

**Ernst Fraenkel Vorträge**  
zur amerikanischen  
Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft und Geschichte

Herausgegeben von Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich

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Nelson W. Polsby

**The American Election of 1988:  
Outcome, Process, and Aftermath**

Richard E. Neustadt

**The American Presidential Transition:  
Constitutional Requirements and  
Policy Risks**

John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien  
der Freien Universität Berlin

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## Vorwort des Herausgebers

Diese Schriftenreihe des John F. Kennedy-Instituts der Freien Universität Berlin soll dazu beitragen, die Ergebnisse der Ernst Fraenkel Vorträge zur amerikanischen Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft und Geschichte über den Tag hinaus festzuhalten und einem breiteren Interessentenkreis auch außerhalb Berlins zugänglich zu machen. Die Vortragsreihe ist dem Deutsch-Amerikaner und weltweit bekannten Politik- und Amerikawissenschaftler Ernst Fraenkel gewidmet, der von 1951 bis 1967 an der Freien Universität Berlin lehrte und dessen Initiative 1963 zur Gründung des John F. Kennedy-Instituts für Nordamerikastudien führte. Wie Ernst Fraenkel mit seinem Leben und Wirken, so sollen auch diese Vorträge renommierter amerikanischer Wissenschaftler und Kenner der jeweiligen Themenbereiche zum wissenschaftlichen Brückenschlag über den Atlantik hinweg beitragen und Anregungen für die Forschung am Kennedy-Institut sowie an anderen europäischen Amerikainstituten vermitteln.

Dieses Heft enthält weitere Vorträge zum Rahmenthema "Die Präsidentschaft", die die Professoren Nelson W. Polsby (Direktor des Institute of Governmental Studies der University of California at Berkeley) am 14. Dezember 1988 und Richard E. Neustadt (John F. Kennedy School of Government der Harvard University) am 12. Januar 1989 im Kennedy-Institut hielten. Es schließt inhaltlich an das Heft 2 dieser Reihe an, in dem William Schneider "The Political Legacy of the Reagan Years" behandelte.

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Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich



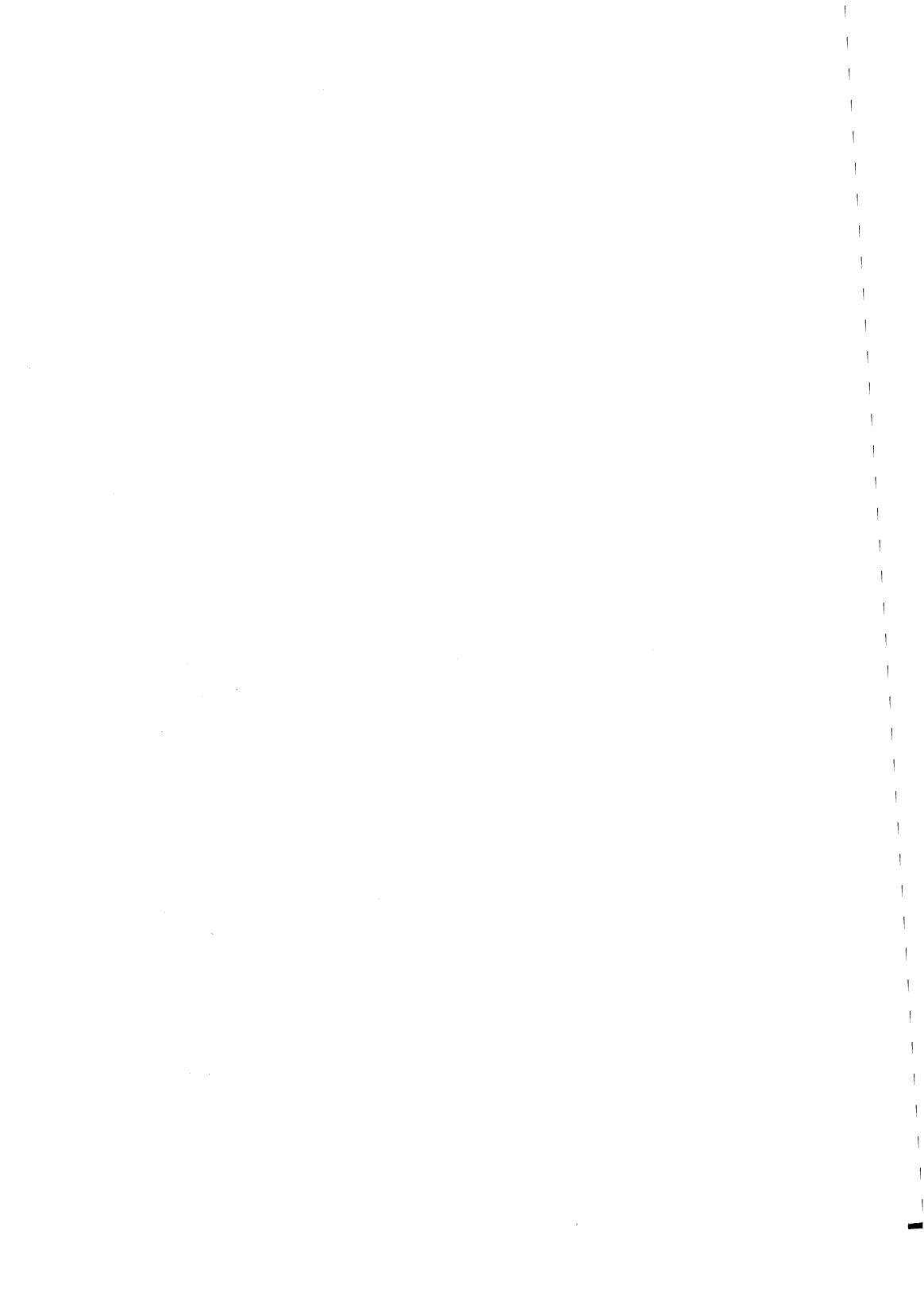
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## The American Election of 1988:

### Outcome, Process, and Aftermath

Nelson W. Polsby

My European friends tell me that because so much in the world depends upon the outcome of the American presidential elections, the rest of the world ought to be able to vote in these elections, just as Americans do. I doubt, somehow, that if we were to enlarge the American electorate in this fashion, the outcome would be any more defensible, sensible, or comprehensible than the situation that currently prevails. It would, however, add a layer of complication to what is already an enormously complicated process. Thus as a political scientist, I must record myself as strongly in favor of the proposal. Anything that makes the American political system a little harder to understand is good for business, and I am all for it. In the meantime, we must scrape by with such complexities as the current system provides.

This lecture will be in the nature of a report to what I nevertheless would like to think of as some of the outlying precincts of the American political system, to people who have every right and many reasons to be concerned, and interested, in the ways in which the American people have exercised their responsibilities of citizenship in the election of 1988.

The outcome has already been disclosed to you: George Bush representing the Republican party was elected President. By the rules of our constitution Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates are elected together<sup>1</sup> and so by virtue of Bush's victory Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana, who detracted significantly from Bush's popularity and from his margin of victory,<sup>2</sup> was elected Vice President. The Democratic party -- the majority party in the United States -- gained one seat in the Senate, winning 19 seats, and the Republicans won 14 seats of the 33 that were up for election. The new Senate will have 55 Democrats and 45 Republicans. In the House of Representatives, where the Democrats in the last Congress enjoyed a margin of 255 to 177, with three vacancies, the totals are now 260 Democrats and 175 Republicans, for a net gain of 3 Democrats. Democrats also gained a net of one governor: There are now 28 Democratic, 22 Republican governors.

In state legislative elections, very few seats changed parties, with Democrats evidently gaining a net of 10 seats overall. Twenty-eight bicameral state legislatures are now controlled by the Democratic party; only eight are controlled by the Republicans and thirteen are split between the two. The unique unicameral legislature of the State of Nebraska is elected and organized on an officially non-partisan basis.<sup>3</sup>

What explains this overall pattern of results? I believe we can quickly rule out one theory that is offered by axe-grinders -- mainly Democrats -- to the effect that this election was an ideological referendum in which one ideology emerged triumphant. An important oddity is that on the whole this is not a claim being made by Republicans. I think the reason is this. Claims of this sort are made because they are weapons of combat over decisions soon to be made within Congress or in the management of the two national parties. When Ronald Reagan brought a dozen new Republican Senators in with him in the 1980 election Reagan supporters sounded the battle cries of party realignment and conservative mandate because these slogans helped to mobilize Congressional Republican votes and to demoralize Democrats in Congress. Today the claim that the election was a referendum on liberalism and liberalism lost is mostly being used as a device by right-wing Democrats to attempt to increase their influence on the future of the Democratic party in such matters as the leadership and the activities of the Democratic National Committee.<sup>4</sup> When we hear, on the other hand, from Jesse Jackson and others that Democratic centrists have had their chance and now it is time to move briskly toward a strong, uncompromising affirmation of left-wing policies we are not really hearing an analysis of the electoral results either.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the actual picture is quite mixed on the ideological dimension. It is true, I am sure, that most people whose sympathies are on the right voted Republican, but that is also true in years when Democrats win the Presidency. It is true that people who call themselves liberal are many fewer than people who call themselves conservative -- or, especially, middle of the road -- in the population at large but that has been true for about 20 years and it has not stopped Democrats -- even liberal Democrats like, for example, Senator Howard Metzenbaum this year in Ohio or liberal Republicans like Senator-elect Jim Jeffords in Vermont -- from winning elections.<sup>6</sup>

The data on ideology are extremely difficult to interpret. On the whole, American voters are centrist in their ideological dispositions. They frequently want government action in areas that cost money but they don't like to tax themselves. They have changed their minds over the years on such issues as expenditures for



national defense. They support both death penalties and gun control. In short, public opinion on specific issues is ideologically mixed -- if anything with a liberal slant -- but in any case is very much subject to signals from leaders.<sup>7</sup> As for inferences from the election results themselves, it is hard to harmonize disparate results in which Democrats won and Republicans won, liberals won and conservatives won, into a straightforward and uncomplicated tune such as ideologists wish the Democratic party to sing. So I shall not try to warble further in this vein.

