that the NRA uses a distinct vocabulary to describe the in-group and adversarial out-groups. He also shows that the NRA's ideology shifted in the 1960s and 1970s. Before then, the NRA tied the importance of gun ownership to "collective security" and military preparedness, whereas since the 1970s—and even more so since the 1990s—it has focused on the Second Amendment as a guarantee against domestic tyranny. Furthermore, the text comparison technique shows that letters to the editor supporting gun rights are more likely than letters supporting gun control to employ identity-based language and use arguments and frames that the NRA used in earlier communications.

Analysis of the legislative process in both eras suggests that the NRA effectively mobilized its members (to the dismay of elected officials) and achieved significant legislative changes that frequently gutted key provisions, making federal gun control laws all but unenforceable. Lacombe asserts that a "subtle—but important—form of NRA influence" is its ability to get "policymakers [to] write weaker bills in the hope of avoiding a pro-gun mail campaign while also often including NRA-favored provisions that actually *weaken* existing aspects of gun regulation" (p. 135). Early on, it achieved its aims with no lobbying budget—a remarkable feat.

Survey analysis using national datasets further supports the contention that NRA members hold views about the media and the courts that mirror NRA beliefs. Based on the tight and careful identification strategy used in the text analysis, Lacombe suggests that we can assume that the direction of the effect flows from the NRA to the public. The NRA's ideas and gun owner identity have permeated the broader gun community, not only a few highly engaged members who write letters to the editor. What is more, Lacombe presents evidence that the NRA has more than infiltrated the Republican Party. During the Trump era, the NRA, through its tight hold on its mass membership, may have become the party's ideological leader.

*Firepower* is an important book not only because it substantiates one key mechanism through which the NRA exerts influence on politics, but also because it raises many new questions. For example, it is disappointing that the reader does not get a very good sense of who the NRA really is, despite the archival material. One chapter is called "The NRA's Quasi-Governmental Phase," but Lacombe's discussion is not very enlightening. Yet, "quasi-governmental" is a vital clue that suggests an access to power that is typically unavailable to membership groups such as the ACLU or the Brady Campaign. Similarly, how did the NRA come to be a quasi-monopoly in guns-related programming? Offering in-person services and being the only game in town are not the same thing, and very few membership organizations can achieve such a status. These issues are important because they suggest that creating a political identity may not be sufficient for attaining NRA-level success.

The mystery is compounded by Lacombe's suggestion of a temporal symmetry in NRA influence despite fluctuations in its membership levels. If the NRA achieved its goals with few members in the 1930s, why invest in recruiting millions? Could its members in the early part of the century have been qualitatively different—more influential—than later ones? Or did the NRA have avenues of influence then that were no longer available later? Lacombe's study documents one key source of NRA influence, but he leaves behind clues that suggest a much richer underlying tableau. To understand the NRA's influence, we need to embed the story of political identity-building into the broader historical context that gave rise to the association and allowed its ascent to political primacy. Only through contextualization can researchers determine whether this is a unique case or a model for building influence that other groups can effectively follow.

Overall, Lacombe's book is a worthy read because it provides a new lens through which to view the NRA and the development of the gun rights movement more broadly. Its reorientation of the discussion from material and partisan to psychological processes makes *Firepower* an important addition to any syllabus on gun politics and interest group politics.

**The Man of the People: Political Dissent and the Making of the American Presidency**. By Nathaniel C. Green. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020. 408p. $50.00 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592721003571

— Mel Laracey, *University of Texas at San Antonio*
Melvin.Laracey@utsa.edu

This book makes a notable contribution to the exploration of a fascinating historical question: How, so very soon after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, did a conception of the office of the presidency arise that was fundamentally at odds with the philosophy of most of the authors of that Constitution—and then became the dominant conception of the office?

As is well known, most of the framers were Federalists. As Green so aptly describes it in *The Man of the People: Political Dissent and the Making of the American Presidency*, the Federalist political philosophy involved several key precepts: "the obedient, compliant citizenry; the aloof executive; [and] the insistence that direct public civic engagement began and ended with voting in elections" (p. 98).

