George W. Bush, the Republican Party, and the "New" American Party System

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Scholars have long expressed concern that the ascendance of the modern presidency since the New Deal and World War II, by hastening the decline of political parties and fostering the expansion of the administrative state, portended an era of chronically low public engagement and voter turnout and an increasingly fractious and impotent national politics. Presidents' inattentiveness to the demands of party-building and grassroots mobilization, coupled with their willingness to govern through administration, were seen as key obstacles to the revitalization of a politics based in widespread political interest and collective responsibility for public policy. This article argues that George W. Bush's potent combination of party leadership and executive administration, foreshadowed by Ronald Reagan's earlier efforts, suggests the emergence of a new presidential leadership synthesis and a "new" party system. This new synthesis does not promise a return to pre-modern party politics; rather, it indicates a rearticulation of the relationship between the presidency and the party system. The erosion of old old-style partisan politics allowed for a more national and issue-based party system to develop, forging new links between presidents and parties. As the 2006 elections reveal, however, it remains to be seen whether such parties, which are inextricably linked to executive-centered politics and governance, can perform the critical function of moderating presidential ambition and mobilizing public support for party principles and policies.

The relationship between the executive branch and the American party system has never been easy, though its dynamics and consequences have varied over the course of American political history. Before the New Deal, presidents who sought to exercise executive power expansively or perceived the need for the expansion of national administrative power were thwarted, as Stephen Skowronek has noted, "by the tenacity of [a] highly mobilized, highly competitive, and locally oriented democracy." With the consolidation of executive power during the 1930s and 1940s, the president, rather than Congress or the party organizations, became the leading instrument of popular rule—in Theodore Roosevelt's capacious phrase, "the steward of the public welfare."[1] Many analysts thus viewed the rise of the modern presidency in the wake of the Great Depression and the Second World War as signaling the end of an older institutional order based in grassroots mobilization and decentralized political control and the beginning of a permanent ascendance of national, non-partisan executive administration.[2] Others believed that the birth of the modern presidency and the "decline of parties" portended an era of chronically low public engagement and voter turnout and an increasingly fractious and impotent national politics.[3]

By the end of the 1980s, students of American political parties began to identify evidence of partisan resurgence, particularly in the Republican Party, at the organizational, congressional, and grassroots levels.[4] Moreover, the presidency of Ronald Reagan served to cast some doubt on the notion that there was a simple zero-sum conflict between robust executive administration and presidential leadership that strengthened the party.[5] Nonetheless, continuing low voter turnout, the intensification of candidate-centered (rather than party-based) campaigning, and the ongoing tension between party politics and executive administration (exacerbated by divided government in the 1980s and 1990s) appeared to reconfirm perceptions that the modern presidency was incompatible with vigorous party politics.[6]

Our observation of the presidency of George W. Bush, however, leads us to believe that the time has come for a fundamental reconsideration of the relationship between the modern presidency and the American party system. Bush has surpassed Reagan with his dramatic and unprecedented efforts to build his party at the congressional, grassroots, and organizational levels; moreover, he has challenged the ideological legacy bequeathed by his predecessor to the Republican Party. These efforts helped produce a remarkable string of electoral victories for Republicans at all levels of government; indeed, until the 2006 elections, the party was as strong as at any point since the 1920s. The Bush administration's sharp partisanship and

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mobilization efforts also played a critical part in engaging millions of Americans more deeply in national politics. At the same time, Bush has wielded the administrative presidency with great vigor, and has shown how executive administration may, in some circumstances, advance partisan objectives. Bush's potent combination of party leadership and executive administration, foreshadowed by Reagan's earlier efforts, suggests the emergence of a new presidential leadership synthesis and a "new" party system. This new synthesis does not promise a return to pre-modern party politics; rather, it indicates a rearticulation of the relationship between the presidency and the party system. The erosion of old old-style partisan politics allowed for a more national and issue-based party system to develop, forging new links between presidents and parties.

This argument unfolds in four major parts. First, we briefly describe the salient characteristics that have constituted the relationship between the president and the parties and suggest how this relationship has varied over the course of American history. This exercise provides us with the analytic leverage for distinguishing the "new" party system from both a modern executive establishment that weakens parties as well as the party politics that characterized the pre-modern era. Secondly, after acknowledging that party resurgence (particularly in the Republican Party) has origins outside the presidency, we examine the major factors that explain both the incentives prompting more executive-centered presidential party leadership and the variation in the intensity of presidential party leadership between different administrations. Third, we provide evidence for our claims of the emergence of a "new" party system characterized by new president-party relations and attempt to explain this development with a structured comparison of the party leadership of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. Comparing Reagan and Bush demonstrates that the latter's unusually vigorous party leadership is the result of his efforts to respond to salient features of the contemporary political context.

The article concludes with our assessment of the consequences of the reconfigured relationship between the president and the parties for American political development. The legitimation of the American party system grew out of an effort to curb and regulate the power of the executive. We argue that although the Reagan and Bush presidencies abetted the revitalization of partisanship and furthered the development of national, programmatic parties through the establishment of new partisan practices and institutions, it remains to be seen whether such parties, which are inextricably linked to executive-centered politics and governance, can perform the critical function of moderating presidential ambition and mobilizing public support for party principles and policies.[7] Bush's experience as president, especially, demonstrates that the merging of executive power and partisanship holds both promise and peril for the practice of American democracy.

Our empirical analysis relies extensively on more than 20 in-depth interviews with officials in the Bush-Cheney '04 campaign, the Bush administration, the John Kerry-John Edwards '04 campaign, and conservative interest groups conducted by the authors, PBS Frontline, and Harvard's Institute of Politics, as well as a wealth of secondary material drawn from newspapers and academic analyses. Interviews with campaign and administration insiders provide unusual insight into the dynamics of Bush's party leadership, allowing us to counter some of the limits inherent in the exclusive use of secondary sources; at the same time, the use of secondary material allows us to check the validity of the information we glean from interview sources.[8]

Executive Power and Partisanship

A tension between executive administration and partisanship emerged with the rise of the first political parties, which sought from the start to modify the constitutional role of the presidency. The architects of the Constitution established a nonpartisan presidency which, with the support of the Senate and judiciary, was intended to play the leading institutional role in checking and controlling "the violence of faction" that the Framers feared would rend the fabric of representative government.[9] The parties, in contrast, were deliberately welded to the Constitution by Jeffersonian and Jacksonian reformers to restrain executive ambition and to keep power close enough to the people for representative government to prevail.[10] The party system that prospered during the nineteenth century thus imposed a brake on the expansion of national administrative power, promoting collective consideration of public policy and ensuring that citizens would play an active part in self-government.[11] The price paid for the dominance of localized parties, however, was a national government largely unresponsive to the challenges posed by economic insecurity, civil rights, and the United States' growing prominence in world affairs.

Viewed as contributing to democratic reform at their founding, political parties came under attack as an obstacle to popular sovereignty by the end of the nineteenth century: the localized, highly mobilized party system posed a formidable roadblock to progressive reformers who considered the expansion of national administrative power essential to economic and political reform.[12] Indeed, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, most progressives looked to a "modern" presidency, emancipated from the suffocating grip of the decentralized parties, to become the principal agent of political, economic, and social reconstruction.[13]

The "burden" of party was finally relieved during the New Deal. Although he considered establishing a national, executive oriented party as a means for pursuing national purposes, strong resistance by locally-oriented congressional Democrats led Franklin Roosevelt to build a more

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progressive form of government within a reconstituted executive office rather than through a vital connection between the president and Congress.[14] The consequences of Roosevelt's and his successors' emphasis on administration for party politics were profound. The gradual institutionalization of the presidency, beginning with the Executive Reorganization Act of 1939, enacted after a bitter two year struggle with Congress, led to the creation of the Executive Office of the President and the White House Office—the "West Wing"—which codified a development in which presidents no longer ran for office and governed as the head of a party; instead, they campaigned and sought to enact programs as the head of a personal organization that they created in their own image. These organizations now carried out tasks party leaders and organizations once performed, such as staffing the executive branch, connecting the president to interest groups, formulating public policy, directing campaigns, and, perhaps most important, enabling the president to communicate directly with the people. The displacement of party politics by executive administration was further prompted by the programmatic commitments of the New Deal Liberalism, which were conceived as entitlements and thus protected from the vagaries of partisan politics, and the emergence of a national security state in response to World War II and the threat of international communism.[15]

Although these developments resulted in a more active and better equipped national state, they also had troubling consequences for American democracy. They encouraged presidents to pursue their programmatic aspirations through executive administration rather than through collaboration with Congress and the parties, and thus devalued collective responsibility for programmatic ambition. As the parties declined, the presidency has evolved, or degenerated, into a rhetorical and plebiscitary office, speaking directly to and for the people, which has weakened constitutional and legal constraints on executive power.[16] The unfulfilled promise of the "personal presidency" has contributed to an ongoing crisis in public confidence in government evident in declining political participation and decreased public satisfaction with government performance.[17]

Significantly, however, the erosion of old-style partisan politics with the coming of the New Deal allowed a more national and issue-oriented party system to develop. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the modern presidency's apparent hostility to party politics, major features of the nationalized party system emerged independently, if not in spite of, the White House's political ambitions.[18] In an effort that supplemented rather than challenged the increasingly candidate-centered campaign,[19] party organizations underwent a transformation from locally-based engines of mass mobilization to nationally-oriented "vendors" of campaign services.[20] At the same time, the national parties used their enhanced resources as leverage to rein in state and local affiliates.[21] As a result of these processes, the traditional apparatus of both parties, based on patronage and state and local interests, gradually gave way to a more hierarchically-organized, programmatic party politics, based on the national organization, by the late 1980s.[22] Congressional partisanship also intensified greatly in the 1980s and 1990s compared to the 1970s, as increasing ideological homogeneity within each party promoted greater interparty conflict.[23] Robust party organizational activity at all levels and intensifying congressional partisanship contributed to a resurgence in mass partisanship beginning in the 1980s, albeit not to the high levels observed in the heyday of mass partisanship in the 1950s.[24]

Although these service parties were strong organizationally, they were much less attentive to voter mobilization and participation than traditional organizations had been, so much so that citizen engagement declined to disturbingly low levels.[25] Nor did the national programmatic parties clearly strengthen collective responsibility in government. A strong emphasis on candidate-centered campaigning (an emphasis reinforced by the new service parties) limited the effectiveness of national party organizations to achieve collective responsibility—within Congress or between the Congress and White House—in the formulation, enactment, and administration of policy programs.[26] Moreover, on the whole, modern presidents tended to blunt these party-building efforts.[27] Modern executives, especially Democrats but, to an important extent Republicans as well, tended to downplay their party identification, thereby likely dampening partisan identification and voter mobilization; failed to attend to party-building or took measures that eroded others' party-building efforts; generally refrained from partisan campaigning; and, driven by the pressures of divided government,[28] often engaged in controversial administrative politics that loosened collective responsibility for policy and undermined public confidence in the president's party.[29] Thus, despite considerable evidence of party resurgence, there seemed to be ample reconfirmation of the belief that the modern presidency did not contribute to, and, in fact, may have obstructed the development of a new party system.

When Will Presidents Become Strong Party Leaders?

Indeed, modern presidents have strong incentives to seek to govern through executive administration and downplay party leadership. Identifying with one's party may be risky if the party is unpopular or if office can be won without doing so. The modern presidency offers the promise, however fleeting, of unilateral policymaking power, while party consultation and cooperation with party leaders and members of Congress may require unacceptable compromises with the White House's political objectives.

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Moreover, partisan campaigning, organization-building, and grassroots mobilization are costly and time-consuming ventures, and may not necessarily offer presidents much in return, especially if modern candidate-centered campaigns are perceived as effective means of acquiring and maintaining political power.