There are, in any case, better and more plausible theories to consider. I shall mention three. They refer, respectively, to peace and prosperity, to the conduct of the campaign, and to structural properties of the parties and the nominating process. And I think all three have merit.

The first theory is refreshingly straightforward. It says, simply, that if nothing is badly disturbing the electorate, then incumbents will do well. George Bush was of course not an incumbent president, but as the sitting Vice President he was as close to an incumbent president as it is possible to be without actually being an incumbent president. In the election incumbents whether they were Democrats or Republicans did extraordinarily well for all offices, as they do in conditions of peace and prosperity. And most, of course were Democrats. Those scholars who use fancy models to attempt to forecast elections have, on the whole, employed assumptions stressing such variables as the condition of the economy somewhat in advance of the election and they all produced numbers suggesting a Bush victory.<sup>8</sup> Indeed some of them did so even during the spring and summer months when Michael Dukakis was leading George Bush by a wide margin in the public opinion polls.

The second theory also seems to me entirely plausible. It points out that Vice President Bush ran an effective campaign and Governor Dukakis did not. Jerry Roberts of the San Francisco Chronicle gave an excellent summary of professional opinion on this subject, noting the following features of the Dukakis campaign:

"A fatal reluctance to respond to Bush's bareknuckles attacks. The Republican hit Dukakis as weak on defense and soft on crime, attacking him over the Pledge of Allegiance, prison furloughs and the death penalty. By the time Dukakis fired back in late fall, it was too late. Many voters by then believed the attacks because they had gone unanswered.

A failure to find a consistent campaign theme. Running against peace and prosperity, Dukakis tried campaigning on competence, the middle class squeeze

and the unfairness of Bush's attacks before settling on traditional Democratic economic populism in the closing weeks of the race.

A disastrous media campaign. Matched against Bush's state-of-the-art television commercials – which meshed precisely with the message he was delivering on the campaign trail – Dukakis' shifting set of ads had little impact. They were produced by a series of media specialists and drafted by committee, and were criticized as confusing, obscure and without much content.

'We absolutely should have won this race,' said California Democratic Party Chairman Peter Kelly. 'What happened was George Bush defined Mike Dukakis before Dukakis defined himself.'<sup>9</sup>

The technique used by the Bush campaign was not new. Indeed it was precisely the strategy employed by Senator Alan Cranston in his reelection battle in 1986 against the relatively little known Representative Ed Zschau in California. The better known candidate has the strategic opportunity of attempting to characterize his opponent in a negative way at the very start of a campaign, thus requiring the newcomer to waste resources in trying to overcome negative first impressions planted by his opponent. This was, in fact, the Bush strategy. As Bush's political advisor Roger Ailes, said,

"We always knew we would have to define Dukakis... and whichever of us defined the other and ourselves most effectively would win..."

You've got to understand (Ailes continued) that the media has no interest in substance. Print has a little more interest because they have to fill a lot of lines. But electronic media has no interest in substance.

There are three ways to get on the air: pictures, attacks, and mistakes, so what you do is spend your time avoiding mistakes, staying on the attack and giving them pictures."<sup>10</sup>

Dukakis, whose admirable quality of self-restraint served him well during the primary election season, had never before run in an election where the electorate was not completely dominated by Democrats. Entirely confident in his own identity as a frugal and enlightened Democratic centrist with an outstanding record as a public servant (though with no foreign policy record at all), he rejected advice to hit back and early and voluntarily passed up opportunities to explain himself with the broad brush that makes for easy comprehension by the inattentive. He refused help on the patriotism issue from John Glenn and he attacked Bush very little, going so far in one report as to ban the use of the term "country club" in any of his speeches. As a member of the Dukakis team said of the Bush negative campaign:

"We used to read this stuff and laugh and say 'How can this be? Why would people take this seriously?'"<sup>11</sup>

It is possible to dwell too long on particulars of the campaign. There is unusually strong agreement this year among campaign professionals that Dukakis campaigned badly in the general election. This overlooks the fact that he did well enough in the primary season and in dealing with Jesse Jackson thereafter and in his Vice Presidential pick. There is, likewise, strong agreement that the Bush campaign was well tailored to make the best of the Vice President's chances, conveniently overlooking the selection of Dan Quayle. So if we accept the professional assessment of the effects of the campaign -- as on the whole I do -- we must do so in the face of the fact that every winning campaign looks better in retrospect and every losing campaign looks worse than it probably was.

Of the third theory I am especially fond, because it helps us understand not only the election of 1988 but the entire set of Presidential elections over the last 20 years and not only Presidential elections, where Republicans have been so successful, but also the great and persistent anomaly in the American political system in which there is Republican success in Presidential elections while at the same time Democratic dominance overall, as measured by electoral success at all other levels, party identifications and party registrations.

Because I have written at such tedious length on this subject elsewhere I will try to be brief on this occasion.<sup>12</sup> Essentially, the argument is that since the drastic reforms of the Presidential nominating process that took place in the wake of the chaotic 1968 Democratic National Convention, the system has changed radically from a coalition-building regime to a factional mobilization regime. Over the long run this harms Democrats and helps Republicans in the general election because the Democrats, although they are the larger of the two parties, are also far more factionally fragmented and therefore greatly disadvantaged in a long nomination process in which there are no incentives or occasions for coalition formation. Because the Republicans are much more easily mobilized and coordinated through their basic ideological similarities, the lack of coalition-building incentives harms them less. In the one election since 1968 when Republican competition was as fierce and as persistent in the nomination process as it always is on the Democratic side, the Republicans lost the general election. That was in 1976. But in all other elections since 1968 it has been the divisions within the Democratic party, and the accentuation of these divisions during a long and arduous campaign for the nomination, that has harmed the chances of the Democratic party to compete successfully in the general elections, and Republicans have won on the strength of

Democratic defections at the Presidential level while the Democrats have won elections for most of the other offices on the ballot all over the country.

Before the reforms of 1969-70 there were, to be sure, primary elections. But they occurred in only a few states and most of them were purely advisory and not binding in the selection of delegates to national party conventions. The most important purpose of primaries was to demonstrate the relative popularity of candidates in a trial heat situation so as to supply information to the real decision-makers in the Presidential nomination process -- state party leaders. Party leaders could ignore evidence of popularity if they chose to do so -- and indeed as they did, for example, in the case of Estes Kefauver in 1952. Kefauver was regarded as unacceptable for many reasons, relevant and otherwise, by Democratic party leaders who knew him and did not like or trust him even though he was a highly successful primary campaigner. On the Republican side in that year, party leaders heeded the evidence of the overwhelming popularity of Dwight Eisenhower in the Minnesota primary, where one hundred thousand voters wrote his name on their ballots. This almost certainly turned the tide against "Mr. Republican," Robert A. Taft.

The point is, before the reforms nominations were settled by agreement and by coalition building. The reforms are, many of them, now encoded into state laws but in any event they are centrally enforced by national party officials primarily in the Democratic party and consist of rules governing the seating of delegates to the national party convention. These rules have given powerful incentives for state party leaders to remove themselves from the delegate selection process altogether. And now delegate selection is done mostly through open caucuses and primary elections in which candidates go state by state seeking allies and votes -- mobilizing their factions -- so as to come out ahead of the other candidates who are doing the same thing. In a coalition-building regime, second choices count for a great deal in case during the deliberation process no first choice commands a majority. In a factional mobilization regime, which has no deliberative process, it is first-past-the-post the earlier the better that matters. It is true that delegates may be allocated within states on a proportional scheme, but it is coming out ahead that counts, because what is really important is reaching the electorates in successive primary elections with the free publicity that winning brings. The idea is to develop "momentum," the publicity that helps so much to mobilize the faction in the next trial heat, and the next.<sup>13</sup> And so what happens early in the game matters enormously because of the publicity generated by these early events.

These forces do not necessarily operate in a perfectly straightforward way, as the events of this year's nominating process illustrate. Party regulations require that all delegates must be selected in the calendar year of the general election. And the first delegate-selecting events in the nation took place at open caucuses in the state of Iowa.

I went to Iowa, and with a group of other political scientists, watched what happened at one of the four thousand or so caucuses that took place on the night of February 8. I watched the caucus of the Democratic Party of the 4th precinct of Johnson County, 289 or 287 strong, depending on the count you use, all gathered together in the auditorium of the Lincoln School of Iowa City, Iowa. Before the Democrats got their act together, I stuck my head in where the 4th Precinct Republicans were meeting -- in the kindergarten room, as it happens, and there they were, about 60 Republicans, sitting decorously on those tiny little kindergarten chairs, chatting quietly and behaving just as though they were waiting for a string quartet concert to begin. Even in middle class Iowa, the Democrats were more disorderly. They had the task of selecting 9 delegates to the Johnson County caucus of the Democratic party a month hence. The county caucus would send delegates to the congressional district convention a month after that, and they would elect delegates to the Iowa state convention which in turn would send delegates to the national convention of the Democratic party in July.

