The Four Pillars of Politics

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The Four Pillars of Politics: Why Some Candidates Don't Win and Others Can't Lead, By James T. Kitchens and Larry Powell

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Why Some Candidates Don't Win and Other's Can't Lead

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Chapter One

The Four Pillars of American Politics

An Introduction

To understand why certain political messages appeal to voters, one must first understand the four pillars of the American psyche. These pillars consist of four psychological states: fear, narcissism, consumerism, and religiosity. These are the primary prisms through which Americans evaluate political messages. These four dominant components anchor the American psyche, particularly in terms of the way Americans perceive politics and government. Some may refer to this as our collective conscience. The background and development of each of these psychological states will be examined in more detail later in the next four chapters. But, for the moment, here are the four personal and societal emotional reactions associated with each one:

Fear
Attack on my home from a criminal
Attack on society by terrorists
Something could happen to my children
I could lose my job

National Narcissism
I am essential and must work all the time
My children deserve only the best
America is the greatest country
I am not responsible for anyone else
Everyone should speak English

Consumerism
I need more stuff
I should have the best

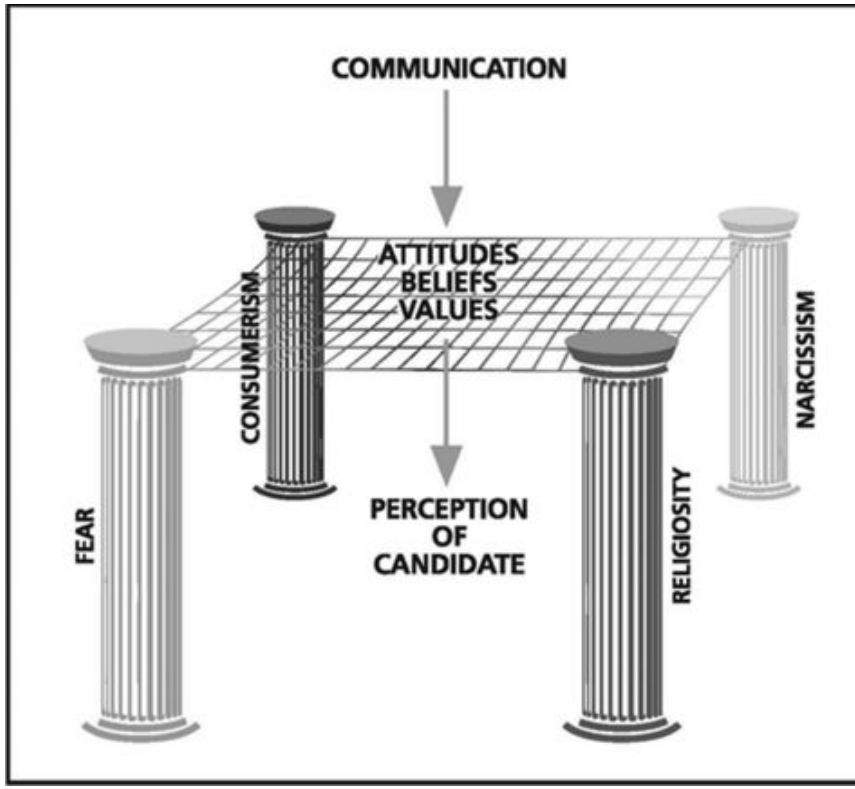
America can buy security
I am entitled to more stuff

Religiosity
There are absolute rights and wrongs
There is only one God—ours
We have some moral obligations
God loves America

These psychological states serve as attitudinal anchors, with a matrix of attitudes, beliefs, and values connecting them like a net strung between four posts. This net represents the mind. All political communications pass through this net and are evaluated based on one or more of these anchors. Then, the voter reacts to the communication. This reaction may be a positive response, a negative response, or no response. The lack of response is caused by a message being perceived as irrelevant, confusing, or simply failing to penetrate the consciousness or appealing to any of the pillars. According to Social Judgment Theory (Hovland & Sherif, 1961, 1980; Sherif, Sherif & Nebergall, 1965), there is a range of positions or latitudes which people find acceptable, unacceptable, or uncertain. For a political candidate to be considered by a voter, the candidate's message must fall within their range of acceptable ideas, or at least close to those ideas. Any message rated as unacceptable means that both the message and the candidate are dismissed by the voter. Additionally, a person's ego-involvement in an issue will determine how large the areas of acceptability and unacceptability are on any issue (Powell, 1976). The Four Pillars model differs from the traditional Social Judgment Model in that there are four specific anchors or pillars involved in the reaction to a message versus a theoretical model with no context of the American culture. Using the Four Pillars model, any number of these pillars could play a role in determining the reaction to a political message. Therefore, the most effective political message should be relevant to all four pillars.

Another factor to consider is the phenomenon known as Cognitive Dissonance, a psychological theory initially developed by Leon Festinger (1957). According to this theory, individuals become uncomfortable when confronted with or exposed to dissonant information, i.e., ideas and information that is at odds with their view of the world. When placed into a situation where they must confront dissonant information, they will engage in any of several techniques to relieve the resulting psychological discomfort. This includes rationalizing, discounting the information, or discrediting the source, among others. The idea is important in politics, since it implies that voters will be resistant to any information that might alter their views of their party or preferred candidate. In fact, voters are known to be apprehensive

about even the possibility of listening to dissonant information and highly inflexible in responding to that information (Wheeless & Schrodt, 2011).