With the development of more national and issue-oriented parties, however, the potential exists to forge new links between presidents and their parties, should presidents' ambitions and the political environment shift in ways that promote greater cooperation. We argue that modern presidents will become stronger party leaders—committed to strengthening their party's national committees, working with their partisan brethren in Congress, and appealing to the party's supporters—if their ambitions extend far beyond office-seeking or if the political environment changes in ways that presidents perceive as undermining the efficacy of non-partisan styles of campaigning and governance.

Ronald Reagan's presidency was notable because it suggested that modern executive administration and robust party leadership were not wholly incompatible. Reagan was the first modern president to pose fundamental challenges to received governing arrangements, a stance which required the support of a national, programmatic Republican party and therefore created incentives for presidential party-building. Nonetheless, he faced a political environment that was somewhat less ripe for party building than did his self-styled heir apparent, George W. Bush. Bush came to office with the ambition to make his own distinctive mark on the conservative movement; in addition, he faced an environment in which electoral margins were razor-thin, old campaign strategies were cast in doubt, comparative organizational weaknesses were strongly perceived, and unified government presented the possibility of more cooperative partisan decision-making. The combination of these incentives drove Bush to a new level of party leadership, and encouraged him to make use of executive administration in ways that, at least in the short run, strengthened his party and gave further impetus to the development of a new party system.

Ronald Reagan's Limited Reconstruction of President-Party Relations

Reagan was the first Republican president in the modern era—indeed, the first modern president—to issue a fundamental challenge to the emphasis that the New Deal and Great Society placed on administration and entitlements, thus setting the stage for a possible revitalization of party politics.[30] The president's basic message, which he emphasized consistently throughout his career, was that centrally administered government demoralized and enervated its citizenry.[31] According to Reagan, the responsibility of the president and the Republican Party was to remove the regulatory barriers that suppressed private initiative and to reduce the public subsidies that weakened individual self-reliance.[32] Given his ideological ambitions, Reagan had an incentive to strengthen the national Republican organization, because the fulfillment of his vision required a strong party to mobilize voters and create public support for his values and policies.

However, the environmental incentives for presidential party leadership were not as compelling as those that George W. Bush would face. In 1980, Reagan confronted a Democratic incumbent presiding over the effective collapse of the New Deal Democratic coalition (a collapse which had its roots in the 1960s), a stagnating economy, the apparent decline of the United States' prestige in foreign affairs, and the Iran hostage crisis.[33] Carter's own private polls showed that Americans favored the election of a new president by a 2-to-1 margin.[34] In 1984, the situation had changed little at the presidential level. Reagan was a formidable incumbent: as president, he had achieved a massive tax cut, a substantial reduction in inflation, a successful invasion of Grenada, and the economy was improving. The Democratic coalition was still in disarray, with Mondale achieving the presidential nomination only after a bruising primary fight.[35] Thus, in both 1980 and 1984, Reagan had strong reasons to believe that the margin of electoral victory would not be so close as to necessitate a massive investment in party-building.

Moreover, the election campaigns of 1980 and 1984 were characterized by a lopsided organizational environment: due to the GOP's heavy investment in party organization from the late 1960s to the early 1980s and the cresting of the Conservative Movement by the early 1980s, Republicans were perceived to have a strong organizational advantage (both in terms of technical capacity and grassroots organization).[36] This perception reduced Reagan's incentives to involve himself in the improvement of Republicans' organization. In addition, characteristics of the electorate suggested that the incentives for extensive use of partisan campaigning and extensive investment in party organization were far less powerful than they would be during the tenure of George W. Bush. The comparatively large number of political independents and conservative Democrats encouraged the deployment of candidate-centered, mass media campaigns rather than straightforwardly partisan appeals, which were perceived as ineffective in such an environment.[37] Finally, while during Reagan's tenure Republicans had a legitimate shot at winning control of the Senate (and, in fact, they did so during this period), the House of Representatives appeared firmly under the control of the Democrats. Thus, Reagan could reasonably anticipate facing divided government throughout his tenure, a fact which reduced considerably his investment in the fate of his congressional colleagues, and thereby weakened his incentives to engage in party-building for

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their benefit. In short, the electoral environment provided only modest incentives to engage in energetic presidential party leadership.

The Contributions of Reagan's Party Building Project for Party Politics

Rhetoric: Undermining New Deal ideology and popularizing conservatism. Reagan's call for a departure from the New Deal political order, seemingly ratified by sweeping electoral victories in 1980 and 1984, had important consequences for his party and the party system. To be sure, Reagan's presidency would never fundamentally threaten the New Deal state.[38] As Hugh Heclo has noted, Reagan's rhetoric had a serious "blind spot" in that it failed to come to terms with the rise of "big government" as an important reality of modern America.[39] Still, as Paul Allen Beck explains, "[Reagan's] assault on big government put liberalism on the defensive and lent such respectability to conservative ideas that they permeated the public more deeply than ever before."[40] Reagan's forceful rhetoric thus fundamentally altered the national political agenda, placing Republican issues such as tax and budget cuts, defense spending, and traditional morality at the center of American politics.[41] Moreover, by showing that conservative rhetorical appeals could lead to electoral victory, Reagan helped remove the last remnants of resistance to the party's move toward ideological conservatism initiated by Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign;[42] by the same token, Reagan's electoral triumphs "force[d] the party of liberalism to search on his ground for some new identity, a 'New' Democratic party."[43] Significantly, the only Democratic presidential candidate to be elected to two terms since the Reagan "revolution"—Bill Clinton—recurrently promised voters a fundamental departure from core liberal commitments.[44]

Strengthening the party organization. Although the national party organizations suffered at the hands of presidents such as Roosevelt, Johnson, and Nixon, all of whom considered partisanship an obstacle to their ambition, Reagan was unusually concerned with nurturing party responsibility and organization.[45] Reagan's efforts were hardly *de novo*: due especially to the efforts of Bill Brock, who served as Chairman of the Republican National Committee from 1976 to 1980, Reagan inherited a formidable organizational apparatus, which displayed unprecedented strength at the national level.[46]

Significantly, Reagan broke with the tradition of the modern presidency and identified closely with his party: as the party's presidential candidate in 1980, he posed with Republican congressional candidates on the steps of the Capitol "to symbolize his association with the entire party ticket."[47] After achieving election, Reagan played the part of party unifier by incorporating key personnel from his primary opponent George H.W. Bush's campaign organization into his administration.[48] Moreover, between the 1980 election and the 1982 midterm, Reagan's pick for the RNC chairmanship, Richard Richards, implemented a novel organizational and fundraising apparatus that significantly boosted Republicans' party capacity;[49] in the view of Gary Jacobson, these organizational improvements helped stave off an electoral disaster in 1982 that could have come as a result of the recession.[50] Following the Republicans' disappointing showing in 1982, Reagan made a successful effort to ensconce allies in the Republican National Committee and the Republican Senatorial Committee, which enabled the administration to improve the coordination of campaign efforts and policy development without undermining the GOP's organizational strength.[51] Reagan's allies at the RNC oversaw the expansion of the Party's direct mail fundraising, which grew from a base of twenty-four thousand contributors in 1975 to over two million by the mid-1980s, as well as a dramatic increase in its technical, organizational, and grassroots capacities.[52]

Reagan worked hard to strengthen the Republicans' organizational and popular base, surprising his own White House political director with his "total readiness" to raise funds and make speeches for the party and its candidates.[53] As one account has it,

> in 1983 and 1984 during his own reelection effort, Reagan made more than two dozen campaign and fundraising appearances for all branches of the party organization and candidates at every level . . . [and] during the pitched and ultimately losing battle to retain control of the Senate for the Republicans in 1986, Reagan played the good soldier, visiting twenty-two key states repeatedly and raising $33 million for the party and its candidates.[54]

By actively lending his popularity to efforts to strengthen the organization and resource base of the Republican Party, Reagan contributed to the widening organizational advantage enjoyed by Republicans during the 1980s that helped improve the performance of Republican candidates at all levels of government.[55]

Expanding the Republican coalition. Reagan's rhetoric and attention to party building were joined to important policy changes that served to disrupt the old Democratic coalition and forge new ties between the Republican Party and important constituencies. Tax cuts, coupled with dramatically increased defense spending, led to an increasing federal deficit, which constrained Democrats' ability to provide resources and programs to constituents.[56] Reagan's deregulatory program weakened the position of key Democratic constituencies, such as environmentalists and consumers.[57] Through a variety of measures, the administration also "sought to undercut, if not destroy, the position and authority of organized labor in order to weaken its bargaining position vis-à-vis business."[58]

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Just as Reagan's policies imposed strains on the Democratic coalition, so did his rhetoric and policies—which linked traditional Republican anti-statist appeals and "New Right" positions on abortion, defense, guns, school prayer, and other social issues—serve to broaden Republicans' electoral appeal with Southern whites, big business, working class voters (especially union workers and Catholics), and the suburban middle class.[59] Due to his identification with evangelicalism and his staunch anticommunism, Reagan significantly advanced the gradual migration of Southern whites into the Republican Party.[60] Reagan also made a largely successful effort to unify the business community, "[taking] advantage of the dissatisfaction of big business with high taxes and growing regulation to reattach it to small business as part of the Republican coalition."[61]

Working class voters were wooed with a two-pronged strategy. Having weakened the links between Democrats and the working class by attacking labor unions, Reagan and the Republicans sought to attract blue collar voters by emphasizing moral issues and patriotism.[62] The strategy ultimately won the Republican president "a majority of Catholic voters and nonunion blue-collar households, as well as 46 percent of the union vote" in 1984.[63] Reagan's Republican Party also made considerable inroads among middle-class suburbanite voters, in large part by encouraging them to think of themselves as benefactors of social programs consumed by others rather than as beneficiaries themselves.[64] Riding on the coattails of Reagan's two presidential victories, George H.W. Bush, Reagan's chosen successor, retained much of this new coalition in 1988,[65] while George W. Bush would later count Reagan's coalition as the base from which he would seek to expand.

The Limits of Reagan's Party Leadership

Downplaying partisan appeals and avoiding partisan campaigning. Despite his ideological ambitions, Reagan failed at key moments to present his programs in the strongly partisan terms that would give voters a compelling reason to endorse enduring Republican leadership or a fundamental reshaping of liberal programs.[66] His 1984 reelection campaign deliberately relied on the feel-good theme "It's Morning Again in America" rather than on sharp issue stands that clarified the choice between Democratic and Republican views of the future.[67] Reagan's decision to engage in what was ultimately a personalistic, media driven campaign rather than an ideological, partisan-based one was motivated by his campaign's belief that, given Reagan's personal popularity, the weakness of partisan bonds, and the high rate of political independence, this type of campaign was a sufficient—indeed, perhaps ideal—means to achieve electoral victory. Rather than invoke partisanship, as Walter Dean Burnham argued in a post-mortem of the campaign, "Reagan's [1984] campaign was a classic replication of that well-known incumbents' ploy in economically good and socially quiet election years: 'You've never had it so good.'"[68]

In the view of party politicians, Reagan's failure to emphasize the differences between Republicans and Democrats and to make a strong case for his conservative programs may have helped weaken Republican efforts to complete the "Reagan Revolution."[69] Though he won a stunning personal triumph in 1984, carrying 49 states, Republicans actually lost two seats in the Senate and regained a net of only 14 of the 27 House seats they had lost in the 1982 midterm elections. Of course, effective gerrymandering of congressional districts by Democratic state legislatures and the incumbency advantage (a record 96 percent of all incumbents won re-election) during a period of economic prosperity also contributed significantly to the disappointing (from Republicans' perspective) outcome.[70] Nonetheless, the Reagan administration's personalistic politics drained a popular president's re-election campaign of the broad political meaning that might have boosted the fortunes of Republican congressional candidates and posed hard challenges to the institutional arrangements that ensconced the Democrats in the House.

