center. This includes states such as Georgia, Arizona, and North Carolina. Some Sunbelt states have become true swing states or even Democratic-leaning states such as New Mexico, Nevada, and Colorado. Other Sunbelt states have remained solidly Republican, such as South Carolina, Utah, and Texas. While the Republican Party still typically carries the majority of states and electoral votes in the Sunbelt, Democrats have been making inroads in this region in recent presidential elections. In fact, in 2008, Barack Obama carried a majority of electoral votes in the Sunbelt – 129 – while John McCain was able to add 120 electoral votes to his scorecard (Cunningham 261). This region is one of the geographic cornerstones of the Republican Party, so, as a matter of basic electoral math, it cannot afford to lose too many states and electoral votes in this region. As discussed in chapter two, the Sunbelt was targeted in the 1960s and 1970s by Richard Nixon and political strategists, such as Kevin Phillips, as they rightly saw the region as fertile political ground. Having been an integral part of the GOP’s electoral playbook since the days of Nixon, the growing competitiveness of the region might pose significant challenges for the Republican Party in presidential elections.

An important explanation for this trend is the growth of certain groups that are more friendly to the Democratic Party. This includes some of the groups that supported George McGovern in 1972, such as students, younger voters, minority voters, and “highly skilled professionals” (Judis and Teixeira 38). Cunningham seems to corroborate this view as he writes that the growing competitiveness in the Sunbelt has to do with, among other things, “the rise of what John Judis and Ruy Teixeira have called ‘postindustrial metropolises’ – relatively younger cities driven by technology, university-based research and development, and a cultural willingness to re-embrace the trappings of a limited urbanity, while not entirely abandoning the comforts of modern suburbia” (258). An additional aspect that plays an important role in the growing competitiveness in the Sunbelt is the “rise in the proportional number of Hispanics and Asian Americans living in the region” (258).

Now, one might argue, especially post-2016, that the GOP might offset the growing competitiveness in some of the Sunbelt states – Arizona, North Carolina, Georgia, among others – with winning traditionally Democratic-leaning states in the Rust Belt. However, one cardinal rule in American politics is to resist the temptation to read too much into one single election. Trump’s wins in the Rust Belt states, while impressive, do not necessarily signal the beginning of a new trend or a fundamental realignment of the American electorate. Trump’s narrow victory margins in the Democratic-leaning Rust Belt states that he carried in 2016, should already caution the GOP. More specifically, in 2016, Trump won Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin – the three states that essentially delivered Trump the presidency – by a combined total of 77,744 votes out of more than 13,22 million votes cast (“Official 2016” 1-6). Furthermore, in those three traditionally Democratic-leaning states, Donald Trump averaged a vote share of about 47.5 percent to Clinton’s forty-seven percent, well below the fifty percent mark (“Presidential Election Results”). Now, these Rust Belt states might trend more Republican in future presidential elections, but more data – i.e. presidential election results – is needed in order to identify trends<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, despite a striking streak of Democratic victories in these states since 1988 and 1992 until 2016, it may not be out of the ordinary for the GOP to carry these states at some point, given the close Democratic victory margins in past presidential elections. George W. Bush, for example, “lost narrowly twice in Wisconsin by under a percentage point in 2000 and 2004” (“A Recent Voting History,” par. 21).

All in all, the trend of the Sunbelt as a region becoming less reliably Republican, poses another challenge for the Republican Party, especially when it comes to presidential elections. The Sunbelt is one of the core regions for the Republican Party and it cannot afford to concede too much terrain in that region if the party wants to remain electorally viable in presidential elections. For Democrats, on the other hand, the demographic trends in the Sunbelt gives them “a great deal of confidence about their party’s prospects for future success in the region” (Cunningham 259). Now, this does not mean in any way that Democrats are destined to become the dominant political party in the Sunbelt. What it does mean in my view, however, is that it is imperative for the Republican Party to at some point address its demographic “political blind

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<sup>32</sup> On the state level, these three states have been trending more Republican since the Obama years, but Republican gains in the state legislatures and governorships came predominantly during off-year elections (2010 and 2014) in which Republican intensity significantly outpaced Democratic enthusiasm. The question is whether these midterm cycles and the 2016 election are a result of a Republican trend or other factors such as, for example, a voter intensity gap, gerrymandering of legislative districts or an inferior political strategy and organization.

[spot],” not just on a national level, but also in the Sunbelt, one of the geographic cornerstones of the party (Gyory, “Lecture I” 1).

In conclusion, in this chapter I have explored the potential future of the Republican Party and American politics in general. I agreed with Judis and Teixeira’s assertions about the disintegration of the Conservative Republican Majority and a coming Democratic majority, but I am not sure if this realignment has already occurred. A potential future Democratic realignment will be, as argued, the result of the changing demographic nature of the country, hence my argument that this will be a ‘secular’ realignment, i.e. a process in which a new majority coalition gradually develops. It was illustrated that important Democratic voting blocs – college-educated whites and minority voters – are projected to increase substantially over the coming decades, while an important Republican voting group – non-college educated whites/working class whites – is projected to shrink in the coming years. In addition, it was argued that an important region for the Republican Party – the Sunbelt – seems to become more competitive. The Sunbelt is a critical region for the GOP in presidential elections and a growing competitiveness in this region poses a challenge for the party in terms of remaining viable in presidential elections.