Yet just 12 years after the ratification of the constitution in 1788, Thomas Jefferson rode into office on a wave of democratic populism that represented an entirely different, "plebiscitary" conception of the office that has been described and analyzed by scholars including Theodore Lowi, Bruce Ackerman, and Stephen Skowronek. In this conception, "the American people were not the complaisant, deferential servants that Federalists insisted they

should be," writes Green. Instead, "they were a dynamic engaged people, united by … a belief that they ruled over the government and not the other way around" (p. 98). In other words, they believed the federal government "should directly reflect who the people were, rather than act as a tyrannical force subordinating them to its arbitrary authority" (p. xxviii). This meant that presidents, as the heads of this continuously responsive government, had the "essential duty to be intimately attuned to the majority of the citizenry, to recognize public criticism as a legitimate voice, and to work assiduously to facilitate their will into government action" (p. 89).

Today in America, there is no other viable conception of the office. Yet Jefferson described his election in 1800 as a "revolution in the principles of our government" and declared that this revolution had been just as profound as the American Revolution in 1776 (p. 202).

So how did this enduring, "second revolution" happen so quickly? Green's answer is found in the title of his book: it was the work of an extraordinary upwelling of dissent that started almost as soon as the new federal government began functioning with George Washington as president. The dissent was a reaction to a series of actions by Washington, his "prime minister" Alexander Hamilton, and the Federalist majorities in Congress. They included Washington's proclamation of neutrality in relations with the warring countries of France and England, Hamilton's bold federal economic proposals, and Washington's secretive efforts to ram the Jay Peace Treaty with Great Britain through the U.S. Senate with as little public involvement as possible (chapter 3). Then came the final straw: the presidency of ultra-Federalist John Adams, with its blatant attempt via the Sedition Act to stamp out any popular criticism of federal government officials (chapter 5).

In a unique contribution to scholarship in this area, Green shows, in engaging detail, how that dissent was manifested through the political newspapers of the time that circulated throughout the country. In issue after issue, in newspaper after newspaper, usually anonymous or pseudonymous commentators railed against the popularly disconnected, undemocratic tenor of Washington's presidency that seemed to be taking no account of national public opinion. When Washington, in 1795, cordially but airily publicly dismissed a respectfully worded letter of complaint to him about the Jay Treaty from some prominent Bostonians, these "Republicans," as they had begun calling themselves, became enraged and embarked on a five-year crusade against Federalist rule that culminated in their victory in 1800. In doing so, Green writes, "They made the presidency the possession of the American people, the young democracy's most powerful national symbol, its most coveted political prize" (p. xxiv).

Notably, Green also shows how this conception of the role of the president in American democracy was advocated for by a "broad American public, not merely elite white men cloistered in halls of government power" (p. xxix). As he points out, there was a nationwide flow of political information and commentary generated not just by top governmental leaders but also by more localized political operatives and elites. The messaging they produced both inspired and was inspired by the sentiments of otherwise voiceless "non-elites" who still managed to express their views via "public assemblies, written petitions, and even civil unrest." These "out of doors" actions would then be reported in the newspapers as evidence of the strong popular support for a popularly responsive federal government headed by a popularly responsive president (pp. xx, xxx).

Green's book presents chapter-length case studies of the presidencies of Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Andrew Jackson. It is in the accounts of the Washington and Adams presidencies that we see the vigorous promotion of the "modern" conception of the presidency by Republicans in response to the decidedly "non-modern" conception exhibited in those presidencies. Aided by the massive spread of Republican newspapers spawned by the adoption of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, that modern conception prevailed via Jefferson's election in 1800.

With that story told, Green shifts to another story in the chapters on Jefferson, Madison, and Jackson. That tale chronicles the constant streams of often vitriolic political criticism and attacks that each of these presidents endured. Although less analytically oriented than the first half of the book, this part is a good education in the time-honored techniques of political argumentation. With dissent over the popular role of the presidency in the American constitutional order having largely been resolved with Jefferson's election, the criticisms endured by Jefferson and his successors are, as portrayed in this book, more electorally oriented. The accounts show that, just like today, partisan critiques of presidents are generally grounded in one simple premise: presidents are good and above reproach if they are of one's own party, and quite the opposite if they are not.

Until fairly recently, the key role played by newspapers in political life in the early American republic had been mostly neglected by scholars. Jeffrey Pasley's "*The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (2002) showed brilliantly how these newspapers and their editors were effectively the "political lifeblood" of organized politics in America. My work, as seen in *Presidents and the People: The Partisan Story of Going Public* (2002) and *Informing a Nation: The Newspaper Presidency of Thomas Jefferson* (2021), has focused on how presidents themselves were able to use their own sponsored administration newspapers to promote themselves and their policies while still avoiding obvious conflict with the fading, Federalism-inspired view that presidents should be "above popular politics."