The candidates, as I have said many times, are as flotsam on a roiling sea of process, and that's a whole lot of process right there. At least on the Democratic side, this process had something to do with the actual selection of actual delegates to the national convention. On the Republican side there was one major difference. Before they got down to business, they conducted a straw poll ballot, at each precinct caucus. It was the results of this straw poll on the Republican side -- not the real delegate selections -- that were phoned into the networks who in turn reported the Iowa results to the waiting world.

This underscores the fact that the real significance of these early skirmishes is not simply what happens at them -- it is what the news media say about them that matters. As we all know, the big story of Iowa -- and there always has to be one big story -- is that Pat Robertson came in second and George Bush came in third in the Republican straw poll. That's how it played on television that night as the returns came in, and for the rest of the week between Iowa and the New Hampshire primary election. By the way -- at the Republican August Convention itself Robert Dole came out the winner in Iowa -- as he had in the straw poll -- with 16

delegates. But Robertson got only ~~two~~ Iowa delegates and Bush got 12. Nevertheless, February 8th in Iowa was Pat Robertson's night.

Obviously, that was bound to have some impact on the Republican race -- but not as much as on the race on the Democratic side. Because what really happened in Iowa was that the Robertson blip absorbed so much media attention it seriously endangered the Democratic winner, Richard Gephardt's, chances of capitalizing on his Iowa win to become the focal alternative to Michael Dukakis in New Hampshire.

Everybody knew that in the pre-primary period Governor Dukakis was doing well at mobilizing his faction. He was well financed by money flowing in from Greek-Americans from all over the country, and from contributions from people doing business with the State of Massachusetts. The election calendar was also very much in Dukakis' favor, since the next stop of the marathon -- and the first primary election - was in New Hampshire.<sup>14</sup> New Hampshire is increasingly an economic and communications satellite of Massachusetts and Dukakis had recently made himself popular with many New Hampshire Democrats by blocking a safety plan necessary for the operation of the Seabrook nuclear reactor in New Hampshire just over the Massachusetts border.

But first there was the rather important Iowa hurdle.<sup>15</sup> Remember in 1984 what happened on the Democratic side: a miserable 15 percent second place showing in Iowa made Gary Hart a media darling and made him the New Hampshire alternative to Walter Mondale. Or remember what happened in 1976 on the Democratic side: fully 38 percent of the Iowans who showed up to a Democratic caucus in that year voted to remain uncommitted.

Here is how Johnny Apple wrote about 1976 in the next morning's New York Times:

"Former Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia scored an impressive victory in yesterday's Iowa Democratic precinct caucuses, demonstrating strength among rural, blue-collar, black, and suburban voters.

Mr. Carter defeated his closest rival, Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, by a margin of more than 2-1, and left his other four challengers far behind. The uncommitted vote, which many Iowa politicians had forecast at more than 50 percent, amounted to only about a third of the total, slightly more than that of Mr. Carter."<sup>16</sup>

This article, with its strong and coherent story line, cast a long shadow. It contained many elements that in later years would worry journalists -- notably the use of such a word as "impressive" (to whom?) in the lead of what ostensibly was a

news story and the belittling of the uncommitted vote because of the disappointed "forecasts" or expectations of anonymous politicians.

Elizabeth Drew's diary for the day after the 1976 Iowa caucuses said:

"This morning, Carter, who managed to get to New York on time, was interviewed on the CBS Morning News, the Today Show and ABC's Good Morning America also ran segments on Carter. On the CBS Evening News, Walter Cronkite said that the Iowa voters have spoken "and for the Democrats what they said was 'Jimmy Carter'".<sup>17</sup>

I will put those of you who can't remember the actual percentage of the vote that Jimmy Carter won in Iowa in 1976 out of your misery: it was 29 percent.

In 1988 Richard Gephardt got 31 percent in Iowa. The Wall Street Journal reported that in the following week -- leading into New Hampshire -- the coverage he got on the network evening news programs actually went down from the week preceding -- from 6:05 minutes to 4:55 minutes.<sup>18</sup> This destroyed Gephardt's candidacy; and this is how Pat Robertson came to have more influence on the Democratic nomination than on the nomination of his own party.

It is no secret, I think, that overdependence upon media spin is now part and parcel of how the game of presidential nominations is played. Although this tends to give the news media too much power, and it enormously exaggerates the pathologies characteristic of the news media -- pack journalism, the tendency to hyperbole, the great stress on what candidates say, and so on -- it isn't, in my judgment, the fault of American journalists that in the aftermath of the 1968 debacle the political parties -- and especially the Democratic party -- chose to abdicate their responsibility to nominate their candidate for President, and instead gave the power over to mass electorates to do the job for them. But it means that analysts have to spend a lot of time talking about the role of the news media.

It is very frequently said that the media raise the wrong things to talk about, that they are too intrusive, and that they concentrate on personalities and on the horse race questions of who's ahead and who's behind rather than on important things, whatever they are. But why shouldn't they talk about personalities? It seems to me the personalities of prospective candidates should matter a great deal.

Owing to the coincidences of this election year, when we speak of "personalities" or "character" we are probably referring to the publicity surrounding Gary Hart's disastrous candidacy and to whether he went to Bimini on a boat named, or engaged in, Monkey Business, or whether Dan Quayle did or did not dodge the Vietnam draft in an acceptable way. Are these topics the sort of thing that news media should not have covered? I'd like to put that issue into some

perspective. We are talking about selecting somebody to be President of the United States, or a heartbeat away from the Presidency, pretty important positions. Presidents get a lot of leeway in deciding how they will do their job, and so what sort of a person a President is will actually matter significantly in job performance.

We decide who gets to be President by having an election, in which roughly 85 million or so Americans make choices between candidates who are total strangers to most of us. Mass electorates also do most of the choosing in the nomination part of the process, since that process is completely dominated by open caucuses and primary elections in which voters state by state vote for these total strangers.

So what do voters do for information that can help them to decide for whom they wish to vote? Virtually none of us has private sources of information. Everything we know is given to us by the news media. They tell us about horse races, true enough. But voters find this information useful since they need to guess which candidates are viable out of what in the early primaries may be a very extensive menu. They want to vote, if possible, for a candidate likely to survive the winnowing process as time goes on.<sup>19</sup> Of course, these sorts of calculations contribute to self-fulfilling prophecies in which contributions dry up, publicity dries up, and therefore votes disappear for prospective candidates who are behind in the early horse race, and pretty soon they can't overcome the momentum of the competition. And then it's goodbye Al Haig and goodbye Bruce Babbitt, and au revoir Pete DuPont, courtesy of Iowa and New Hampshire, and well before Californians and other participants in the later primaries have a chance to express their preferences. So the order in which the state selection processes are run has a big influence on the outcome.

What about the criticism that the news media dwell too much on "character" and "personalities"? The argument here is that they shouldn't mention character because a politician's character is somehow private and nobody's business. I don't see how anybody can possibly believe this argument. Because character isn't just monkey business. It's also whether a candidate is flexible or frozen, selfish or public spirited, cooperative or a loner, grim or humorous, lazy or industrious, truthful or an exaggerator, possessed of a normal ego or a stuffed shirt, bright or dim, scrupulous or a con man, cynical or idealistic, shadow or substance, a work horse or a show horse. I'm sure everyone can find a favorite American politician somewhere in that list. Why shouldn't we want to know these things? It is bound to affect the way public business gets done.



And yet, it is said, when we attempt to pay attention to the personal characteristics of candidates we are ignoring "the issues": where they stand on nuclear disarmament and budget deficits and trade balances and so forth.

I think it is interesting to find out where politicians stand on issues, but the fact is many politicians -- especially those who run for president as members of the same party -- stand just about in the same place on most issues as many other politicians. And in some election years, the candidates may be reluctant to talk much about issues except in vague generalities. They may prefer to speak in praise of "competence" or "values" or to lead friendly audiences in pledges of allegiance to the flag. It's enough to make observers nostalgic for those stirring times when we debated important things like the defense of Quemoy and Matsu. And so the real problem for ordinary voters may be how hard it is to make inferences about what sort of Presidency candidates can actually deliver.

To figure that out, I believe we have to know about a third category of information -- and in this category it seems to me the media could be stronger. This is the record of performance that prospective candidates have made as public officials. I should say immediately that so far as I am concerned, if a candidate has no prior record as a public official, and therefore if elected would be taken completely by surprise by the work that has to be done, that candidate ought not to be taken seriously as a prospective President of the United States. Such people should hold some other public office first, in order to find out whether they can do any public job.

But as for the candidates who have such a record, I offer two alternative approaches. In one case, we count up the votes or the public stands on various issues and figure out who has the profile that most agrees with our preferences. I call this the eighth grade report card, and I recommend that citizens use this approach sparingly -- because, as I have mentioned, it says nothing about whether the candidate can deliver on his promises and nothing about how practical any of his proposals is.

The alternative is the kindergarten report card. I want to know, and I think the American people should want to know, how well the candidate gets along with the other children. The American constitution says that governing is a cooperative enterprise in the United States -- most notably between the President and Congress. I weigh very heavily -- as I think all Americans should -- the fact that some candidates have the support and the high esteem of their colleagues -- people who have worked with them -- and some clearly do not. Some candidates may have held important jobs but nobody can point to any actual accomplishments in those

jobs and some have actually done things. Some take more credit for accomplishments than they are entitled to.