Now, this all does not mean that the future looks inevitably bleak for the Republican Party. As explained in chapter one and briefly in this particular chapter, Republicans enjoy a variety of advantages on the congressional level, such as the fact that “Democratic voters [are] much less efficiently distributed than Republican voters” (Abramowitz 27). These advantages help Republicans in maintaining their political clout and influence in Congress. On the presidential level, Republicans are likely to face a more challenging future, as evidenced by the demographic trends that have been laid out in this chapter. This does not mean, however, that Republican will not be victorious in future presidential elections since, as the realignment theory suggests, majority parties do not necessarily win every presidential election. However, the Republican path to the White House does not seem to get easier in the coming presidential election cycles unless it makes some changes that the RNC with its post-2012 election ‘autopsy report’ called for. Ultimately, when taking all of this into account, I believe that if a Democratic realignment materializes in the future (or maybe it already has), Donald Trump may well be seen by historians and political scientists as the Jimmy Carter of the current era. I realize that this sounds more than peculiar, but what I mean by this is that Donald Trump and the Republican Party in the context of the political realignment theory might well be seen as the ‘moon’ party, “which [reflects] the power of the ‘sun,’ ” the Democratic Party (Rosenof 41). Just as Jimmy Carter – a moderate southern Democrat – and the Democratic Party in the 1970s

“reflected the power of the ‘sun’ ” – the emerging Conservative Republican Majority – Donald Trump and the Republican Party might well operate within an emerging Democratic majority (41).

Lastly, as indicated in the introduction of this thesis and in this particular chapter, my aim was not to provide a complete and conclusive answer to the issue of the future of the Republican Party. First of all, it is impossible to know what the future will bring, but, more importantly, my aim in this chapter was to provide an opening for a dialogue rather than dissecting every facet and argument that might validate my theory of an emerging Democratic majority. My focus has been mainly on the growth of nonwhite voting groups and the growing competitiveness of the Sunbelt, but there are many other areas that one can focus on, such as the gender gap, and the different generational cohorts and their political and ideological proclivities. In other words, this analysis is far from complete, but I believe that it offers some valuable observations that might serve as a starting point for a debate about the future of the Republican Party and American politics in general.

## Conclusion

This thesis has provided an in-depth examination of the Republican Party. One of the main reasons why I wanted to study and subsequently write about the Republican Party is that I am fascinated by the complex histories and factional makeups of America's two most prominent political parties. Because of America's two-party system, both the Republican Party as well as the Democratic Party are broad coalitions with often unusual alliances. The New Deal majority coalition, for example, included "racists and racial minorities" and the present-day Republican Party, as chapter three has illustrated, features socially conservative evangelical Protestants as well as libertarians who stress the idea of liberty and making your own (moral) decisions (Mackenzie and Weisbrot 46-47). Ideally, I wanted to provide an in-depth analysis and examination of both major political parties, but that would have been impossible to do in a Master's thesis. Trying to fit a comprehensive examination of both political parties in this thesis would have done injustice to the profoundly complex nature of America's two major political parties.

What intrigues me the most is how the parties' coalitions have developed throughout history and how and why majority coalitions, such as the Conservative Republican Majority, have emerged and subsequently disintegrated. This thesis has shown that the emergence and disintegration of majority coalitions can be caused by a plethora of reasons. From major events such as the Great Depression, to voters defecting from one party to the other, to demographic growth that electorally benefits one party or the other, both political parties and their coalitions have experienced periods of ascendancy and disintegration. Another interesting facet is how the broad factional composition of the parties – in this particular thesis the Republican Party – can cause frictions and how, despite the broadness, there are several ideological elements that bind these coalitions together. A third fascinating aspect is the future of the parties and America's political landscape in general. Exploring the potential future paths for both parties and examining whether or not there are any signs of emerging or disintegrating majority coalitions are issues that have always intrigued me.

In this thesis, I have attempted to incorporate all of the aforementioned aspects. More specifically, I have examined and analyzed the past, present, and future of the Republican Party. In pursuance of this goal, the political realignment theory was utilized to serve as the theoretical framework of this thesis. This theory is a useful tool to look at American political history in that it maps and identifies different periods of ascending and disintegrating majority coalitions that reflected the ideological zeitgeist of the moment. Newly emerging majority coalitions often

develop in response to the previous majority coalition. The New Deal majority coalition, for instance, was to a large degree a response to the laissez-faire economic policies of successive Republican administrations in the Roaring Twenties. The Conservative Republican Majority that supplanted the New Deal coalition was in many ways a response to the idea of an overly present and active government that inserted itself in most aspects of life. When a political realignment occurs and a new majority emerges, it will have a significant and prolonged impact on the nation, both policy wise and electorally. Chapter one dealt with a discussion of the political realignment theory. In addition to discussing what exactly a political realignment is, chapter one also presented some characteristics of the realignment theory along with an explanation of the different types of realignments – ‘critical’ and ‘secular’ realignments. I also argued to make some adjustments to the theory so that it can remain a valuable instrument in the future.