Similarly, although the president made considerable efforts to help elect Republican candidates in the 1986 midterm elections, Reagan, as one disaffected Republican congressman put it, voiced the "same feel good, empty rhetoric that dominated the 1984 race."[71] Indeed, the White House ordered the Republican National Committee to avoid a national partisan campaign.[72] The results from the 1986 midterm were even more disappointing for Republican congressional candidates than those of 1984, as the party lost eight seats and its majority in the Senate. By that point, the weakening economy shifted the electoral advantage to the Democrats; but many conservative Republicans and party strategists complained bitterly that the White House's discouragement of a more national partisan campaign gave Democrats the opportunity to benefit from the economic insecurity of important groups—in particular, farmers in the Midwest and West as well as textile workers in the upper south.[73] After the weakening of Republican congressional strength, "at no point during Reagan's final four years in office would he conjure up the same intensity or unity he had in 1981."[74] Indeed, without a strong Republican congressional presence to reinforce and advance his reconstructive ambitions (itself a product in part of the Reagan's desire to transcend partisan politics), the president was increasingly forced to retreat to administrative politics, which, while advancing some core Republican policy objectives, also undermined collective responsibility and ultimately threatened the stability of the Republican coalition.

Reagan's administrative politics—undercutting Republican governance. Spurred on by the limits imposed by divided government and by his belief that a strong national state

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was necessary to foster growth, oppose communism, and nurture family values, the Reagan White House often relied on executive administration to achieve its policy objectives. Reagan's presidency presupposed that an institutionalized presidency forged for liberal purposes could be redeployed for conservative ends; however, ill-conceived administrative maneuvers short-circuited the legislative process, weakened collaboration between different elements of the party, and undercut public support for the GOP.[75]

The president used a variety of administrative mechanisms to achieve his policy goals apart from collaborative or partisan channels. Reagan "pursued a campaign to maximize presidential control over the federal bureaucracy that was more self-conscious in design and execution, and more comprehensive in scope, than that of any other administration in the modern era."[76] Indeed, many of the president's signature policies (such as the tax and budget cuts of 1981 and the "New Federalism" of 1982) were developed primarily in the Executive Office of the President, in the absence of serious consultation with the relevant administrative agencies, Republican members of Congress, or party officials.[77] Reagan also attempted to subordinate the executive branch to his will by instituting a highly centralized process for staffing important positions within the federal bureaucracy.[78] These controversial appointees ostensibly controlled the behavior of career civil servants and advanced Reagan's objectives of reducing environmental regulations and rolling back certain civil rights programs.[79] Finally, Reagan "made frequent use of executive orders to impose his agenda to the fullest extent possible *without congressional action*, especially in the regulatory sphere," thereby bypassing substantial congressional opposition, which included many members of his own party, to his policy goals.[80]

To a degree, Reagan's administrative presidency furthered Republican goals, many of which could not have been achieved through collaboration with Congress, given Democrats' stranglehold on the House of Representatives.[81] Nonetheless, Reagan's administrative presidency often threatened the collaborative, deliberative politics central to coherent conceptions of partisanship, and, significantly, undermined the Republican Party. Indeed, the scope of the efforts by the administration to impose its will through the bureaucracy suggested that Reagan's reformist ambitions outstripped the limited agreements that could be forged in a fragmented political system.[82] Equally important, the politics of administration embraced by Reagan and his advisors recurrently blunted Republican efforts to forge a durable majority coalition. As previous analysts have discussed at length, the administration's most ambitious administrative maneuvers—its efforts to cut Social Security and Disability benefits and support Contra insurgents in Nicaragua—produced politically debilitating embarrassments for the president and his party when Congress (and the public) overwhelmingly repudiated them.[83]

Reagan thus left an ambiguous legacy of party leadership. We would suggest that this ambiguity was driven in part by the fact that he lacked the full panoply of incentives for engaging in more sweeping party leadership. Though his ambition to construct a new political order spurred unusual attention to party-building, the limited prospects for party-building during the 1980s ultimately moderated Reagan's appetite for partisan leadership; moreover, the administrative powers available to the modern executive tempted Reagan to make policy unilaterally, at the expense of collaboration with Republicans and moderate Democrats in Congress.

Toward a New Party System? George W. Bush's Extensive Reconstruction of President-Party Relations

Though he came to the presidency following a contested election that was effectively decided by the Supreme Court, George W. Bush had no intention of governing modestly. Indeed, as George C. Edwards noted in a recent assessment of the Bush presidency, "George W. Bush has tried to lead a revolution in public policy. He has broken from the incremental, fiscally prudent, and moderate approaches that characterized the presidencies of both his father and Bill Clinton. Instead, he has boldly re-examined and challenged the basic tenets of decades of foreign, economic, and domestic policy."[84] Thus, though his attempted "revolution" is different in kind than that of Ronald Reagan, Bush's outsized ambition provided considerable motivation to exercise strong party leadership: a strengthened party could, in principle, provide the organization and infrastructure for the cultivation of grassroots support for his project.

In addition to the incentives created by his political ambition, Bush has been faced by a political environment that diverges sharply from that of his predecessor. First of all, given the experience with the 2000 presidential election, Bush and his strategists anticipated that the 2004 election would be extremely close.[85] Second, the president and his strategists perceived that mass partisanship had increased and that the proportion of political independents in the electorate had declined dramatically.[86] Third, though Republicans believed they possessed many organizational advantages over their opponents, they had been unpleasantly surprised by the strength of the Democrats' grassroots organization in 2000: top Republican strategists had expected to win outright, and credited the Democrats' achievement of a popular vote victory to a superior grassroots effort by Democratic affiliates (in particular, by organized labor). Finally, unlike Reagan, Bush came to office enjoying unified government and the possibility of extending this situation into the future, which gave him a considerable stake in the fate of his congressional partisans. The dramatic Republican triumph in the

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1994 elections, in which the GOP took control of the House and Senate for the first time forty-two years, meant that Bush was greeted by a militantly partisan and seasoned Republican majority on taking office. Bush's fragile, controversial victory in 2000, which had little if anything to do with the Republicans' ability to retain their majorities in both congressional chambers, made him far more dependent on his partisan brethren in the legislature than Ronald Reagan had been.[87]

These environmental conditions encouraged a much greater attention to party-building by President Bush. As our interview evidence shows, the first three conditions cast fundamental doubt on the efficacy of the candidate-centered campaign and encouraged much greater presidential attention to party organization, voter mobilization and participation, and partisan campaigning. The possibility of enjoying unified government also created a greater presidential investment in partisan campaigning and permitted greater opportunities for collective responsibility for government action as well as the use of executive administration for partisan ends.

The Strengths of Bush's Party Leadership

Bush's rhetorical leadership. The Bush White House believed that building an enduring Republican majority required redressing Reagan's "blind spot" to the important role government had come to play in people's lives.[88] Thus, Bush embraced a "compassionate conservatism" designed to soften the harsh anti-government edge of the Republican Party. Rather than curtail New Deal and Great Society entitlements, as the Reagan administration and the Gingrich-led 104th Congress attempted, Bush sought to recast them in a conservative image.[89] His hope has been to cement ties between the Republican Party and groups that have conservative instincts but which, for one reason or another, need government help. For example, religious organizations have felt that they have been unfairly disadvantaged in obtaining federal funds to help those in need. In response Bush instituted a "faith based" initiative to change federal and state regulations to permit private "faith-based" charitable organizations to play a larger role in providing government services to drug addicts, homeless persons, pregnant teenagers, and other disadvantaged members of society. As he had done in Texas, Bush sought to rally conservatives around the idea of making schools better by making them more demanding. Rather than eliminate the Department of Education, as the Reagan administration proposed to do, the Bush administration championed the No Child Left Behind Act, passed in 2001, which holds all schools accountable to standards set by the federal government. In response to pressure from the elderly, he fought for the enactment of an extremely costly expansion to Medicare, the 2003 addition of prescription drugs coverage.

On their face, Bush's proposals bore a striking resemblance to Clinton's rhetoric during the 1992 and 1996 elections, while programs that embodied his words—especially his reform proposals for education, social services, and welfare—closely mirrored ideas incubated at the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), a centrist political group, that gave rise to Clinton's policy initiatives.[90] However, the similarities end there. While Clinton and the DLC were highly ambivalent, if not avowedly hostile, to partisanship,[91] Bush embraced "compassionate conservatism" as a doctrine that he and his close advisors hoped would strengthen the appeal of the Republican Party.[92] Bush's rhetoric and policy proposals, his top political strategist Karl Rove claimed, were a deliberate attempt to play to conservative values "without being reflexively antigovernment."[93] In fact, as Michael Gerson, Bush's principal speech writer, argued, the president's rhetoric did not try to "split the difference between liberalism and conservatism," but rather conveyed how "activist government could be used for conservative ends."[94] Bush's willingness to exploit the power and independence of the modern presidency to broaden the political appeal of received Republican commitments suggests the potential of the office as a mechanism for consolidating support for a broader partisan order rather than merely for its occupant.

Partisan Campaigns, Party Organization Building, Grassroots Mobilization, and Partisan Use of Administration. Faced with a very different set of environmental incentives, Bush's devotion to party development has outstripped that of Reagan, and his actions demonstrate the enormous potential of the presidency as an instrument of party-building. As president, Bush has made unprecedented efforts to recruit Republican candidates, engage in partisan campaigning, and utilize the administrative presidency to achieve partisan objectives. Arguably, Bush's attention to party has helped Republicans acquire new organizational advantages against their Democratic counterparts and to advance the development of a strong national Republican machine—the vanguard of a transformed party system.

The depth of the president's commitment to building his party was first made evident during the 2002 midterm election campaign. Convinced by Vermont Senator James Jeffords' defection from the Republican Caucus (which gave control of the Senate to Democrats in May 2001) that his best chance to lead Congress was to regain control of the Senate, Bush threw himself into the campaign earlier and more energetically than any president in history. The White House involved itself deeply in the cultivation of Republican candidates for national office, often intervening in state party politics to do so.[95] Like Bush's rhetoric, the White House's recruitment of candidates was pragmatic, indicating a strong attentiveness to the exigencies of party-building.[96] Indeed, Bush and Rove recruited and supported the primary campaigns of more "electable"

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moderates whom militant conservatives such as Steven Moore, the president of the Club for Growth, scorned as unwanted "RINOs" (Republicans In Name Only).[97]

During the 2002 campaign, Bush revealed an enthusiasm for his partisan responsibilities—in particular, for partisan campaigning, strengthening party organization, and voter mobilization—that far surpassed Reagan's efforts. Like Reagan, Bush was unusually active in raising money for Republican candidates, helping Republicans achieve a decisive financial advantage over their opponents.[98] However, the president also made an unparalleled effort to lend the popularity he enjoyed in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks to his congressional partisans: he made 108 campaign stops on behalf of 26 House candidates and 20 candidates for the Senate.[99] In the final five days before the election, the president traveled 10,000 miles in a whirlwind tour across 15 states and 17 cities to stump for Republican candidates, an unprecedented display of presidential campaigning in an off-year election.[100] Significantly, Bush concentrated his campaign visits in the most competitive races, with the hope that his prestige might make the difference for marginal Republican candidates.[101]