Far from being too intrusive and too inquisitive I should say that the news media are too tentative and too timid in dealing with this set of concerns. They don't tell us enough about performance in public office. We can ask ourselves, for example, what we learned in our very long campaign about George Bush's actual work as CIA Director, Ambassador to the UN and to China, chairman of the Republican National Committee or member of Congress.

The reason it is necessary to tax the news media with this responsibility, which after all is actually our responsibility as citizens to inform ourselves is simply this: for most of the people who vote in primary and in general elections, they have nowhere else to turn in order to inform themselves and thereby to make even a minimally informed choice.

It seems to me there is a significant short circuit in the system: the fact that we know a candidate's name does not necessarily go hand in hand with the possession of relevant information about performance. Yet name recognition is what produces big numbers in the public opinion polls. Favorable publicity can produce a powerful bounce. These polls, when they are conscientiously done, are faithful samples of some significant population. Who turns out to a caucus or to vote in a primary may not be, indeed almost certainly will not be, a faithful sample, however. It is important to stress this point because in some simple-minded versions of democratic theory the mere fact that large numbers of people appear at polling places is sufficient to sanctify a nomination process.

In other versions of democratic theory, the fact that voting takes place is not enough. If the people who turn out are an unrepresentative subset of the relevant electorate, which in the case of a party nomination would be all rank and file party identifiers, then it is important to ask: who is voting? And what do their votes mean? The meaning of an election may be hard to fathom: if the alternatives on offer are very numerous, as is generally true at the beginning of the nomination process, and each voter has only a single, nontransferable vote, then the results of the election may be extremely difficult to interpret. Suppose, for example, a George Wallace, or some other extremist who is the strong first preference of 30 percent of the party electorate, comes out ahead of the six other more moderate candidates in the race? Does democratic theory demand that he be declared the nominee even if he is the last choice of the 70 percent of the voters who spread their votes among the other six? Run-off elections have been devised to attempt to deal with this problem. But there are no run-off primary elections.

In a system where most of the delegates to national party conventions are selected by candidates themselves, pursuant to popular caucuses and primary election results, winning for a candidate means, as I have said, coming out of these primary elections and caucuses ahead of the others, not winning a majority of votes. Thus candidates mobilize their factions of first-choice voters, and ignore building a majority coalition. The eventual nominee is the candidate with the biggest and most faithful faction. He may never have to come to terms with the rest of his party at all to get the nomination. So there is a lot of incentive for primary candidates to speak ill of one another. Recall also that the general election campaign -- the one between the nominees of the two major parties -- is entirely subsidized by the federal treasury, which means that the nominee never has to ask for financial support from anybody, and is free to ignore the raising of so-called soft money for party-building and turnout generating purposes while running a general election campaign that bypasses party alliances and goes straight to the population at large with television ads featuring flag factories and other key images of modern American life.

As many people now realize, this is not a set of rules or political structures that strengthens political parties. State party leaders, who news media people insist on calling "party bosses" even though very few of them even remotely meet that description, have, by and large, been excluded from the party Presidential nominating process. And we therefore have to do our best to sort out the candidates on our own.

At least, in the general election, voters have the aid of the party label to guide them. The party label, as it happens, is for perhaps three-quarters of American voters a useful guide. The rest do the best they can by attending to media advertising or news coverage or such events as our televised so-called debates. From none of these, regrettably, are we likely to receive the information we need to make intelligent inferences about the sort of Presidency a candidate is likely to give us.

But there are clues to be garnered from the background and long-term record of public service that an incoming President carries with him into the Presidency, and from the earliest appointments he makes to leadership positions in his administration.<sup>20</sup> Watching new presidents put together their cabinets is a good index of long-term presidential intentions and prospects for governing and may also say something eloquent about the factional structure of the president's party. We must remember that American cabinets have absolutely no collective responsibility or power. When they meet en masse with the president it is

nowadays usually for ceremonial purposes only. The title "member of the cabinet" simply applies to appointed -- not elected -- heads of major executive departments of the American national government and to a small number of presidentially designated White House staff members.

Devoted cabinet-watchers have noticed that over any given president's term of office, cabinet members appointed early in the game are on average more qualified by personal and ideological compatibility with the President, less qualified by technical capacity or subject matter knowledge than those appointed later in the term. Early appointments may be a better signal of what presidents wish to do, or to appear to be doing, than of what they can actually accomplish. Toward the end of the last two presidencies, presidents made symbolic gestures in their cabinet appointments as ways of mobilizing support for the upcoming election. Thus Jimmy Carter belatedly reached out to make alliances with the grand coalition of Democrats that he had sorely neglected for most of his term of office in his appointments to cabinet positions of the mayor of New Orleans, the mayor of Portland, Oregon, and a prominent Chicago Jewish business leader. Ronald Reagan appointed a Hispanic American Secretary of Education plus two friends and supporters of George Bush to his lame duck cabinet.

These maneuvers hint at the variety of populations from which Presidents draw cabinet members. Cabinet members have responsibilities upward to the President, downward to their own bureaucracies -- some of which include sizeable groups of professionals with their own norms and beliefs about the right way to do things -- and outward to the clientele served by their agencies.

At least five different pools of talent exist for Presidents to draw upon:

(1) Members of the President's own entourage. These are likely to be loyal to the President but may not operate successfully in the rarified air of national government. John Kennedy's Massachusetts mafia, with a few exceptions, learned to adapt. Jimmy Carter's Georgians, with exceptions, did not. Nor did most of Ronald Reagan's cabinetlevel Californians leave Washington with enhanced reputations.

(2) Old Washington hands. These provide a set of advantages and disadvantages complementary to presidential friends. They bring to an administration general knowledge of how the government works and operational skills, but how loyal are they? How loyal was David Stockman? Not as loyal to Reagan, clearly, as Lloyd Cutler was, and is, to Jimmy Carter.

(3) Members of interest groups whose inclusion at the cabinet level sends a symbolic signal that enhances political support for the administration. The Reagan

administration tended to relegate women and blacks -- two categories of Americans who must appear somewhere in a President's cabinet -- to posts where they were not expected to accomplish very much. Symbolic appointees may lack competence or may act with great, and embarrassing, independence, two risks for Presidents as they pursue this strategy of appointment.

(4) Technical and subject matter specialists are frequently appointed to the State, Treasury or Defense Departments, to the Office of Management and Budget, and the Council of Economic Advisors. Specialists are not as interchangeable in their subject matter as old Washington hands, but rather tend to have served an earlier apprenticeship as assistant secretaries in their respective departments. These appointees tend to know where the bodies are buried in their departments and may even get along well with Congress. They are likely to have strong professional views about the substance of policy. Presidents thus do well to make sure these views are compatible with what the President wants.

Finally, (5), each department and each party serves interest group clientele who may offer up candidates for cabinet posts: environmental preservationists for Democratic Secretaries of the Interior, let us say, or advocates of environmental development on the Republican side. Republican bankers like Treasury Secretary-designate Nicholas Brady and stock brokers sometimes enter public service by this route, as do liberal Democratic lawyers. Defeated politicians or political leaders at the state and local level who are appointed to the cabinet frequently are appointed because they have strong alliances with sectionally important interest groups, such as mid-west dairy farmers or people in the oil business.

Most Presidents draw from all five pools in picking leading members of their administration. If they are lucky, they can get a few appointees who overlap two or even three categories -- as Bush's close friend James Baker now does after eight years as a Washington figure in the Reagan Administration. How adroitly the President elect manages the mixture will tell a great deal not only about the character of the program he will put together but also about the prospects that this program will receive adequate political support in Congress and in the country.

So far, what signals is George Bush sending? I am just old enough to remember 1948 when everyone was sure that Harry Truman was going to lose the election. Some of the magazines began putting out stories about the probable Thomas E. Dewey Presidential staff and cabinet.<sup>21</sup> Of course it never happened -- until now. Dewey was the Republican Governor of New York, with strong Wall Street legal and eastern establishment connections. George Bush has spent many years in an ill-fitting disguise as an adopted Texan, in spite of body language,

clothing, education, speech patterns, and family background that proclaim him even more than Dewey a quintessentially northeastern upper-class WASP.<sup>22</sup> He is the second son of the late Prescott Bush, a New York investment banker in the firm of Brown Brothers, Harriman -- who in the years George was growing up was moderator of the representative town meeting of Greenwich, Connecticut and after that became a U.S. Senator from Connecticut. Prescott Bush was the son of a Columbus, Ohio steel manufacturer. Unlike the vast bulk of American teenagers, he went away to boarding school, to St. George's, in Newport, Rhode Island, and thereafter to Yale, where he played baseball and golf, joined the honorific secret society Skull and Bones, and sang bass with the Whiffenpoofs. This foreshadows George Bush's early life rather well: George Bush in his turn went to Greenwich Country Day School, Andover and Yale, where, like his father, he played baseball and joined Skull and Bones. Prescott Bush served in World War I; George Bush served, with distinction, in World War II.<sup>23</sup> After marrying a northeastern member of his own class and graduating from Yale he moved to Texas, and with a sizeable stake of capital from the New York investment banking community with which his family was connected, he entered the oil business. His siblings stayed mostly in the northeast and he and his family always summered at his mother's family retreat in Kennebunkport, Maine, among -- as they say in that neck of the woods -- his own kind. As soon as he made a modest fortune in Permian Basin oil he moved to Houston, and ran for Congress. His closest Texas friends are evidently Ivy Leaguers and prep school graduates.