Green's book is a welcome addition to this area of scholarship. With its wide-ranging sampling of the



https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592721003571 Published online by Cambridge University Press

political rhetoric found in these early newspapers, it also provides an opportunity for interested readers to compare the rhetoric "back then" with what we have today. The phrasing may have been more flowery or convoluted, but otherwise one comes away with the impression that, as Green says in his epilogue, not much has changed. Dissent, as he shows, has always been an integral aspect, both positive and negative, of the American presidency.

**The Partisan Gender Gap: Why Democratic Women Get Elected but Republican Women Don't**. By Lauren Elder. New York: New York University Press, 2021. 229p. $89.00 cloth, $25.00 paper.
doi:10.1017/S1537592721003406

— Shannon McQueen, *West Chester University*
smcqueen@wcupa.edu

In *The Partisan Gender Gap*, Lauren Elder investigates why Democratic women representatives have outnumbered Republican women representatives over the last three decades. Elder pays attention to a phenomenon that has generally been ignored by the larger field, arguing that the partisan gender gap is not a random occurrence but instead an effect of structural and self-reinforcing dynamics inherent in the American political system. Using qualitative and quantitative data, she identifies how racial, ideological, and regional realignments—as well as differing partisan cultures—contribute to fewer electoral opportunities for Republican women compared to Democratic women.

The first chapter outlines the four overlapping theoretical frameworks used to explain the partisan gender gap among women in elective office: ideological realignment, regional realignment, racial realignment, and the impact of parties' distinct cultures on the recruitment of women candidates. Considering evolving party ideologies, Elder theorizes that states with more traditional cultures have fewer women in state legislatures than states with more moralistic political cultures. In a closely connected insight, Elder notes that regional realignment in the parties has reinforced ideological polarization, particularly in the South. She reasons that, for Republican women, realignment has resulted in a party that is strongest in regions most resistant to women office seekers (the South) and that is losing seats in areas more welcoming to women (the Northeast and West). Additionally, the realignment of the parties around race and the high levels of success for Democratic women of color increase the partisan gender gap. Finally, Elder notes that distinct partisan cultures likely accelerate the rise of Democratic women candidates. Whereas Democratic women face an identity-forward culture, the Republican Party's gender-neutral recruitment, disdain of identity politics, and reluctance to discuss the inherent value of electing women contribute to a culture in which Republican women candidates are less likely to be recruited or supported.

The second chapter explores the partisan gender gap within state legislatures. Elder first explores the gap's trajectory over three decades and to what degree it has coincided with the realignment of parties ideologically, racially, and geographically. She finds trends consistent with the impacts of realignment. Elder also capitalizes on the variation in the partisan gender gap at the state and regional levels, revealing suggestive trends about the importance of where Republican women run. The data suggest that as the Republican Party's foothold in the South grew, Republican women faced a more challenging electoral landscape, resulting in a problematic underrepresentation of Republican women in an area of the country where their party holds the most electoral power. Interestingly, Elder suggests that, as Democratic women have been able to make striking gains in the Northeast, Midwest, and South, geography is no longer an obstacle for Democratic women candidates. Elder attributes this difference in geographic importance to conservative attitudes about women's place in southern culture being concentrated among Republicans (and thus only constraining Republican women), more effective recruitment for Democratic women, and the strong performance of Democratic women of color. Elder also uses multivariate analysis to explore the factors that help or hinder the representation of Republican women, finding more support for the realignment frame. Whereas conservative states and strong parties are associated with fewer Republican women, women's presence in the eligibility pool, multimember districts, and increased women in partisan leadership positions are related only to increased numbers of Democratic women.

The third chapter establishes support for the realignment theories at the federal level. As with the state-level results, Elder finds that regional realignment negatively affects Republican women at the federal level because of the lack of Republican seats in "women-friendly" regions and the increase of Republican Party power in the South. She explores racial realignment using data on the racial/ethnic and gender background of congressional representatives over time, finding a comparatively stronger electoral performance of women of color than white women. To assess ideological realignment, Elder analyzes the educational, occupational, and political backgrounds of women members of the 116th Congress. This analysis suggests that Republican women have a greater reliance on state legislative experience as their path to power. This reliance is potentially unsustainable because of the shrinking number of Republican women in state legislatures, suggesting a widening partisan gender gap.

The fourth chapter explores the diverse party cultures and their impact on the recruitment of women candidates. Elder uses a wealth of descriptive data from 21 interviews with members of party organizations, women candidates and officeholders, and members of partisan groups