In a striking departure from his predecessor Ronald Reagan, Bush also effectively exploited national issues for partisan gain during the 2002 campaign. The president's blitzkrieg in the final days of the campaign trumpeted his proposal for a new Department of Homeland Security, attacking Democratic Senators who had stalled legislation to create a new department. Although both parties supported a homeland security department in principle, congressional Democrats had resisted the Bush administration's insistence that the president be vested with power to suspend collective bargaining rules for departmental employees.[102] In response, Bush charged that the Democrats were putting "special interests" ahead of the interests of the American people, thus linking Democrats to weakness in the face of a national security threat.[103]

Finally, Bush moved to redress significant shortcomings in the Republicans' grassroots organization and mobilization strategy. Believing that they were out-organized "on the ground" by Democrats in the 2000 election, Bush and his political advisors enlisted the support of the RNC in putting together an impressive grass roots mobilization in the midterm elections.[104] Whereas Democrats since the New Deal had relied on auxiliary party organizations like labor unions to get out the vote, the GOP created a national partisan organization to mobilize support. Depending on volunteers, albeit closely monitored ones, and face-to-face appeals in the states and localities, the Republicans greatly strengthened the national Republican machine, preparing the groundwork for an even more ambitious national grass roots campaign during the 2004 elections.[105]

The results of the election seemed to vindicate Bush's decision to campaign vigorously on behalf of his fellow partisans. The Republicans gained two seats in the Senate, transforming them from minority to majority status, and increased their majority in the House of Representatives.[106] The GOP also emerged from the elections with more state legislative seats than the Democrats for the first time in half a century. The evidence suggests that Bush's considerable efforts made a difference. Due to the president's influence, Republicans presented an unusually strong slate of candidates, putting them in a favorable position to pick up seats in the election.[107] Bush's vigorous campaigning may have benefited the candidates he visited during the campaign;[108] moreover, his unprecedented intervention in congressional contests went far to transform the election into a referendum on his presidency, which the public, in the immediate aftermath of September 11, rated very highly.[109] Bush's exploitation of the Homeland Security issue, reinforced by negative television ads, would prove especially important in defeating incumbent Democratic senators in Georgia and Missouri.[110] Perhaps most significantly, as numerous analysts have shown, the Republicans' get out the vote efforts during the 2002 election campaign were central to their success at the polls.[111]

Unlike Ronald Reagan's efforts on behalf of Republicans in 1986, therefore, Bush's intervention in the 2002 congressional elections employed rhetoric and tactics dedicated to a partisan victory. Following the election, Bush continued to embrace his responsibility as a party leader, attending carefully to the GOP organization, especially to its capacity to mobilize Republican loyalists. During his first term, Bush broke Reagan's record for attracting first-time contributors to the Republican Party.[112] The Bush White House also worked assiduously to expand the Republicans' political base. At the administration's request, the RNC focused on registering new Republicans between 2002 and 2004, increasing the party rolls by 3.4 million voters.[113]

Recognizing the value of unified government, Bush entered the 2004 presidential campaign hoping to further strengthen the party's majorities in the House and Senate and increase the number of Republican state legislators and governorships.[114] Eschewing the "soft focus" issues that dominated Reagan's re-election campaign, the Bush White House once again sought to make the president's personal leadership a partisan issue. The president's strong leadership in Iraq and the War on Terrorism, his campaign strategist Matthew Dowd argued, was championed in the campaign not to elevate Bush as a Commander In Chief who stood apart from partisan conflict, but, instead, to highlight the Republicans' advantage over Democrats on matters of national security. The extraordinary Bush-Cheney get out the vote efforts were also highly partisan. Rather than merely focusing on "swing voters" who could be persuaded to vote for the president for reasons particular to Bush's candidacy, the grassroots organization, in coordination with the Republican party committees,

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emphasized reaching and turning out "lazy Republicans" who were predisposed to vote for Republicans at all levels but who were unreliable in their voting habits.[115] As we discuss below, the grassroots organization was extremely successful in locating, targeting, and mobilizing latent Republicans.

Clearly, then, Bush's attention to the health of his party organization has far surpassed that of Reagan. Crucially, however, the differences between Bush and Reagan are of quality, not just of quantity. Driven by an array of environmental incentives as well as by ideological ambition, Bush has developed new partisan practices (exhaustive partisan campaigning on behalf of congressional candidates, extensive intervention in congressional primaries, deliberate use of political issues for collective partisan gain) and new institutions (the national grassroots organization) that indicate an easing of the tension, indeed, a growing synergy between the modern presidency and the party system.

Strengthening the Republican coalition. Bush benefited substantially from the legacy of coalition-building bequeathed by Ronald Reagan. By the time Bush entered office, the groups that Reagan had reached out to with such success (such as big business, tax cut advocates, evangelicals/social conservatives and Southerners) had become mainstream Republican constituencies;[116] indeed, Bush continued to benefit extensively from the coalition assembled by his predecessor, particularly those voters who came of age during the Reagan years.[117] Moreover, as President, Bush followed many of Reagan's coalition-building strategies, most clearly in his systematic efforts to weaken organized labor.[118]

Bush could not simply follow in Reagan's footsteps, however. The ambition to redefine Republican conservatism and achieve an enduring Republican political order evident in Bush's rhetoric entailed a difficult balancing act between partisanship geared to satisfy core constituencies and the bipartisan cooperation necessary to reach out to new groups. Given his understanding of the political environment, it is unsurprising that early in his presidency Bush chose to identify with his party's strong ideological leaders in Congress, hoping to solidify his base of support before reaching out to independent voters. The president persuaded Congress to enact the leading conservative plank in his 2000 platform, a ten-year, $1.5 trillion tax cut. He also placed a strong emphasis on traditional conservative issues such as regulatory relief, energy production, and missile defense. This strategy risked estranging moderate Republicans (such as Jeffords) and alienating public opinion, which considered cutting taxes a lower priority than attending to longstanding social issues such as education and health care.[119]

Bush reaped the rewards of his early strategy of partisan conservatism, however. His proposed tax reforms were strongly supported by important Republican constituencies which cared much more about tax cuts than about the deficits they might produce.[120] According to some Republican activists, Bush's tax cuts were—in addition to being the product of philosophical commitment—a means for maintaining the Republican coalition.[121] Although some Republican groups expressed discomfort at Bush's embrace of "big government" in his sponsorship of education and Medicare reform, there is little doubt that the tax cuts were critical to their strong support of the White House.[122]

Nonetheless, the Bush White House also has made self-conscious efforts to break from Republican orthodoxy in order to forge an enduring Republican majority.[123] Stung by Jeffords' defection and the loss of the Senate to the Democrats, Bush sought to reach out to moderate voters with initiatives that impinged on issues traditionally "owned" by Democrats. As noted above, Bush strayed from Reaganites' visceral dislike of government not only in his commitment to faith-based initiatives (which were heavily favored by Christian conservative groups) and education reform (which received the overwhelming approval of strategically important state governors),[124] but also in his support for adding a prescription drug program to Medicare (which attracted the support of the interest group behemoth AARP).[125] Even his most spectacular domestic policy failure, the doomed effort to reform Social Security, reflected Bush's effort to meld liberal and conservative themes to broaden the attractiveness of Republican values. In the wake of his victory in the 2004 election, Bush proposed not to cut social security benefits, as Reagan had once attempted and paid dearly for, but, rather, to "privatize" them, allowing workers under age 55 to divert some of their Social Security payroll taxes into personal retirement accounts. This reform, the White House claimed, would yield a better rate of return on funds dedicated to Social Security benefits; equally important, the personal retirement accounts would recast the core New Deal entitlement as a vehicle by which individuals would assume greater responsibility to plan for their own retirement. Nonetheless, the national government would still have forced people to save, controlled the investment choices they made, and regulated the rate of withdrawals, thereby preserving core features of the original liberal program.[126]

Successfully exploited by Bush and his party for partisan advantage, the War on Terrorism served to strengthen the Republican coalition. Bush's aggressive foreign policy posture has attracted the support of Americans who were sympathetic to Reagan's muscular diplomacy.[127] Bush's foreign policy also served to confirm the support of evangelical Christians, who have received unprecedented influence in its formulation.[128] But an aggressive foreign policy cultivated support beyond the Republican base: during his first term Bush's response to 9/11 contributed to across-the-board Republican gains in partisan identification (except among African-Americans), in particular among important Democratic constituencies such as white Catholics and Hispanics.[129] Predictably, then, congressional

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Republicans benefited tremendously from public confidence in the president's management of the War on Terrorism in the 2002 midterm elections. The 2004 presidential election also seemed to testify to the enhanced strength of the Republican coalition during Bush's "wartime" presidency. Although the results of the 2004 election indicated that the divisions between Republicans and Democrats appeared to have deepened and become more widespread since 2000, the rough parity between the parties had clearly given way to a small but decisive Republican edge. While the conventional wisdom claimed that "moral values" tipped the election to Bush and the Republican Party, the best evidence suggests that Bush's leadership on Iraq and the War on Terrorism was far more important.[130]

Since Bush's reelection, the Republican coalition has shown severe signs of strain, as the War in Iraq, the Hurricane Katrina debacle, the failed Harriet Miers nomination, and scandals have eroded Bush's public approval ratings. Important libertarian conservative groups have grown increasingly frustrated with Bush's "big government conservatism," which they perceive as an abdication of conservative principles in pursuit of the elusive "centrist" voter.[131] At the same time, social conservatives have grown frustrated with the administration's willingness to soft-pedal some issues of importance to them (abortion, same-sex marriage, and so forth) in a pragmatic effort to maintain ties to libertarians and more moderate voters.[132] Republican business elites and the mass base also have split over the issue of immigration reform, with business interests seeking a guest worker program that would accommodate illegal immigrants and the Republican base desiring a policy emphasizing border security and the removal of undocumented workers.[133] More recently, as we discuss at greater length in the postscript, the deterioration of the situation in Iraq has resulted in an implosion of public support for the president and his party, resulting in a repudiation of Republicans at the polls in the 2006 midterm elections.[134] Still, there is evidence that the administration's collapse would have been even more severe had it not been for the expanded, fiercely loyal Republican base and congressional delegation that he and his political strategists have so assiduously cultivated.