It is interesting to recount these details of Presidentelect Bush's social identity in part because he has striven so long to de-emphasize the north-east and accentuate the Texas in his background. Membership in the American social elite does not confer great advantages in electoral politics. But it may nevertheless play an important role in supplying the intellectual influences that have formed the President-elect's character and his basic political outlook.

One never knows with certainty about these things, but I'll bet George Bush grew up reading the old New York Herald Tribune, and that on the Herald Tribune editorial page of the 1940s and '50s we can find his center of intellectual gravity even today: in international affairs, Anglophile, Eurocentric, oriented to east-west concerns rather than north-south concerns; in domestic affairs charitable but parsimonious, full of noblesse oblige and public spiritedness, paternalistic, mindful of excessive expenditures, but comfortable with capital formation and economic boosterism. Not a Main Street Republican but a Wall Street Republican, who would care, therefore, what foreign capital markets think of the President and

who may take rather for granted the concerns of ordinary Americans except as they can be satisfied with symbolic gestures of leadership.

His first cluster of top appointments include his old friend James Baker, a Texan who was educated at the Hill School in Pennsylvania and went to college at Princeton; Nicholas Brady, a native New Yorker, a graduate of St. Mark's School, and of the Yale class of '52, and head of the New York investment firm of Dillon-Read; former Pennsylvania governor and assistant attorney general Richard Thornburgh, Yale '54; Lauro Cavazos, a Hispanic Texan; and a couple of Washington technicians: Richard Darman and Brent Scowcroft. About the selection of Dan Quayle as Vice President I have one vagrant thought: Bush reminds me of one or two of the prep school teachers I have known, and Quayle of one or two of the attractive, friendly, docile, athletic, intellectually lazy, and gritless prep school students whom prep school teachers of a rather conventional sort liked. The Bush-Quayle ticket is, I believe, the first all-Episcopalian ticket in modern times. Like Prescott Bush, Dan Quayle is an avid golfer. He even belongs to the same college fraternity -- Delta Kappa Epsilon -- as George Bush.

Right away we can discern a sharp difference between Bush and his predecessor. Bush is an old Washington hand and is comfortable with and respectful of prevailing Washington wisdom on a wide range of public policies; Reagan was capable of obliviousness to received knowledge when it conflicted with ideology or with wishful thinking. Reagan's personal entourage came with him from California; Bush's staff is already in Washington, and many of his long-term personal connections are with Washington people.

If any of these observations turn out to be true and significant we can guess that rather soon we shall be hearing complaints from the right wing of the Republican party that the policy equivalents of right-wing Texas pork rinds have been banished from the White House. If political expediency requires lip service to right wing social issues, or even more than lip service, Bush seems to me acquiescent enough to make some efforts in that direction. But I do not believe any more than right-wing Republicans believe that his heart is in star wars, abortion prevention or school prayer.

In fact, right-wing Republicans may make quite a lot of noise, but the really severe pressures on the Bush Presidency will initially come from another quarter altogether: the Democratic-controlled Congress. Bush must find ways of working out with Congress the four big policies on the top of the national agenda. All four of them are linked together: deficit reduction, taxes, entitlements and defense expenditures, and Congress and the President must negotiate not only substantive

measures to deal with them all, but also timing and the phased allocation of credit and blame. All this will loom very large as President Bush begins his administration and will amply exercise his talents for compromise and conciliation.

Let me close by thanking you for your patience and your interest in hearing a few of my conjectures on the process, the results and the aftermath of the 1988 edition of the amazing electoral process that we Americans have contrived for ourselves. And, as our friends abroad properly remind us, not for ourselves alone.



Notes:

<sup>1</sup> United States Constitution, Twelfth Amendment.

<sup>2</sup> George Gallup, Jr., and Alec Gallup, "Post-Election Poll Examines Factors Leading to Bush Victory", Gallup Poll press release, November 20, 1988. See "Poll Shows Quayle Cost Bush Many Votes", San Francisco Chronicle, November 16, 1988, p. A 17.

<sup>3</sup> A thorough round-up of all these results can be found in Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report 46 (November 12, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Ben Wattenberg, "The Curse of Jesse", New Republic (December 5, 1988), pp. 20-21.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Robert Kuttner, "Incompetent Ideology", *ibid*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>6</sup> Here is how Americans have identified themselves ideologically since 1972:

	Year							
	1972	1974	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal	19	21	16	20	17	15	18	18
Middle of road	27	26	25	27	20	22	23	28
Conservative	27	26	25	28	28	27	29	28
Don't know	28	27	33	27	36	36	30	25
Number of respondents	2155	2478	2839	2284	1565	1400	2229	2170

Based on answers to the question: "We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?" "Liberal" = "extremely liberal" + "liberal" + "slightly liberal"; "Conservative" = "extremely conservative" + "conservative" + "slightly conservative".

Warren E. Miller, et al, American National Election Studies Data Sourcebook, 1952-1978 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 95; Center for Political Studies, The American National Election Study, 1980, vol. 1: Pre- and Post-Election Surveys, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1982), pp. 150-151; Center for Political Studies, American National Election Study, 1982: Post-

Election Survey File, 1st ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1983), pp. 219-220; Center for Political Studies, American National Election Study, 1984: Pre- and Post-Election Survey File, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1986), pp. 186-187; Center for Political Studies, American National Election Study, 1986: Post-Election Survey, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1987), pp. 189-190.

This sort of information is quite sensitive to the wording of the question, and may not translate easily into specifics, as the next footnote illustrates.

<sup>7</sup> For example, here are recent Gallup figures on a number of issues generally thought to array themselves along a left-right dimension:

	Spending for Government Programs			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	%	%	%	%
Medical, health care	67	24	4	5
Public education	66	22	7	5
Food programs	44	35	15	6
Space programs	26	41	24	9
Defense, military	17	42	35	6

- (1) Increased
- (2) Kept the same
- (3) Reduced, eliminated
- (4) No opinion

From the Gallup Poll, no. 273 (July 1988), p. 4. Interviewing dates: June 24-26, 1988.

For more on elite leadership of public opinion, see John R. Zaller, "The Role of Elites in Shaping Public Opinion", unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> Ray C. Fair, "The Effect of Economic Events on Votes for President: 1984 Update", Political Behavior, vol. 10, no. 2 (1988), pp. 168-179; Larry Bartels, "Economic Consequences of Restrospective Voting", (July 1988) unpublished manuscript; Alan Abramowitz, "An Improved Model for Predicting Presidential Election Outcomes", P. S. (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Jerry Roberts, "What Dukakis Did Wrong", San Francisco Chronicle, November 10, 1988, p. A 3.

<sup>10</sup> Steven W. Colford, "Ailes: What He Wants Next: Bush Adman Aims Attack at Madison Ave.", Advertising Age, November 14, 1988, pp 1, 67.

<sup>11</sup> William Schneider, "Tough Liberals Win, Weak Liberals Lose", New Republic (December 5, 1988), p. 12.

David Shribman and James M. Perry report:

"Last August, as Republicans were starting to batter Michael Dukakis over the Pledge of Allegiance, Dukakis' media adviser Scott Miller suggested having Sen. John Glenn, the war hero and astronaut, make a commercial answering the charges. Sen. Glenn eager to do it.

The idea was rejected reportedly by Mr. Dukakis himself.

A few weeks later, Mr. Dukakis' aides planned an economic-populism offensive to portray Vice President George Bush as the candidate of privilege.

Gov. Dukakis not only rejected the idea but also angrily told his advisers never to put the phrase "country club" into a speech again ...

As Dukakis insiders re-examine the governor's 19-month odyssey, the images that linger are of a candidate possessed of little understanding of the voters or the election and, more important, of a candidate offering no compelling message or rationale for his campaign. Mr. Dukakis:

-- Resisted every effort to get him to leave the relative security of his State House office in August to campaign outside Massachusetts at a time when the Republicans were on the offensive.

-- Sternly lectured his aides that he would not engage in negative campaigning even as his lead was seeping away, and rejected response after response to Mr. Bush's attacks.

-- Delayed for months the important defense speeches that might have inoculated the candidate from charges that he wasn't fit to be commander in chief.

-- And failed to resolve a struggle among powerful aides that paralyzed the campaign at crucial moments ...

Aides say Mr. Dukakis, apparently content with the case he had made in Atlanta about his competence being the most important factor in the campaign, believed that the attacks were so patently wrong that they wouldn't stick to him. Kirk O'Donnell, who joined the campaign in the summer, wrote riposte after riposte, only to have each rejected. The Dukakis camp produced television commercials on the failures of the federal prison-furlough program -- commercials explicitly designed to counter GOP attacks on Mr. Dukakis over Willie Horton, the

convicted murderer who brutalized a Maryland couple while on a furlough from a Massachusetts prison. But Mr. Dukakis wouldn't allow the spots to be aired."

"Dukakis's Campaign Was Marred by a Series of Lost Opportunities", Wall Street Journal, November 8, 1988, pp. A 1, A 8.