Chapter two – the past – presented a comprehensive examination of political realignments from roughly 1900 until the early part of the twenty-first century to provide insight into the historical development of the Republican Party. If one wants to understand why the contemporary GOP looks the way it does in terms of its coalition, it is imperative to look at some historical developments, such as Nixon’s Southern Strategy, that explain how the party has developed. While this thesis specifically focuses on the Republican Party, chapter two also dealt with the Democratic Party because of the interconnectedness between the two parties. Because of America’s two-party system, emerging and disintegrating majority coalitions always affect both parties. For instance, the defection of southern white Democrats to the Republican Party at the end of the 1960s played an integral role in both the emerging Republican majority and the disintegration of the New Deal majority coalition.

The third chapter – the present – aimed to map the factional composition of the present-day Republican Party. Chapter two laid out the historical development of the GOP since the turn of the twentieth century, but not every wing of the party was discussed. Several factions have come up in chapter two, such as the social conservative/evangelical wing, and also various groups that fit in one or more factions, such as the middle-class suburbanites in the Sunbelt, but it did not offer an exhaustive breakdown of the Republican Party’s different wings. This is what chapter three aimed to do. I devised my own factional model and placed it within the broader debate in academia and journalism in regard to the factional makeup of the Republican Party. Instead of merely focusing on specific voting blocs, such as the libertarian wing, my aim was to map all the important actors in the party, including those that do not have a natural voting constituency, such as the institutional wing. One of the more interesting aspects of chapter three

is that it elucidated the tensions and frictions that exist between the various wings, despite the fact that they are bound together – with the exception of the libertarian wing on social issues – by an ideology that is rooted in neoliberalism and social conservatism.

Chapter four, the final chapter of this thesis, dealt with the issue of the future of the Republican Party and, by extension, the future of American politics in general. My approach to this chapter was to create an opening for dialogue rather than to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the different components that might tell us something about the future of the GOP and American politics. The argument was made that the Conservative Republican Majority has been in the process of disintegration since at least 1992, and that, given certain developments, a new Democratic realignment and subsequent majority might be on the horizon. One of these developments pertains to the changing demographic nature of the country, which poses a challenge to the Republican Party in terms of presidential elections. Certain voting groups that are more friendly towards the Democratic Party are growing substantially, while an important Republican voting group – non-college educated white voters/the white working-class – seems to be shrinking as a percentage of the electorate. Additionally, one of the core geographical regions of the Republican Party – the Sunbelt – appears to be becoming more electorally competitive. This might also pose a challenge for the GOP in future presidential elections because if they lose too much ground in this region, they will have to find other ways to offset the growing competitiveness in the Sunbelt. That, as indicated, might not be an easy task.

All in all, this thesis has aimed to contribute to the ongoing debate about the historical development of the Republican Party, its factional makeup, and its potential future and challenges. Now, one of the difficulties of dealing with topical issues is that there is always a degree of uncertainty. More specifically, how, for example, do we interpret certain events and developments, and do they represent permanent changes or are they merely temporary interludes. This challenge was especially true in this particular thesis. During the process of writing this thesis, Donald Trump successfully captured the Republican nomination to be the party's standard bearer and subsequently went on to become the forty-fifth president of the United States. Of all the Republicans seeking the presidency in 2016, Trump was arguably the least likely to emerge as the winner of the Republican primary season. He had only been a registered Republican for a couple of years, he had donated money to Democrats, and his political ideology and policy views were not particularly in line with the Republican Party. Yet, he was able to win the party's nomination.

What the election of Trump means for the Republican Party is unclear at this point. One can speculate whether the party's factional composition is changing or that the era of

'establishment' rule in the party is over or that segments of the party are abandoning traditional Republican policy views such as free trade, and, instead, are attracted to the nationalism, protectionism, and populism of Donald Trump. This uncertainty was one of the main reasons why I decided to present chapter four as an opening for debate and dialogue as opposed to attempting to provide definitive and conclusive answers to the question of the future of American politics and the Republican Party. However, despite the natural uncertainty when dealing with contemporary topics and despite the election of Trump, which has only exacerbated the uncertainty, the arguments that I have put forth in chapter four suggest that, regardless of Trump, the Republican Party at some point has to address its "demography gap" (Gyory, "Lecture I" 2). In conclusion, nobody knows exactly what the future will bring for the Republican Party and American politics in general, but it will undoubtedly be interesting and fascinating to follow how the party moves forward.

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