Mobilizing the grassroots. Unlike his predecessor, Bush has been consistently occupied with expanding and mobilizing the Republican base, a project that came to fruition in the 2004 presidential election campaign. Driven by the electoral imperative, Bush's success in mobilizing the grassroots indicates that a more participatory mass politics may not be incompatible with modern presidential administration. Deeply disappointed with the performance of their grassroots organization in the 2000 presidential election and motivated by new evidence gathered by the RNC's "72 Hour Task Force", the Bush/Cheney strategists decided to develop an elaborate grassroots organization for the 2004 campaign emphasizing interpersonal interaction between locally-based campaign volunteers and targeted publics.[135]

In its organization and execution, the Bush/Cheney effort was extremely sophisticated and disciplined, creating what was effectively a "centralized grassroots campaign" or "national party machine."[136] Concentrated in the 16 "battleground" states, the grassroots organization was constructed as a complex, multiple-level hierarchy centered at the campaign's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The campaign recruited volunteers not only through the professional staff on the ground but also through its website, allowing the Bush/Cheney headquarters to develop a personal line of communication with campaign workers through email and the internet.[137]

Campaign volunteers were charged with responsibilities for reaching specific goals laid out by the Bush-Cheney headquarters: recruiting additional volunteers, organizing rallies or campaign events, writing letters to the editor, registering voters, or canvassing particular neighborhoods.[138] Campaign officials in the states—experienced local professionals—oversaw grass roots activity with tough love, holding volunteers accountable for the targets that were set by higher level officers.[139] While the Bush/Cheney 2004 campaign conducted the most expensive media campaign in history, the tightly disciplined grassroots organization was closely coordinated with the media campaign in an effort to maximize the effectiveness of both. Bush/Cheney strategists believed that the grassroots organization would disseminate the campaign's major media themes (strong leadership, the War on Terrorism, Homeland Security),[140] while carefully-calibrated media messages would help mobilize volunteer support.[141]

Democrats too mounted impressive "ground wars," but they allowed auxiliary organizations—the so-called 527 groups—such as Americans Coming Together (ACT) and MoveOn to conduct the bulk of their grassroots efforts; in contrast, Republicans kept their grassroots organization within the party and the campaign.[142] Significantly, some Kerry supporters acknowledged that the Democrats paid dearly for their failure to attend to party-building; in a close election, the discipline and coordination that came with in-house organization gave Republicans the edge.[143]

The Republicans' elaborate grassroots organization was highly successful in mobilizing supporters and voters, especially in crucial battleground states. Campaign officials estimate that between 1.2 and 1.4 million individuals volunteered for the campaign nationwide.[144] Significantly, the 2004 election ended four decades of desultory participation in presidential campaigns: slightly more than 60 percent of the eligible electorate voted, the largest turnout in a presidential campaign since 1968.[145] Detailed case-studies of individual states suggest that the Bush campaign's grassroots organization contributed significantly to increased

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Republican registration and higher voter turnout in the election.[146] Preliminary analyses of 2004 National Election Studies (NES) data also indicate that both campaigns' grassroots efforts were effective: 45 percent of Americans reported being contacted by a campaign (a record for the period recorded by the NES), and contact had a strong impact on voter turnout.[147] Preliminary findings, therefore, suggest that national grassroots organizations, if they are institutionalized as part of the parties' campaign repertoires, may ameliorate the inability of centralized parties to cultivate strong attachments in the electorate and, by extension, help alleviate the "crisis of participation" that has plagued American elections since the 1960s.

The Limitations of Bush's Party Leadership

Bush's administrative presidency. Buffeted by demands from a Congress that was usually in the hands of his opponents, Ronald Reagan made extensive use of the administrative presidency to achieve his programmatic objectives, often at the expense of collaboration with his party or Congress. As president, George W. Bush also has made considerable use of administrative mechanisms to achieve his programmatic goals, even when his party controlled both houses of Congress. Bush's reliance on bureaucratic politics even in the presence of unified Republican control of government suggests that the administrative presidency remains a powerful temptation, and one that may continue to impede the emergence of a more collaborative, party-centered policy process under the most favorable circumstances.

The Bush administration has made considerable efforts to achieve programmatic goals through bureaucratic channels rather than through cooperation with Congress or the party.[148] Bush has sought to maximize presidential control over the civil service by staffing the bureaucracy with appointments—even at the subcabinet level—that shared his ideological convictions.[149] Like Reagan, Bush also has made aggressive use of the Office of Management and Budget's powers of regulatory review—through the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA)—to achieve his policy objectives by centralizing oversight and control over agency rule-making.[150] Moreover, there is substantial evidence that the president has used regulatory rule-making to alter the course of public policy, particularly in the areas of environmental[151] and health and safety regulation.[152]

Like Reagan, Bush has aggressively used executive orders and directives to achieve ambitious and controversial policy goals in both foreign and domestic affairs without congressional action. Executive orders have been used to launch the much touted faith-based initiatives; overturn a Clinton-era policy of providing aid to family-planning organizations outside the United States that offered abortion counseling; and establish a controversial plan for the limited funding of stem-cell research.[153] In foreign affairs, Bush has made equally controversial decisions unilaterally, including removing the United States from the ABM treaty with Russia, commencing funding of the "Star Wars" program, and withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol.[154] Thus, like Reagan, the president has often sought to transcend institutions of collective responsibility rather than work through them to achieve compromise or consensus.

Already executive-centered in its approach to politics and policy, the Bush White House became even more insulated from Congress and the Republican Party as it planned and fought the war against terrorism. To be sure, Bush did not ignore Congress in managing the War on Terror,[155] but congressional authorizations and statutes served largely to grant the president considerable discretion in pursuing the White House's military and security goals.[156] The president has pressed this discretion to the hilt, claiming (among other things) the authority to hold individuals captured in the War on Terror (both foreigners and American citizens) indefinitely and without access to counsel and to try them in military tribunals rather than in civilian courts,[157] and to secretly engage in electronic surveillance of American citizens with alleged ties to Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.[158]

In many cases, Bush's most ardent partisans in Congress have supported his aggressive administrative management, suggesting that administrative politics may advance partisan objectives.[159] Yet this aggressive approach has also threatened a core tenet of political partisanship—that programmatic objectives be achieved through collective, rather than unilateral executive administration. Moreover, just as Reagan's administrative presidency recurrently undermined popular support for his presidency, Bush's administrative overreaching has contributed to declining confidence in his presidency and his party. Most clearly, the Bush administration's imperious and insulated management of the war in Iraq has contributed substantially to the growing public dissatisfaction with the administration and with the Republican Party. Without a doubt, this controversial management strategy (and the collapse of the United States' position in Iraq) was an important contributor to Republicans' loss of both houses of Congress in the 2006 elections.[160]

Bush's extensive use of administrative politics suggests that even presidents who take party-building seriously and enjoy strong partisan support in Congress are likely to be sorely tempted to advance many of their programmatic objects *uno solo*, thus loosening collective partisan ties with Congress. There is a strong probability, then, that even in a "new" party system the administrative presidency will continue to be used to advance executive goals at the expense of collective policy responsibility.

Presidential dominance of the party. Bush's partisan leadership marks the most systematic effort by a modern president to create a strong national party; nevertheless, the

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very centrality of the Bush White House in recruiting candidates, mobilizing support, and framing the issues during the 2002 and 2004 election campaigns suggests the modern presidency's threat to the integrity of the emerging party system. Held in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and the launch of the "war on terrorism," the midterm elections celebrated executive power, turning on issues of international and domestic security that emphasized the modern presidency as the center of government action.[161] This campaign strategy was conceived within the administration and urged on congressional candidates: Karl Rove exhorted Republican candidates to "run on the war,"[162] while Bush's White House political advisor Ken Mehlman argued in a presentation to Republican officials that the party's greatest advantages in the campaign were the president's high public approval ratings and the increased salience of national security issues.[163] The stamp of the president on the campaign was such that the chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, following the election, declared that "We made history tonight . . . *It was a great win for the President of the United States*."[164]

The president's dominance of the party was reaffirmed in the 2004 election campaign. Once again, although the Bush campaign's emphasis on leadership was skillfully tied to values of national security and traditional values that appealed to Republican partisans, the centrality of presidential leadership tended to emphasize loyalty to Bush rather than a collective party organization with a past and a future. As Bush/Cheney chief strategist Matthew Dowd put it, "Leadership is a window into the soul—people want someone they can count on in tough times, and Bush filled this paternalistic role."[165] The 2004 election, widely regarded as a referendum on the Bush presidency, appeared to sanction Bush's approach to homeland security and the War on Terror. Bush won 51 percent of the popular vote to Kerry's 48 percent, and the Republicans gained three seats in the House and four in the Senate. Significantly, the gains in Congress were built on Bush's narrow but solid victory. In all the key Senate races, such as the five open southern seats, which the Republicans swept, Bush did better at the polls than the GOP's candidate, winning by an average of 18 percentage points to their 6. Although Republican gains in the House were due in part to Tom DeLay's controversial Texas redistricting plan (which led to the defeat of four Democratic incumbents), congressional Republicans also benefited from the voters' perception that Bush provided resolute leadership in the war against terror.[166]

The White House also played a dominant role in organizing the massive grassroots efforts that characterized the 2004 election cycle and stimulating public participation in these efforts. Much of the grassroots organizing was run out of the Bush/Cheney campaign offices, though the Republican National Committee played an important ancillary role. Moreover, campaign officials admitted that they recurrently bypassed uncooperative or incompetent state and local party organizations and created new political organizations in order to maximize the effectiveness of their grassroots efforts.[167] Finally, the concentration of the grassroots organization in the 16 presidential "battleground" states seems an indication of the presidency-centered character of this effort. Bush's personal leadership also was essential to the effort's success. The success of the remarkable grass roots effort in Ohio, a local Bush/Cheney official insisted, was due in large part to the "volunteers' admiration for and loyalty to George W. Bush," and relied on frequent presidential visits to "fire up" the grass roots organization.[168] Significantly, as Dowd acknowledged, "both parties' organizing force has focused on President Bush—the Republicans in defense of his leadership; the Democrats in opposition—hostility—to it. After the election, both parties will be challenged to sustain a collective commitment independently of their devotion to or hatred of Bush."[169]

Conclusion: Executive Dominion and the New Party System

American political parties were originally formed to constrain national administration and to engage the participation of ordinary citizens, with localistic foundations that were critical for maintenance of an engaged citizenry. Beginning in the Progressive Era and culminating with the New Deal, reformers sought to emancipate the presidency from the parochial parties they saw as retarding necessary political and economic reform. Study of these historical dynamics led students of party politics to the conclusion that modern executive administration and party politics were in fundamental conflict. In this article, we have striven to show that this conclusion was overstated. Modern presidents, especially when motivated by a congeries of ideological and contextual incentives, can be strong party leaders; indeed, they may exploit executive power for partisan purposes. Admittedly, the modern executive office, born of a reform program dedicated to transcending parties, remains an obstacle to presidential party-building. This fact suggests that even in a "new" party system characterized by greater presidential party leadership, executive aggrandizement will likely continue to complicate efforts to achieve greater collective responsibility for policymaking.

More significantly, however, the very robustness of Bush's party leadership threatens the integrity of the Republican Party. During the Progressive Era, at the dawn of the modern presidency, Herbert Croly noted that Woodrow Wilson's effort to put his own stamp on the Democratic Party suggested that aggressive executive partisanship might erode the integrity of collective responsibility, even as it strengthens party organization in the short term: "At the

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final test, the responsibility is his [the president's] rather than his party's. The party which submits to such a dictatorship, however benevolent, cannot play its own proper part in the system of government. It will either cease to have any independent life or its independence will eventually assume the form of a revolt."[170] Croly's observation about the inherently antagonistic relationship between collective responsibility and executive dominion was made in a context when localized, decentralized parties still prevailed. Yet it may still provide guidance for analyzing the dynamics of the relationship between the president and the parties in an era of modern administration and nationalized, programmatic parties.

Although Bush's efforts have clearly advanced partisan objectives, there is evidence that the administration conceives of parties as a tool of presidential aggrandizement. In a personal interview, Karl Rove granted that the national parties that had emerged since the late 1970s "were of great importance in the tactical and mechanical aspects of electing a president." But they were "less important in developing a political and policy strategy for the White House." In effect, he said, parties served as a critical "means to the president's end." The emergence of the modern executive office presupposed that "the White House had to determine the administration's objectives" and by implication the party's.[171] Just as the nationalized parties are more formidable tools of presidential governance than traditional parties, so these more centralized organizations might be susceptible to serving the political and policy ambitions of the White House. As Stephen Skowronek has written, the modern GOP might signal a future in which the party "in effect [becomes] whatever the president needs it to be, and whatever capacity it had to hold its leaders to account would accordingly be lost."[172]

But the national programmatic parties, especially the GOP, are strong institutions, more than twenty years in the making. The new party system is more amenable to presidential governance to be sure, but certainly not completely subordinate to it. The failed Harriet Miers nomination, Republicans' strongly negative response to the Dubai ports deal, their resistance to Bush's efforts to "compromise" on the issue of policy regarding undocumented workers—all these suggest that the party still retains considerable capacity to resist presidential domination. The major question for the next several years is whether it will retain its autonomy and the capacity to vigorously impose limits on presidential action, even in the face of continued vigorous presidential leadership.