<sup>12</sup> Nelson W. Polsby, Consequences of Party Reform, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> See Larry Bartels, Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> See Gary R. Orren and Nelson W. Polsby, (eds.) Media and Momentum: The New Hampshire Primary and Nomination Politics (Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Much of the following is taken from my essay "The Iowa Caucuses in a Front-Loaded System: A Few Historical Lessons", to be published in Peverill Squire (ed.) First in the Nation, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, Forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> R. W. Apple, Jr., "Carter Defeats Bayh by 2-1 in Iowa Vote," New York Times, January 20, 1976, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Drew, American Journal: The Events of 1976 (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Monica Langley, "In Pre-New Hampshire Flurry, Images Prevail, and TV Coverage May Be Pivotal to Candidates", Wall Street Journal, February 16, 1988, p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Brady and Richard Johnston, "What's the Primary Message: Horse Race or Issue Journalism?" in Orren and Polsby (eds.) Media and Momentum, pp. 127-186.

<sup>20</sup> An earlier discussion of some of these issues is my "Presidential Cabinet Making: Lessons for the Political System", Political Science Quarterly, vol. 93 (Spring 1978), pp. 15-25.

<sup>21</sup> For examples see "Albany Provides Preview of Dewey Administration", Life (September 13, 1948), pp. 42-42; Helen Fuller, "Dewey's Brisk Young Men Move In", New Republic (July 5, 1948), pp. 15-19; Alden Hutch, "The Men Around Dewey", Harper's Magazine, vol. 197 (October 1948), pp. 38-46.

<sup>22</sup> A fine recent discussion of this group of Americans, full of sympathy and insight, is Nelson W. Aldrich Old Money: The Mythology of America's Upper Class (New York: Knopf, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Aldrich is most interesting on the institutionalized role of "ordeals" in the lives of American upper class males: school, "outdoors", and "under fire", all of which were an intimate part of Bush's life experiences, pp. 141-190.

## **The American Presidential Transition:**

### **Constitutional Requirements and Policy Risks**

**Richard E. Neustadt**

I am delighted to be here, honoring Ernst Fraenkel, and I am delighted to follow my friend Nelson Polsby. My great-grandfather would have addressed you in German and so would I, had I not learned the language in the old way before World War II, when one was taught to read but not to speak. So you will have to put up with me in English. Thanks for that. Thanks also for your courtesy with the Anglicized version of my name. But even in England I am quite used to its proper, German pronunciation -- and certainly I expected it here.

I wish to speak about a process through which the American government is passing, the process of transition into a new presidency, a new administration, after a quadrennial election. This is a singularly important, quite problematical and very interesting process, with special hazards of its own. Yet these express the essence of the American system and the dilemmas associated with it. I thought the subject of transition important for that reason, and interesting because it is current.

President Bush was elected last November and will be inaugurated January 20. By the time of the congressional recess for Easter, at the end of March, he will have had to do, well or badly, at least the following things since Election Day:

1. Choosing people: He will have had to preside over the appointment of some 5,000 officials, the entire upper echelon of the American national government, legislators and judges aside, reaching down five levels into the executive departments. Of those 5,000 persons perhaps 300 are major members of the new regime and of them perhaps 60 are immediately important to the President himself. None automatically carries over from the previous administration. Collectively they can be expected to reflect the combination of factions Mr. Bush credits for his election and the combination of skills, along with interests, he considers important to him. The choice is his -- his and that of those to whom he delegates his own associates -- subject in senior offices to Senate confirmation, usually accorded a new President's nominees. The task takes longer now than in the past, because of heightened concerns about potential

conflicts of interest. But before the Easter recess one can expect that most of those 5,000 appointees will be in place: some of them hold-overs from the Reagan administration, others not. They will constitute the Bush administration, created, as we say, "from scratch."

2. Outlining a Program: In the course of February, Mr. Bush will have had to present to Congress at least rough outlines of a legislative program. He will have had to develop the themes and emphasis after his election, since their nature will be effected in large part by the election's terms. While he won a substantial victory, that outcome could not be taken for granted in advance. The Bush program will have been built around whatever he decides by way of reshaping the Reagan budget, just now sent to Congress. Mr. Bush will have to have prepared himself to indicate in what respects he wishes to alter the present administration's budget and in what respects he means to meet the budget and trade deficits that plague the United States. This last has urgency because it affects the psychology of foreign lenders on whom our prosperity in the United States depends. And federal budgeting for Bush is difficult by virtue of his early campaign promise not to raise taxes (whatever "taxes" ultimately may come to mean). He made that promise to win nomination. Now he's stuck with it, at least in large degree. (What ever cynics think, all Presidents have tried to honor campaign promises.) The outlines of a program centered on the budget is to be expected well before the Easter recess. Yet serious consideration of those matters cannot have begun before election.

3. Shaping his public image: Mr. Bush is now attempting to create, as indeed he must, a public image of himself as President quite different from the image of himself as successful candidate at the end of a rather snarly, negative campaign. He does this by exploiting every opportunity he gets, before inaugural and after, to impress himself on members of the press and on attentive publics (a wider segment at the start than often after) by his actions in conjunction with his words, and his demeanor. He endeavors -- so far with success -- to appear different than he did last fall.

Americans want their presidents to be presidential. There is a strong monarchical element in our presidency and most members of the public, much or most of the time, want presidents to fulfill that monarchical quality, to be kinglike. Candidates rarely look like proper kings. Especially not in negative campaigns. One of the great tasks of a newly elected president is to convert himself by his demeanor, words, and acts from "politician" to "king." And he must undertake to do so in the period before and after his inauguration. For the

weeks of January, February, March appear to be the time when many or most members of the general public form a lasting image of the man-in-office. So I assume it will be with this President.

4. Building professional reputation: Mr. Bush has to establish, as best he can, a reputation for skill and will with the new Congress -- elected at the same time as he and already in office three weeks before his inaugural. He has to build a reputation also with the ongoing executive bureaucracies, with interest groups, and with governments abroad. By Easter, or soon after, each of those sets of attentive observers will have formed opinions of Mr. Bush's capability and understanding, and of his readiness to use his capability. Their early opinions either will leave him advantaged as he deals with them, for months to come, or will make it harder for him to get cooperation from them, harder in proportion to their doubts.

To undertake those four tasks immediately after a long, hard-fought campaign involves genuine hardship. But there is no escape. Mr. Bush seems better off to do it than most predecessors. In approaching personnel selection, program creation, image making, and professional reputation, experience along with propinquity appear to give him relative advantages. I shall soon turn to these. But first, by way of context, to afford a proper setting, let me sketch certain of his predecessors as they tackled the same tasks in the same time period. Having done that it is possible to speculate a bit on Mr. Bush's advantages -- along with his possible troubles and (likely) prospects.

Historically the story of transition, as we now understand it, begins in 1932. Then, when Mr. Roosevelt was elected and Mr. Hoover defeated, the original constitutional arrangements were still in effect. The new President did not take office until March 4, 1933. Four months elapsed between election and inaugural. The day before the new President's inaugural, the old Congress went out of office. The new Congress did not assemble until the following December, unless called into special session by the President for such special purposes as he chose. In normal conditions this made it far easier than now for the new President to build his administration, program, image and reputation -- free of Congress, or with Congress there only for his special purposes. But 1932-33 was far from normal. In that particular four months, the banking system of the United States collapsed. President Hoover appealed to the incoming administration for support and joint action. The incoming administration quite properly refused, since Mr. Roosevelt had no constitutional or statutory authority until his inauguration. The long period in which the banking crisis

worsened, with the old administration incapable of decisive action and the incoming administration unwilling to collaborate, so impressed the country that a constitutional amendment was passed the next year, providing for the present system.

One of the encouragements to change was Roosevelt act when he came in, at the height of the banking crisis, to call Congress into session. He found the legislative branch so traumatized by crisis, so acquiescent and so willing to do anything he wished, that he held Congress in session for 100 days. In that interval both Houses happily passed all sorts of legislation sent them by the new administration. Nothing like that has happened since -- save for a pale reflection in 1965, when Johnson's election brought in 40 extra northern-Democratic congressmen, thus changing the political disposition of the House. But the notion of a "hundred days" and the President's first "hundred days" has become a cliché in American politics. It has haunted all successive presidents, including Mr. Bush. The expectation is now universal in the media, so far as I can read and hear, that Bush has three months from next January 20 in which to formulate his program and to pass its essentials through Congress. This is an impression to which Mr. Reagan's successes with budget cuts in 1981 lent a certain superficial credence, making Bush's circumstances all the harder.

The thought that shortening the interval, with Congress in office before the new President, could bring the 100 days into play whenever wanted, charmed practically all Americans in 1933. The constitutional amendment -- the 20th -- was passed with virtually no opposition. Since then there have been five completed transitions under that amendment (excluding succession by death or resignation): Mr. Truman gave way to Mr. Eisenhower in 1952-53, Mr. Eisenhower gave way to Mr. Kennedy in 1960-61, Mr. Johnson gave way to Mr. Nixon in 1968-69, Mr. Ford to Mr. Carter in 1976-77 and Mr. Carter to Mr. Reagan in 1980-81. We are now in the middle of the sixth such transition and the five that preceded it shed a good deal of light on the problems and prospects of President-elect Bush.

The five completed transitions just cited suggest three sorts of hazards for new administrations. To a considerable degree, these are exhibited in all five cases. Let me suggest what these hazards have been. Then I shall go on to discuss the degrees to which Mr. Bush may or may not be subject to them.

The first of the hazards is newness, sheer newness -- newness of everyone to everyone and everything. Newness of everyone to his job, to his relations with his colleagues, and to fine detail of policy. This can lead to passivity, as in Mr. Eisenhower's case when Stalin died within weeks of the Eisenhower inaugural.