Of course, the "new party system" may yet unravel when Bush passes from the political scene, thereby making our claims of party system development, as well as our concerns about its consequences, premature. Yet there is reason to suspect that the new relationship between presidents and parties might endure. Indeed, we can expect future presidents to sustain, and exploit them. First, the examples of Reagan and Bush—arguably the two most influential presidents since Lyndon Johnson—may well spark imitation by ambitious candidates for the presidency. More profoundly, however, the environmental incentives motivating party building are themselves likely to endure for the foreseeable future. These considerations suggest that earnest presidential party leadership—with all its potential benefits and drawbacks—may become more common in the future.

Postscript on the 2006 Election

At first glance, the 2006 mid-term elections, which saw Democrats recapture both houses of Congress for the first time since 1994, might seem to invalidate our claims for the emergence of a "new" party system. After all, with Democrats ascendant again, is it meaningful to trumpet the significance of George W. Bush's party leadership? In our view, however, the elections and their aftermath confirm, rather than repudiate, some of our core arguments. First, the 2006 elections illustrate the threat posed by vigorous presidential leadership to party autonomy and adaptability to changing political circumstances. Second, and equally significant, Republicans' successful resistance to Democratic efforts to limit Bush's discretion in fighting the war in Iraq suggests that Bush's party leadership has contributed to Republican party discipline and coherence, which have helped sustain the president politically at one of the most challenging points of his tenure.

The 2006 election was widely interpreted as a repudiation of George W. Bush and his policies—particularly his management of the war in Iraq. According to a national exit poll, about six in ten voters (59 percent) said they were dissatisfied (30 percent) or angry (29 percent) with President Bush. By more than two-to-one, those dissatisfied with Bush supported the Democratic candidate in their district (69 percent to 29 percent); among those angry with the president, the margin was more than fifteen-to-one (92 percent to 6 percent).[173] Several studies appeared to show, moreover, that general unhappiness with the White House and the war in Iraq not only contributed to Democrats taking control of the House and Senate, but also to the substantial gains they made in gubernatorial and state legislative races.[174]

In the past, the White House had pursued its national security aims through executive administration; yet it had successfully strengthened the party's political position by trumpeting its strong leadership in the War on Terror. During the 2006 campaign, the administration adopted precisely the same strategy that had brought victory to Republican partisans in 2002 and 2004. Administration officials repeatedly encouraged Republican candidates to "run on the war",[175] and the RNC circulated a memo suggesting that Bush's handling of "foreign threats" was the primary factor motivating the Republican base during

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the election cycle.[176] The White House stuck with this strategy up to the election: at an early November campaign event, Bush declared "As you go to the polls, remember we're at war. . . And if you want this country to do everything in its power to protect you and at the same time lay a foundation for peace for generations to come, vote Republican."[177] Yet as conditions on the ground in Iraq deteriorated, the Party's long-time source of strength became its Achilles' heel. Many Republicans who had previously ridden on the president's coat-tails now scrambled to disassociate themselves from him.[178] Despite their efforts, however, as the polling data above suggests, Republicans paid the price for the partisan strategy they had long embraced.

Nonetheless, there is reason to suspect that the national structure of the party system—and a politics that privileges national issues and conflict—will be sustained. Although the Democrats have renounced the fierce partisanship that the White House and Republican Congress practiced during the first six years of the Bush presidency, many liberal public officials and strategists have expressed more than grudging admiration for the effective party building that buttressed partisan rancor in the nation's capital.[179] Democrats, in fact, demonstrated in their effective 2004 and, especially, 2006 national campaigns, that they learned a great deal from, and have mimicked successfully many features of, the national Republican machine. There is a real sense, therefore, in which the 2004 and 2006 elections have marked a culmination of sorts in the development of a "new" party system. In both these contests, the Republicans and Democrats instigated a serious partisan dispute about the War against Terror, extended with such controversy in Iraq, that captured the attention of the American people and mobilized, when compared with recent electoral history, large turnouts. Prior to 2004, the national and programmatic parties had strengthened partisan discipline in Washington, D.C., most notably in Congress, and had been a valuable source of campaign services—especially campaign funds—for candidates. But these nationalized parties had failed to stir the passions and allegiance of the American people, attested to by declining partisan identification and anemic voting rates. In contrast, both the 2004 and 2006 contests were passionate, polarized, and participatory. Thus, the Republican grass roots mobilization and earnest Democratic efforts to compete with it suggest that a nationalized party system has come of age.

Indeed, despite Bush's precipitous slide in the polls and the White House's acceptance of responsibility for the "thumping" the GOP suffered in the 2006 congressional campaigns, the vast majority of Republicans have supported their president in the months since the elections, thereby helping to sustain a major, and politically unpopular, new departure in the United States' strategy in Iraq. Following the election, Bush announced a new military plan for Iraq featuring a "surge" of more than 21,000 troops. Congressional Democrats denounced the plan, and sought to counter it with a non-binding congressional resolution expressing formal disapproval of the president's strategy.[180] Although surveys showed that a strong majority of the public (as much as 60 percent) opposed the "surge" strategy, Senate Republicans, with only a few defections, effectively blocked debate on the resolution by refusing to agree on a cloture motion to limit debate unless their alternative resolution promising not to withhold military funds was also admitted. Reluctant to force Democrats to vote on the popular Republican alternative, Majority Leader Harry Reid declined to push the issue further.[181] Though the House passed its own non-binding resolution expressing disapproval of the "surge", Republicans maintained strong party discipline there as well, with only 17 members defecting, thus denying the Democrats the rhetorical claim that their resolution represented a bipartisan consensus against the war.[182] Democrats' failure to secure a vote of "no confidence" against the president's war strategy has allowed Bush to go on the offensive in support the "surge." As one commentator has noted, the White House is "sending Democrats a clear signal that their worst fear may come to pass. If they persist in trying to keep the president from deploying reinforcements in Iraq or attempt to cut off funding for the war, they may be blamed for not 'supporting the troops.'"[183] Bush's aggressive posture, coming only months after a major defeat at the polls, could hardly have been sustained without the staunch support of congressional Republicans.

With their actions, congressional Republicans reaffirmed their faith in Bush's administrative leadership and confirmed the emergence of a national executive-centered party system. Whether this episode represents affirmation or abdication of responsibility on their part awaits the judgment of history.

Notes

1 Skowronek 1982, 40. Acting on the modern concept of presidential power, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson inaugurated the practices that strengthened the president as popular and legislative leader. It fell to FDR to consolidate, or institutionalize, the changes in the executive office that were initiated during the Progressive Era. Roosevelt's leadership was the principal ingredient in a full-scale realignment of the political parties, the first in history in which the presidency was at the heart of the voters' approach to politics and government. After Roosevelt's long tenure, this new understanding of executive responsibilities would lead even conservative Republican presidents to wield the powers of their office in the manner of their more liberal forebears. On the rise of the modern presidency and its effect on the party system, see Milkis 1993.

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2 For the classic statement of this view, see Schlesinger 1949.
3 Milkis 1993; Shea 1999, 2003; Lowi 1985; Skowronek 1997.
4 For early work emphasizing the strengthening of party organizations, see Herrnson 1988, Reichley 2000, Herrnson 2002, and Klinkner 1994; for more recent work, see Galvin 2006. Analyses covering the transformation of congressional partisanship include Sinclair 2002a, 2002b; Davidson 2001; and Pomper 2003. Evidence for the partial revival of partisanship in the mass electorate since the 1970s includes Bartels 2000; Hetherington 2001; Fleisher and Bond 2001; Davidson 2001; but see Beck 2003.
5 Milkis 1993; Skowronek 1997. See also Galvin 2006, who views Reagan's party leadership, while intensive, as a continuation of past Republican practice.
6 See, for example, Shea 1999, 2003; Milkis 1993, 1999, 2001. Numerous works have investigated (and, in some cases, lamented) the decline of partisanship and public participation in politics. See, for example, Aldrich 1995, 1999; Beck 2003.
7 Martin Van Buren, probably the most influential early theorist of the party system, believed that an institutionalized two-party politics grounded in local party organizations would require cross-regional compromise and, as a result, reduce the probability that national administration would be used to threaten core regional interests (such as slavery); Ceaser 1979; Milkis 1999; Frymer 1999. Moreover, Andrew Jackson believed that the party patronage system would render administration more democratic (and less programmatic), and thus less of a threat to the liberties of the people (Milkis and Nelson 2003). Clearly, partisanship emerged in part to moderate the routine exercise of expansive national administrative authority.

To be sure, presidents certainly engaged in unilateral decision-making during the nineteenth century, and sought to use national administration to achieve presidential objectives (see Skowronek 1997; Galvin and Shogan 2004; Calabresi and Yoo 1997, 2003). Moreover, as Calabresi and Yoo (1997, 2003) have argued, presidents since the founding have wielded "unitary" executive powers. Some "premodern" presidents have made sweeping use of executive authority, as the examples of Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln illustrate (see, for example, Skowronek 1997; Bimes and Skowronek 1996).

Nonetheless, parties played an important role in moderating the regularity with which presidents were able to engage in ambitious—and particularly unilateral—political action. As Daniel Klinghard (2005) argues, nineteenth-century parties effectively constrained the exercise of presidential authority through their domination of the organizational resources essential to presidential election and reelection. Parties' control over these resources required presidents to cater to party leaders' preferences and priorities in exchange for their support in rallying voters to the national ticket in congressional and presidential elections (Milkis and Nelson 2003, especially ch. 5). Because the parties were highly decentralized organizations, this state of affairs encouraged a parochial politics that emphasized state and local concerns at the expense of centralized presidential authority (see also Milkis 1999). When nineteenth century presidents attempted to transcend these limitations by eschewing their partisans' demands for patronage, they often found their presidencies embroiled in controversy and their candidacies denied renomination (Klinghard 2005; Skowronek 1982, 1997). Only at the conclusion of the nineteenth century, as presidents gained access to nonparty organizational and campaign resources that allowed them to successfully conduct more candidate-centered campaigns, were they freed from this significant constraint on their discretion. As they lost their monopoly over campaign resources, parties increasingly found themselves submitting to presidential leadership and agenda-setting.

National administrative power also was significantly limited by the party system due to the institution of partisan patronage, which deprived the executive branch of administrative capacity (Carpenter 2001; Skowronek 1982). Even as the administrative state began to emerge at the end of the 19th century, it was fundamentally compromised by partisan politics, as Skowronek ably shows (1982); patronage continued to limit presidents' dominion over the executive branch until at least the late 1930s (Milkis 1993). Yet, with the gradual elimination of party patronage and the emergence of the institutionalized presidency beginning in the very late nineteenth century (Skowronek 1982; Milkis 1993; Arnold 1989), presidents slowly acquired means both for exercising sweeping administrative authority and for achieving significant policy goals through administration (see especially Milkis 1993, 1999; Milkis and Nelson 2003). Probably the strongest indicator of this development is presidents' increasing use of unilateral executive powers to achieve their goals. As Mayer 2001; Ragsdale and Thies 1997; Moe and Howell 1999; and Howell 2003, 2005 have shown, the use of executive orders and other unilateral executive directives to achieve *substantive* public policy goals has expanded dramatically in the 20th century, particularly since the 1930s. Moreover, as Howell and Lewis 2002

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have shown in a striking example of enhanced presidential authority in the modern era, presidents have also used executive order to create a number of important executive agencies since World War II, and have exercised unusual authority over them. To be sure, presidents' willingness to make use of unilateral executive powers is significantly shaped by contextual factors—including the president's popularity, partisan control of Congress, and so forth—but modern presidents are also more likely to engage in unilateral policymaking than their pre-modern forebears.