The government was simply not in any position to react quickly to whatever opportunities presented themselves. But newness can also lead to hyperactivity of a disastrous sort.

The classic instance on the hyper side is President Kennedy's misadventure at Cuba's Bay of Pigs in April 1961. The more one looks into that unhappy episode, newness, ignorance, stands out.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Kennedy inherited a program from his predecessor -- a covert program -- being planned by the Central Intelligence Agency. Kennedy did not know the Agency, he did not understand its inner workings. He had no idea that its overt and covert branches were only loosely related to each other. He had no idea that the analysts in the Agency would have scoffed at the plan its operational people were developing, or that they did not work with one another. He was dubious enough about the plans he received from the CIA to ask for advice from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But he evidently was too ignorant to understand that when the military is asked to comment on an operation that is someone else's responsibility it will be loath to open its mind -- or its mouth.

Nor did Kennedy understand the terms of reference in which military advice was tendered to him. The Joint Chiefs told him that they thought the CIA plan had a "fair" chance of success. What the colonel who wrote those words meant by them was "fair" as next to "poor." What Mr. Kennedy took them to mean was "fair" as "pretty good." Anyone who has been graded at an American university will understand the JCS meaning of "fair"; anyone who has encountered the English language in most other uses will sympathize with Kennedy. And so it went. The military chiefs were half a generation older than the President: they had seen him on television during the campaign, championing vigor and calling for firmness against Cuba. They did not wish to look weak. He took them to be masters of their trade and, oddly enough for a junior Naval officer in World War II, he was enormously impressed with the presumptive expertise of all those senior commanders.

Other advisors behaved comparably. The Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, as he once told me, years later, contributed to the "tragedy" -- so he called it -- by taking entirely too narrow a view of his own duties. Since the planned invasion was not a State Department operation, he did not raise his voice in opposition, although he had plenty of World War II experience to convince him, personally, that the CIA's plan was most unlikely to work.

The White House aides concerned were so new to their calling that they focused on "deniability" as the prime issue for the President. Once they managed

to get the site of the projected landing moved away from a major city, they conceived that requisite deniability had been assured -- not noticing that American newspapers were full of circumstantial stories about the planned invasion. One presumes these were read by Fidel Castro if not in the White House.

The dangers of newness are so sharply revealed by this episode that I choose to use it generically. "Pigs" are what new Presidents run risks of, by virtue of their ignorance, and "piglets," at least, are what most Presidents since Kennedy have managed to produce. None yet has stumbled into anything so flamboyant as the failed exile invasion at the Bay of Pigs -- though Mr. Reagan's Budget Director produced something worse: prospective deficits by inadvertance -- but all recent Presidents have been victimized by embarrassing episodes with difficult policy consequences. And each such instance can be traced to ignorance of personalities and institutions, to the newness of everyone to everything.

The second transition hazard is hubris -- as the ancient Greeks would say -- a sort of exaltation, a kind of early arrogance, which stems largely from victory in the election campaign: "We have won. We are new. We are fresh. Hurrah, the world is starting over. We can; our tired predecessors couldn't!" The length of the campaign, of course, contributes much to this array. The "we/they"- thing matters more than anything else: "They couldn't, wouldn't, didn't, but we shall."

Richard Nixon, who avoided anything remotely like Mr. Kennedy's "Pig," made one serious miscalculation during his first months of office, precisely in the weeks before the congressional Easter recess. Mr. Nixon and his assistant, Henry Kissinger, decided they, unlike the Johnson people, could coerce and cajole Ho Chi Min into a satisfactory settlement on Vietnam within eight months. They evidently envisaged in 1969, and expected to achieve that year, the sort of settlement they actually won only at the end of 1972.<sup>2</sup> Here is a perfect demonstration of post-election hubris, "Johnson couldn't, we can."

Similarly, within weeks of his inaugural, Mr. Carter sent his Secretary of State off to Moscow bearing an unprecedented, new proposal for deep cuts in strategic arms -- a proposal that went far beyond anything the Ford administration had discussed with the Soviets, far beyond anything the Soviets, apparently, had even thought about, themselves. Carter's was a wholly new approach. Moreover, for reasons of security, the Americans had shared it neither with their allies in advance nor with Ambassador Dobrynin, who for years had been the Soviets' window on Washington.<sup>3</sup> So the matter was not

taken seriously in Moscow. On the contrary, Carter's approach was contemptuously dismissed. To be sure, something somewhat like it now is under serious negotiation between Washington and Moscow, after long preparation. But this is eleven years later, as between two successor regimes. When Carter abruptly began, he apparently conceived that by his own will and imagination he could utterly depart from precedents set forth in prior negotiations by his predecessors with the same Soviet regime. That view, briefly held, is in the same category as Mr. Nixon's aborted hopes for negotiation with North Vietnam. "Not they, but we" tempts new administrations and ex-campaigners, especially perhaps, the victors of long campaigns.

The third transition hazard I would put to you is hurry. After each election, the press publishes articles about the "coming hundred days." Commentators comment. Reporters believe what they write. So it was in each of our five prior instances. So it is now: Those articles have been appearing for two weeks. Does anyone believe them? In the past the new administration often has -- and sets itself, accordingly, short deadlines for accomplishments. These Congress rarely disputes frontally knowing that the public, sick of campaigns, wishes each new President well. Rather, Congress waits until the new regime trips over its own deadlines, or otherwise falls victim to its newness -- or events. Then Congress pounces on and punishes mistakes. There may be more of these the more the new administration hurries.

In 1965, LBJ pressed an outsized agenda upon Congress and got most of it through -- but that was an exceptional year, when his party's majorities in Congress were also outsized, and he, himself, was a master of legislative tactics. Neither applies to our other four transitions, nor to the sixth, now in progress.

Presidential "honeymoons" are with the public more than Congress and the "hundred days" phenomenon remains, in fact, exceptional.

Yet the American media are habituated to report relations between President and Congress as a spectator sport. TV makes this believable to citizens at large. So short deadlines for proposing things to Congress rest upon a far from foolish logic. But alas it heightens prospects for exposure to all risks of newness, while raising a risk all its own: the appearance of failure with Congress, "losing" the "game."

In 1977, Mr. Carter was in such a rush to present to Congress everything he wanted, all at once, that he presented far too many measures with far too little public and congressional preparation. He jammed the congressional system so that, with the best of luck, he could not have succeeded overall. He put several

major reforms before a single committee, the Senate Finance Committee, including his novel, controversial, complex energy program. As a result, he got none of the major measures he proposed in his first session. Therefore, in the terms of spectator sports, he failed, and so was reported.

The Carter appearance of failure was studied carefully by the Reagan administration four years later. It set out to do everything differently than Mr. Carter had done, and it succeeded brilliantly in presenting to Congress a program it appeared to get enacted, in sports terms a victory. There was only one thing wrong with this appearance: the haste with which budget projections were developed by David Stockman, the then budget director. He was in such a hurry that he misunderstood and miscalculated the size of the long-term deficits implied by Mr. Reagan's proposed tax cuts and defense increases.<sup>4</sup> It is doubtful that had Mr. Reagan known about those deficits before he sent his budgetary program to the Hill, he would have made defense hikes quite so high or tax reductions quite so low. But having once presented them, albeit on faulty premises, he and his assistants found it far more important to succeed, in terms of reputation and of public standing, than to get the numbers right. Although Stockman discovered by March that his figures were erroneous, spelling trouble four and more years later, the administration was unwilling to cut back its programs in Congress. Mr. Reagan chose short-term success, as the media read such things, at the cost of those longer term deficits. Even when it seems to pay off, hurry can have adverse consequences.

In what respect may the experience of President Bush be different? In what respect may it be similar? To what extent may he be subject to these hazards?

With one qualification, to which I will return, he seems subject least of all to hazards of newness. He himself has been vice-president for the past eight years. It is the task of a modern American vice-president never to be seen, by anyone in public life, to differ with the President. This creates problems of its own. But in return, the vice-president is given free run of all major policy issues, foreign and domestic. Mr. Bush has been sitting there, watching, for eight years. Before that he had the varied experience of American Ambassador to the United Nations, Director of Central Intelligence, Representative in Beijing, Chairman of the Republican Party, and Congressman from Texas -- an experience more varied and more relevant than that of any President in this century, save possibly Mr. Eisenhower, if you regard his military experience as equivalent, and Franklin Roosevelt, with his breadth of experience in the Wilson administration and in New York State.

Moreover, in Mr. Bush's inner cabinet (so-called) -- the four central, departmental posts of State, Defense, Treasury and Justice -- he has appointed people with considerable, and in some cases almost unprecedented, personal experience of federal government. At State is James Baker, three times chairman of a presidential campaign. Under Reagan, Baker was first White House chief of staff, then Secretary of the Treasury. Mr. Tower, the prospective Secretary of Defense, has been a strong-minded, frequently disliked, but often-effective chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, twenty-four years in Congress. Tower lacks executive experience, but he had one recent deep exposure to the executive branch as chairman of President Reagan's Commission to investigate the Iran-contra affair. That must have taught him something!<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Brady, the Secretary of Treasury, already has had several months in office under Mr. Reagan. Mr. Thornburgh, my former colleague at the Kennedy School, now the Attorney General, was Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division in the Ford administration, then a very successful Governor of Pennsylvania. General Scowcroft, Mr. Bush's Assistant for National Security Affairs, held that post in the Ford administration and was Deputy to Henry Kissinger for a number of years before that. Richard Darman, the Budget Director, another former colleague of mine, was Mr. Baker's deputy, both at the White House and at the Treasury, and had been Elliot Richardson's Assistant Secretary in four other Departments during the Nixon, and Ford regimes. Another of my Kennedy School colleagues, Roger Porter, is about to be named a Scowcroft, so to speak, for the domestic side of government, as Assistant to the President for economic and domestic affairs. This is roughly the same position Porter was denied in the Reagan administration, under pressure from the Republican right wing. Porter has had what amounts to the deputyship twice -- once under Ford and once under Reagan: He thus has a vast amount of relevant experience.

The only person without Washington experience in any major, central, official post is the new White House Chief of Staff, Governor Sununu of New Hampshire. Nobody knows how that will come out, but at the least it can be said that he begins surrounded by budget directors, national security advisors, domestic advisors and a President all deeply exposed to government.

Newness should not be their problem, except in one sense -- the sense of not knowing one another, and the various assistants they take on, in their new roles, as they confront their new responsibilities and the relations with each other these define.

This is the qualification to which I referred earlier. When Mr. Kennedy died, to take just one example, and Mr. Johnson, the Vice President, succeeded, the circle of the former's foreign policy advisors remained intact, except for disappearance of the late President's brother and of Theodore Sorensen, his special counsel. Yet their withdrawal -- along with JFK's -- and Johnson's altered status, actually changed every nuance of relationship among remaining members of the circle. The Johnson they had known was not the Johnson they now dealt with, and so around the circle. Their newness to each other in this sense is rarely mentioned as a partial explanation of what followed in American foreign policy, especially on Vietnam. I think it was important. Accordingly, so may be counterparts in Mr. Bush's time. Besides, as people change roles the procedures binding them together alter, often subtly, and must be learned afresh. This too faces the Bush administration.

So much for newness; what of early arrogance, the hubris of "we/they": The "we/they" may be muted. But what could well be substituted for it is the product of "if only". Consider how many times the then Vice President, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chief of Staff, the Deputy Chief, and the Deputy Assistant on the domestic side have sat in Reagan's White House in the last eight years saying "if only I were President, I'd do it differently." That's inescapable, inevitable. It is impossible to sit and watch what any President is doing and not to think, sometimes, "I could do it better". And carrying such memories over into a new administration which must simultaneously show fealty to and differentiate itself from Reagan in the public mind -- and the congressional and foreign minds -- could constitute a hazard of transition all its own. So I think it may, the Bush version of hubris. This is worth watching.

Up to now that prospect is belied by extraordinary skillful public relations. The incoming group has managed to distinguish itself from the outgoing administration, without any public showing of the arrogance I here suggest, neither "we/they" nor "if only". But in January, 1961, one could have said, with justice, that John Kennedy was handling his public relations and his reputation-building with consummate skill. So he was. The Bay of Pigs was still ahead of him.

In Mr. Bush's case the present signs are good -- but let us wait and see. There was a trace of hubris, possibly, in his first action after sliding out from under President Reagan: the choice of a successor, Daniel Quayle.

Finally, we come to the matter of hurry. The usual articles on the "hundred days" were published a few days ago. Congress now is waiting, and the country now is braced for the spectator sport of congressional relations. Abroad in Bonn

and Tokyo -- where the money is -- investors will be sizing up the budget deficits and what Bush says about them, now that he is President. Everyone will focus on immediate action. The media will count the days. Pressures for haste will build. Besides there are events that could evolve so as to force early action, willy nilly. To name one, the impending election in El Salvador. It may drag deadlines in its wake. For another, the impending crisis in Latin American debt, a multinational phenomenon, a play with many, possible fateful scenes: perhaps more deadlines.

Mr. Carter had a marvellous first year in one respect. For 1977 was a year in which external history seemed virtually to stop. There were almost no deadline-making events abroad to demand attention. Domestic expectations and traditions readily created a psychology of hurry, but these were not compounded by external necessities. In contrast, when Mr. Nixon came in the peace movement and the negotiations with North Vietnam, both inherited from Johnson, generated pressures at home and abroad to which he had to respond. Here were events, deadline-making events, he could neither ignore nor dispel by inaction.

Will President Bush be a Carter or a Nixon in these terms of events, of historical moments? One can, if one likes, run down a list of potential deadline-makers stemming from possible events in the next months. For example, the controversy with the EEC on certain agricultural products could get nasty, the Third World debt problem could become difficult indeed. At home there is another kind of debt problem -- the problem of specialized banks, so-called savings-and-loan institutions, now on the brink of bankruptcy, which may cost the U.S. Treasury up to a hundred billion dollars. Consider possible effects on foreign creditor concerns about the deficit! Or consider the initiatives in arms control that Mr. Gorbachev has taken and may choose to take. Or contemplate the consequences of a change of regime in Russia (should there be one). Add the Middle Eastern peace process, so-called, or terrorism, or Central America -- I could go on and on, and you could add still others. Any of these could develop in such a way as to deny Mr. Bush what Mr. Carter had -- a first year happily without external history. We have to wait and see. One hopes -- at least I do -- that history suspends itself at least until next summer. That would grant a little time for new American leaders to begin to take the measure of their counterparts abroad -- and of each other!

The nature of presidential transitions and the nature of the governmental system underlying them give an appearance of great change amidst great disarray. All those new appointees down to levels far below those manned by civil servants

in all European governments, or in Japan. The inexperience, or downright ignorance, of many newcomers at senior levels (less so in the Bush administration than in others). The sudden exposure to unanticipated events. And above all, the tendencies to which I have alluded: the hubris and the hurry. All this leaves many Europeans -- perhaps some of you -- with strong impressions that the government in Washington is changeable indeed, dangerously so.

But such impressions, in my view, go much too far. They ignore underlying continuities in fundamentals of American policy, especially but not exclusively foreign policy. These continuities also are a feature of presidential transitions, and deserve to be stressed as such.

Let me close on this note. Mr. Reagan's loyalty to NATO would have greatly impressed Dean Acheson. It probably stems from Mr. Reagan's memory of the Truman-Acheson period when he was a staunch Democrat. Not since Mr. Eisenhower has any American administration thought seriously of reducing its troop commitment in Europe. Once German rearmament was underway, Ike used to ask "When will our boys start coming home?" But subsequent Presidents ceased to ask. Most of the troops remained. If the past is a guide to the future, they will remain for years to come. Symbolism aside, continuity saves money and serves military careers. If the troops came home and were not at once demobilized, they could cost considerably more than keeping them where they are -- a truth that has been borne in on each new administration -- while the Army always has liked German billets better than Indian forts!

Forty years ago, it was feared that free trade would be followed by protection if Republicans succeeded Democrats, because the Democrats traditionally had sponsored free trade measures while Republicans had done the opposite. Now, with complex shifts in the economy, reflected by reversed constituency pressures, the fears run the other way. Yet the Bush administration promises to be as firm as Reagan on the subject, and he was certainly as constant as his one-time mentor, FDR. Meanwhile the Democrats in Congress, now the alleged protectionists, are surely well aware that the chief exponent of protectionism among them in last year's presidential primary campaign was ignominiously defeated. There is potential trouble in the trade issue -- I don't mean to deny that -- but if one looks historically at the whole period since 1934, with Roosevelt's first reciprocal trade agreements, American policy has shown remarkable continuity, through all changes of parties and presidents.

Fundamentally this is the case even in domestic spheres. Mr. Eisenhower's regime in effect legitimated Roosevelt's New Deal and put its major social



measures beyond serious dispute. And they have remained beyond real controversy ever since. Mr. Reagan did, indeed, cut back a wide array of welfare, educational, and health and safety measures. But these were trimmings on the Great Society from the late 1960s, or reforms originating under Mr. Nixon in the 1970s. They did not touch the fundamentals of American social policy, such as it is, enacted before LBJ's third year -- and with us still. Mr. Reagan claims to have reduced the rate of increase in the federal share of gross national product. He may well have done so, for a time at least. But he, despite his clear intentions, has been quite unable to reduce that share, much less eliminate increases altogether. As a welfare state, America was never much by European standards -- but such as it was, it more or less remains. So signs of continuity are no less striking, when one looks for them, as signs of instability.

That underlying continuities in policy remain, at least until now, despite repeated hazards of transition should be reassuring -- but not, I hope too reassuring. For transitions make both policy development and execution specially vulnerable. In the months after a President's inaugural, while fundamentals may endure, distortions of large moment, detours, zigzags, cul-de-sacs, have frequently been opened up by the results of newness, hubris, hurry. Opened up in haste, to be repaired with difficulty, if at all. JFK feared Moscow might see weakness in him after the Bay of Pigs, and this concern apparently affected his increasing involvement with South Vietnam. The faulty figuring of Ronald Reagan's early weeks then set in train the budget deficits throughout his second term. And so forth. Such costs as these are less than fatal for the policy, or to its basic thrust of policy, but neither are they trivial, far from it. And some such are quite likely to be paid in the transition months of any new administration.

Even Mr. Bush, experienced though he be, is not immune. Newness, hubris, and hurry may be moderated in his case, or otherwise altered in significant ways. But we won't know that until later. By next summer, or fall, this lecture will cry out to be updated. Happily, you'll be able to do the updating yourselves, no further need of me. With interest, I leave you to it.