8 Interview data has a very important place in our analysis. Nonetheless, we have been very careful to use our interviews in appropriate ways to ensure that conclusions drawn from this data are valid. Specifically, we have used interview data only to draw conclusions about our interviewees'—and the Bush administration's—*perceptions* about the political environment, their *reasoning* about political strategy based on these perceptions, and the *actions* they took in pursuit to these strategies. When possible, we have corroborated this interview data with other data sources—including secondary sources such as newspaper and journal articles—to enhance our confidence in our conclusions. Throughout, we have strived to avoid equating interviewees' statements with *objective* factual information about non-campaign related activities. That is, we have avoided using interviewees' opinions or statements about the current president or past presidents to make direct judgments about their party leadership. Rather, interview information was used to illuminate what the current administration did and why it did it; then, using our independent knowledge of past and present administrations' partisan activities (drawn from historical primary and secondary sources), we made informed judgments about the significance of their party leadership innovations. We believe this method makes appropriate use of interview sources.

9 See Milkis 1993, 1999.

10 Milkis 1999, ch. 2.

11 See n. 7.

12 Skowronek 1982.

13 Milkis and Nelson 2003.

14 Roosevelt 1938–1950: v. 9, 671–672; Milkis 1993; Shefter 2002. For discussion of the playing out of New Deal Liberalism since Roosevelt's presidency, see Milkis 1993, 1999; Skowronek 1997; and Milkis and Mileur 2005.

15 Milkis 2006; Shefter 2002.

16 For classic statements of the view that the presidency has become a rhetorical and plebiscitary office see Tulis 1987 and Lowi 1985. In an impressive quantitative analysis of presidential speechmaking from the founding to the present, Lim 2002 has demonstrated that presidential rhetoric has, in important ways, become considerably more oriented toward the mass public since the beginning of the twentieth century—the period often associated with the rise of the "rhetorical presidency." According to Lim, presidential rhetoric has become considerably more informal, anecdotal, and democratic, and has increasingly sought to build a more direct linkage between the president and the public.

The dependence of modern presidents on public opinion is illustrated most clearly in their heavy reliance on polling. To be sure, recent research has suggested that while modern presidents have become obsessed with public opinion—especially as scientific measures of public opinion have become readily available—they have used it in diverse ways. In some cases, presidents have closely followed public opinion to determine what strategy would be most politically popular (what some analysts have derided as "pandering"). In others, however, presidents have sought to gauge public opinion in order to determine how best to "package" or "frame" policies they prefer, or to craft messages that will allow them to divert attention from scandals or policy failures (what has been called "manipulation"). Whether "pandering" or "manipulation" predominates is a subject of considerable debate. In either case, presidents' dependence on viewpoints of the unmediated mass public for political sustenance has, in the view of scholars, increased dramatically. Increased presidential reliance on public opinion polls—either for "pandering" or for "manipulation"—raises considerable normative questions for representative constitutional government. The literature on presidents' use of and reliance on public opinion is large and varied. For important works and reviews of the literature, see Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Jacobs and Burns 2004; Eisinger 2003; Towle 2004; Druckman, Jacobs, and Ostermeier 2004.

17 Lowi 1985; Milkis 1993, 1999.

18 Cotter and Bibby 1980.

19 Herrnson 2002.

20 Aldrich 1995; Herrnson 1988; Herrnson 2002; Bibby 1998. Conway 1983, Klinkner 1994, and, more recently, Galvin 2006, have noted that Republicans have pursued party development with much more alacrity and success.

21 Maisel and Bibby 2002, 71; Bibby 2002, 42.

22 Milkis 1999; Herrnson 1988.

23 Sinclair 2002a, 2002b; Davidson 2001; Pomper 2003.

24 Bartels 2000; Hetherington 2001; Fleisher and Bond 2001; Davidson 2001.

25 Shea 1999, 2003.
26 Ibid.; Milkis 1999.
27 Milkis 1993, 1999.
28 Pomper 2003.
29 These dynamics have been captured in Milkis 1993, 1999, 2001 and Skowronek 1997. For important new work that suggests Republican presidents have been consistently more attentive to party building than their Democratic counterparts, see Galvin 2006.
30 Scaife 1983, 4–5; Skowronek 1997, ch. 8; Busch 2005b. Busch 2005b suggests that Richard Nixon is accurately considered the last "New Deal" president.
31 Muir 1988, 288; see also Hamby 1992, ch. 8.
32 Berman 1990.
33 Skowronek 1997; Busch 2005b, ch. 1; Pomper 1981; Schaller 2007, ch. 2.
34 Busch 2005b, 99.
35 Cronin 1985.
36 For outstanding treatments of the Conservative Movement from the 1940s to the 1980s, see Schoenwald 2001; McGirr 2001; Brennan 1995; Schaller 2007. See also Busch 2005b,101; Herrnson 1988.
37 Nimmo 2001. As Troy 2005 shows, campaign strategists recognized that Reagan's personal popularity was a far firmer base on which to rest a re-election campaign than his partisan program. The "Morning in America" campaign was crafted as a means for achieving victory through personalistic, media-driven appeals. Ladd's 1985 analysis of presidential popularity polls demonstrates that Reagan's personal popularity—and, to a lesser extent, his political program—was receiving enthusiastic support from across the political spectrum (and across social and economic groups) during the campaign season, suggesting the inutility of a stridently partisan campaign. Moreover, as a majority of Americans were feeling confident about the state of the economy and the direction of society during the campaign season, the value of appealing to partisanship was low.
38 Hamby 1992, ch. 8; Berman 1990; Mann 1990, 22; Skowronek 1997; Heclo 2003.
39 Heclo 2003.
40 Beck 1988, 161.
41 Ibid.; Berman 1990, 11. Significantly, however, as Bimes 2002 suggests, Reagan was careful to moderate the tone of his rhetoric to avoid the charges of "radicalism" which had so plagued his conservative predecessors. As Bimes (2002, 9) argues, "To foster a broad electoral and legislative coalition, Republicans had to offer their conservative policy prescriptions with a rhetoric that defused charges of radicalism. Though Reagan would continue to draw upon populist appeals after 1964, he gravitated toward a strategy of rhetorical specialization, in which he generally reserved his more strident populist salvos for the purpose of mobilizing party loyalists, while tending to emphasize more consensual, "soft-sell" themes when addressing a broader audience. Furthermore, Reagan came to reserve his populist salvos for a limited set of economic issues, while using "softer," consensual appeals when discussing a wide range of other topics."
42 Milkis 1993, 270.
43 Skowronek 1997, 415.
44 Milkis 2001; Skowronek 1997.
45 Milkis 1993:267; also, see Galvin 2006.
46 For a detailed account of the emergence of a nationalized Republican party during the 1970s, and the way this development made possible the deployment of executive-centered partisanship, see Galvin 2006. Herrnson (1986, 1988) demonstrates that the national Republican Party was more effective than the national Democrats in providing resources to candidates and in targeting funds to competitive candidates.
47 Reichley 2000, 296.
48 The authors thank an anonymous reviewer for this pointing this out.
49 Galvin 2006.
50 Jacobson 1985–1986.
51 Fahrenkopf 1992; Milkis 1993, 267.
52 Busch 2001, 65; Galvin 2006.
53 Personal interview with Mitchell Daniels, Assistant to the President for Political and Governmental Affairs. June 5, 1986.; personal interview with William Brock, former Chairman of the Republican National Committee. August 12, 1987.
54 Sabato 1988.
55 Herrnson 1988, 125–126.
56 Berman 1998, ch. 5.
57 Ginsberg and Shefter 1990, 337–338; Harris and Milkis 1996.
58 Berman 1998, 98.
59 Sundquist 1983. Reagan's strategy was clearly anticipated by Richard Nixon, who believed that white blue-collar workers could be attracted to the Republican banner. Nixon's "law and order" rhetoric in the 1968 presidential campaign, as well as his political strategy as president, are often interpreted as deliberate efforts to cater to this important voting bloc. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this important point.
60 Ginsberg and Shefter 1990; Busch 2001; Black 2004.
61 Busch 2001, 231; Ginsberg and Shefter 1990; Berman 1998, ch. 5.
62 Ginsberg and Shefter 1990.
63 Busch 2001, 231; Ginsberg and Shefter 1990, 345.
64 Ginsberg and Shefter 1990, 341–343; Berman 1998, ch. 5.

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65 See White 2005.
66 Milkis and Nelson 2003, 357.
67 Troy 2005, 148.
68 Burnham 1985, 221.
69 Prominent Republican congressional leaders perceived that Reagan's failure to wage a partisan campaign undercut efforts to achieve sweeping Republican victories in 1984 and 1986. See Sandoz 1985 and personal interview with Vin Weber (R-MN), July 28, 1987.
70 Troy 2005, 172; Mansfield 1987, 281; Sandoz 1985; Cronin 1985.
71 Personal interview with Vin Weber.
72 Milkis 1993.
73 Ehrenhalt 1986, 2803. Disaffection with the White House's campaign strategy in the 1986 elections was not limited to ideological conservatives. A similar sentiment was lodged by more pragmatic Republicans, including Bill Brock, who said of the midterm campaign effort: "We may have snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. The White House was part of a conscious decision that we would not run as a party in 1986. This is an old story—when Republicans run as individuals, we lose. There is a potential for a Republican majority in the country, and its time these 'experts' [in the White House] understand this." Personal interview with William Brock, August 12, 1987.
74 Troy 2005, 172.
75 Milkis 1993, ch. 10 and 11.
76 Benda and Levine 1988; see also Busch 2001; Milkis 1993; Rudalevige 2003.
77 Milkis 1993; Rudalevige 2003.
78 Busch 2001, 59; Golden 2000; Harris and Milkis 1996.
79 Golden 2000; Harris and Milkis 1996.
80 Harris and Milkis, 1996; Busch 2001, 59, emphasis added; see also Milkis and Nelson 2003, 360.
81 "Regulatory relief" is a good example of this dynamic. Reagan's Executive Orders 12291 and 12498 mandated a comprehensive review of proposed agency regulations by the Office of Management and Budget (Milkis and Nelson 2003, 361); Reagan also appointed a Task Force on Regulatory Relief, headed by Vice President Bush, to apply cost-benefit analysis to existing rules. Comprehensive reviews were subsequently used to attempt to weaken environmental, consumer, and civil rights regulations (see Golden 2000; Milkis 1993; Harris and Milkis 1996).
82 Skowronek 1997, 416–429.
83 Skowronek 1997; Milkis 1993; Derthick and Teles 2003.
84 Edwards 2007, 3.
85 Institute of Politics 2005, 31.
86 Institute of Politics 2005, 67.
87 Jones 2006.
88 As Heclo (2003, 34) points out, Reagan's antipathy for government had an enduring influence on the GOP and hurt the party in the dramatic confrontation between the newly elected Republican congressional majority and Clinton over the fiscal year 1996 budget: "Unfortunately for the party, some Republican congressional leaders came to believe this version of Reagan's blind spot and walked off a cliff. Twenty years later, in the winter of 1995–96, a beleaguered president was desperate enough to call their bluff with a government shutdown. The result was an easy reelection of Bill Clinton, an unfamiliar name of Lewinsky in the news, and the rest is history."
89 Mucciaroni and Quirk 2004, 158
90 Milkis 2006; Mucciaroni and Quirk 2004, 159.
91 Milkis 2001.
92 PBS *Frontline* interview with Dan Balz, reporter, *Washington Post,* April 12, 2005.
93 Personal interview with Karl Rove, director of Office of Strategic Initiatives and Chief Advisor to President George W. Bush. November 15, 2001.
94 Personal interview with Michael Gerson, Chief Speechwriter, President George W. Bush. November 15, 2001.
95 PBS *Frontlin*e interview with Ken Mehlman, chairman, Republican National Committee; Busch 2005b: 51.
96 PBS *Frontline* interview with Ken Mehlman.
97 See Jalonick 2002; personal interview with Steven Moore, Club for Growth, July 21, 2004. The conflict between the White House and Moore came to head in 2004. The White House supported incumbent Senator Arlen Specter in the Republican primary against his conservative challenger, Representative Pat Toomey, who was backed by the Club for Growth. Not only did Bush and his political advisors believe that Specter had a better chance to win, but they also resented Toomey's opposition to their prescription drug program, a key part of their plan to put a conservative imprimatur on entitlement programs. With the White House's blessing and support, Specter won a very close primary contest.
98 Busch 2005b, 51.
99 Herrnson and Morris, n.d., 2.
100 Beachler 2004.
101 Herrnson and Morris n.d.
102 Milkis 2005.
103 Beachler 2004.
104 Personal interview with Terry Nelson, Political Director, George W. Bush-Richard Cheney '04. August 19, 2005; Franke-Ruta and Meyerson 2004;

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Personal interview with Matthew Dowd, Political Strategist, George W. Bush-Richard Cheney '04 campaign. July 8, 2004.

105 Personal interview with Matthew Dowd, July 8, 2004; Bai 2004a.

106 Cook 2003.

107 Personal interview with Stephen Moore, July 21, 2004; Carney and Dickerson 2002.

108 Herrnson and Morris n.d.; but see Keele, Fogarty, and Stimson, n.d.

109 Milkis 2006.

110 Halbfinger 2002.

111 Jacobson 2003, 15; Cook 2002; Adams 2002; Jalonick 2002.

112 Milkis 2005.

113 PBS *Frontline* interview with Ed Gillespie, former Chairman of the Republican National Committee, April 12, 2005.

114 Personal interview with Kevin Madden, spokesman, George W. Bush-Richard Cheney '04. July 5, 2005.

115 Magleby, Monson, and Patterson 2005, 31; personal interview with Matthew Dowd, July 20, 2005; personal interview with Terry Nelson, August 19, 2005.

116 Peterson 2004, 243.

117 White 2005.

118 Peterson 2004; Aberbach 2004; Warshaw 2004.

119 Hacker and Pierson 2005, 39; Mucciaroni and Quirk 2004, 165. However, Bartels 2005 shows that the mass public supported the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003, but because they were, for the most part, ill-informed about their larger implications for public policy and economic inequality.

120 Personal interview with Grover Norquist, President, Americans for Tax Reform. August 3, 2004; personal interview with Stephen Moore, July 21, 2004; Hacker and Pierson 2005.

121 Mucciaroni and Quirk 2004, 165; Norquist 2001; personal interview with Grover Norquist, August 3, 2004.

122 Personal interview with Grover Norquist, August 3, 2004; personal interview with Stephen Moore, July 21, 2004; Hacker and Pierson 2005.

123 Schier 2003.

124 Fusarelli 2005.

125 Skocpol 2004. Nonetheless, the Bush White House's pragmatism on Medicare was allied to the partisan gamble that political capital could be gained with Reaganites by combining a commitment to expanded benefits with provisions that would set the program on the road to privatization. The reform plan included Republican-sponsored "planned experiments" pitting subsidized, private plans against traditional Medicare, and a provision for tax-free Health Savings Accounts, which will allow well-to-do taxpayers of all ages to shelter income for all kinds of loosely health-related expenses (Skocpol 2004). Conservative strategists such as Grover Norquist have suggested that these provisions, once utilized by sufficient numbers of Americans, will generate public support for the further diversion of Medicare services to the private sector in the future. Personal interview with Grover Norquist, August 3, 2004.

126 Mufson 2005.

127 Schier 2003.

128 Stockman 2004; Peterson 2004, 252; Green 2004, 34.

129 Pew 2003.

130 Freedman 2004; Hillygus and Shields n.d., Rasmussen 2004.

131 VandeHei and Barker 2006.

132 Feldman 2005.

133 Rutenberg 2006.

134 See Polling Report 2007.

135 Personal interview with Matthew Dowd, July 8, 2004; personal interview with Christine Iverson, Republican National Committee, July 7, 2004; Franke-Ruta and Meyerson 2004.

136 Dowd insisted that a *centralized* grass roots campaign was not an oxymoron. The "ground war" was built with community volunteers, but "once they volunteered, we ask them to do certain things. A national organization has to have a consistent message and mechanics. If the message is not consistent, if tasks are not systematically assigned, the campaign will implode. This was the message of the [failed Howard] Dean campaign: letting people loose can get the candidate in trouble. The message and organization must be relatively disciplined." The centralized grass roots campaign was not without spontaneity, however. "The campaign headquarters gave people tasks, but Bush-Cheney staff and volunteers on the ground had some flexibility in determining how to carry out those tasks. It was local volunteers, for example, who learned that model homes in subdivisions was a good place to register new voters" (personal interview with Matthew Dowd, July 26, 2004).

137 Personal interview with Patrick Ruffini, website designer and blogger for George W. Bush-Richard Cheney '04 campaign, July 6, 2005.

138 Bai 2004a

139 Personal interviews with Darrin Klinger, Executive Director, Bush-Cheney Ohio Campaign, July 27, 2005, and Mark Wallace, Deputy Campaign Manager, George W. Bush-Richard Cheney '04 campaign, July 20, 2005.

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140 Bai 2004a.

141 Personal interview with Kevin Madden, July 5, 2005.

142 The tendency of the Democratic Party to rely on auxiliary organizations such as labor unions was accentuated by the enactment of the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act in 2002, which proscribed party organizations, but not independent issue groups, from raising and spending "soft" money. The "527 groups," named for a section of the tax code that regulated them, were formed outside of the regular party organization, in part, to circumvent campaign finance regulations. No less important, however, was the view of some leaders of the 527 organizations that the Democratic National Committee and state parties were not capable of mobilizing the support of important liberal constituencies (personal interview with ACT official, not for attribution, August 19, 2005). These groups formed an alliance to build an impressive media and ground campaign to match the efforts of the Republican Party. The task, as Simon Rosenberg, president of the New Democratic Network, framed it, was to build a progressive "information-age political machine" to counter the conservative movement's partisan infrastructure (personal interview, August 9, 2004; see also Bai 2004b). In the end, however, as Rosenberg acknowledged after the election, the Democratic effort was too fragmented to compete effectively with the Republican machine (Rosenberg interview, July 22, 2005). Detailed case studies of party organizing in the states demonstrate the differences between the parties' organizing styles. For a discussion of Republican grassroots organizing in Florida, see Crew, Fine, and MacManus 2005, 72; for Ohio, see Mockabee et al. 2005; for New Mexico, see Atkeson, Carrillo, and Walker 2005.

143 Personal interview with Simon Rosenberg, July 22, 2005; personal interview with Tad Devine, political strategist, John Kerry-John Edwards '04 campaign, August 4, 2004; Atkeson, Carrillo, and Walker 2005, 132.

144 PBS *Frontline* interview with Ed Gillespie; personal interview with Patrick Ruffini, July 6, 2005; personal interview with Terry Nelson, August 19, 2005.

145 Faler 2005. Voter turnout statistics are available at George Mason political scientist Michael McDonald's website, the *United States Election Project*: http://elections.gmu.edu/voter_turnout.htm. Critically, McDonald's calculations of voter turnout are based on the "voting eligible population,"which is constructed by eliminating from voting age population estimates those individuals who are not eligible to vote (such as non-citizens and ineligible felons, depending on state law) and by adding (for national elections) over-seas voters (who are not counted in the voting age population). However, due to lack of data, some ineligible voters, such as mentally incapacitated individuals, permanently disenfranchised felons (depending on state law), and persons who have moved after the close of voter registration (depending on state law), are not removed from the voting eligible population. For more information on the construction of voting age and voting eligible estimates, see the *United States Election Project.*

146 For analysis of the grassroots organization in Florida, see Crew, Fine, and MacManus 2005; for Ohio, see Mockabee et al. 2005; for New Mexico, see Atkeson, Carrillo, and Walker 2005.

147 Abramowitz and Stone 2005.

148 Kelley 2005.

149 Hult 2003.

150 West 2005, 85–86; Kelley 2005; Adams 2003, 2001. A 2003 General Accounting Office Report on "OMB's Role of Reviews of Agencies' Draft Rules and the Transparency of those Reviews" found that Bush's OIRA played a much more significant role in monitoring and evaluating agency rulemaking and was more aggressive in rejecting proposed rules that threatened to impose costs on the economy than under Clinton or George H.W. Bush. See United States General Accounting Office 2003.

151 Hult 2003, 24; see also Adams 2001.

152 Goldstein and Cohen 2004.

153 Hult 2003.

154 Kelley 2005.

155 McCormick 2004.

156 Fisher 2004a, 119.

157 Fisher 2005, 106; Fisher 2004b, 167; McMahon 2004, 125.

158 Thomas and Klaidman 2006.

159 For example, Bush's aggressive and presidency-centered management of the War on Terrorism received consistent support from his congressional partisans (at least until the situation in Iraq began to deteriorate in late 2005).

160 This theme is taken up in detail in the postscript.

161 Beachler 2004, 41–42; Mitchell and Nagorney 2002, A1.

162 Busch 2005a, 45.

163 Beachler 2004, 41.

164 As quoted in Keele, Fogarty, and Stimson n.d., emphasis added.

165 Personal interview with Matthew Dowd, July 20, 2005.

166 Ceaser and Busch 2005, ch. 5. According to Gallup polls, Bush won the election and maintained control of Congress, even though Democrats made modest partisan gains in 2004. Gallup national polling during 2004 showed the following party support: Republicans 34 percent, Democrats 34 percent, Independents 31 percent; if "party leaners" among independents are allocated, the results slightly favor Democrats: Republican 45 percent, Democrats, 48 percent. That Bush tended to do better than would have been expected on the basis of partisan loyalties is likely attributable to the Republicans' more effective grass roots campaign, Bush's incumbency advantage during wartime, and the tendency of many southerners to vote Republican, even as they continue to express loyalty to the Democratic party (Jones 2005).
167 Personal interview with Terry Nelson, August 19, 2005.
168 Personal interview with Darrin Klingler, July 27, 2005.
169 Personal interview with Matthew Dowd, July 26, 2004.
170 Croly 1914, 346.
171 Personal Interview with Karl Rove, November 15, 2001.
172 Skowronek 2005.
173 Significantly, Bush was much more of a drag on his party's candidates than was former President Clinton in 1994. More than a third (36 percent) of the electorate said they voted to oppose Bush; that compares with 27 percent who voted to oppose Clinton in 1994, and 21 percent in 1998, the year Congress impeached the president (Pew Research Center, 2006).
174 Thomas and Garber 2006.
175 McAuliffe 2006.
176 Wallsten 2006.
177 VandeHei and Balz 2006.
178 Christopher Shays trumpeted his independence from Bush in his campaign advertisements; Senator Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island emphasized his anti-war credentials on the campaign trail; Maryland Senate candidate Michael Steele failed to attend his own presidential fundraiser; and Senate candidates Bob Corker of Tennessee and Robert Menendez of New Jersey called for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's resignation (Nagourney and Rutenberg 2006).
179 Nagourney 2006.
180 Weisman 2007; Levey 2007.
181 Barnes 2007; McClatchy 2007.
182 Sandalow 2007.
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