Indeed, such political attitudes are the result of a lifetime of political socialization and serve as an anchor, or political bedrock, for political preferences. As a result, party identification is more stable than any other relevant political attitude (Abramson & Ostrom, 1991; Green & Palmquist, 1994). Thus, getting a campaign message to influence someone with different political orientations is difficult—so difficult that most campaigns don't even try. Instead, they aim for the low-hanging fruit that is available from their party loyalists and try to add enough independent voters to make a majority. How successful those campaigns are often depends upon their ability to craft an effective campaign message.

Campaign messages can be analyzed using this Four Pillars model. A good political communication message should have the voters engaging several of the attitudinal anchors simultaneously. Here are two examples, one from a standard Republican message and one from a standard Democratic message.

> A Republican candidate says: *We must fight against any tax increase. It only allows the government to have more control over our freedom. It is your money and they are simply taking it from you to give it to people who won't find a job. This is wrong. We have a mission; less taxes, more freedom.*

Analyzing this statement using the model, when the voters hear this message, then all four pillars are activated. First, there is a fear appeal against a big government, i.e., a tax increase allows government to have more *control* over you. Second, there is consumerism, i.e., they are simply taking your money. This statement means you are not getting anything in return. Your money is not being used to build new roads, pay for military defense, or to keep the environment clean. Third, there is narcissism, i.e., they are giving it to people who will not work with the underlying value that you should not be responsible for them. Finally, there is religiosity with a moral judgment, i.e., this is wrong. The phrase that *this is wrong* leaves no doubt what the listener should conclude.

Here is a message the Democrats might use:

> *The Republicans have declared war on our children. Our neighborhood schools educated a generation that created more wealth and prosperity than ever before. Now, they want to take away that same opportunity from our children by stealing tax money and diverting it to private institutions who have no accountability. This idea is corrupt and immoral.*

The first statement is designed to strike the emotion of fear, i.e., your children are threatened. The second sentence hits a narcissistic chord, i.e., our generation is the best ever. The phrase that they want to take away that same opportunity actually hits at the consumerism pillar because it says they would not be able to buy the things they deserve. Finally, there are two appeals to religiosity, i.e., stealing tax money and the idea that it is corrupt and immoral. Both of these say the Republicans are taking actions that are against accepted moral behavior.

Using the Four Pillars model, it becomes clear why certain political communication styles fail to have impact on the electorate. For example, some campaigns try to use enthymemes, a form of truncated logic. This approach was originally advocated by Aristotle (Cooper, 1932, 1960), who argued that omitting one line of a logical syllogism allows the audience to complete the argument with its own premises. Thus this argument normally presents facts and allows the recipient to draw a conclusion (e.g., Conley, 1984; Paglieri & Woods, 2011; Powell, 1976).

One argument from a campaign said: *Senator Blank is going to raise the percentage of the state education budget from 55 percent to 57 percent. This will give the schools a boost without raising taxes.* Since the information is filtered through a matrix that is based on four different concepts, different

voters may draw different conclusions or may miss the point and view the argument as confusing or irrelevant. This message is based upon the underlying assumption that voters think the education budget needs more money. Even given that assumption, what does this two percent mean? Are we just throwing money at a problem? Will it provide for a better education for my child? A good campaign message tells the voters both what the information means and why they should care.

Another failed strategy is to run an "egocentric biography" campaign. That is, the campaign focuses on a candidate's background and accomplishments. Such a campaign may make the candidate feel proud, but it often has little impact. While some biographical information helps establish credibility of a candidate, beyond that factor, it does not communicate any reason the voter should care. In other cases, it can actually damage the candidate—as in Mitt Romney's inability to overcome the "rich businessman" image in the 2012 presidential election (Bruni, 2012). However, every campaign feels it needs a "bio" spot to introduce the candidate (Powell & Cowart, 2013). Usually, these spots are a waste of campaign resources and have a minimum impact on voter preference.

Voters expect all candidates to reach a minimum level of qualifications for public office, a concept that political observers call "legitimacy" (Lazarsfeld & Morton, 1960). In the 2012 Republican primary, for example, Congressman Ron Paul's views on taxes (abolish the IRS) and the postal service (abolish it too) were considered so extreme that he never did attain legitimacy as a candidate with a chance to win the nomination (Saunders, 2011).

Normally, the voters do not perceive one candidate's biography as so much better than another candidate's that it becomes the primary reason for making a choice. Political communication is not a battle of resumes as if the candidates are applying for a job. Asking voters to make you a leader is more complicated than that. Voters are looking for a leader who can provide strong leadership, but also must display integrity and an empathic understanding of them the voter (Trenaman & McQuail, 1961). That last element—an empathic understanding of the voters—is a key component in the Four Pillars model. Voters want their leaders to understand them, the public.

Unless something in a candidate's biography speaks to an important psychological anchor, it is not important in the voters' final decision on whether to vote for a candidate. For example, if a candidate is attacked for being arrested for drunk driving, the voters will react through their pillar of religiosity which contains moral judgments. This message means the candidate does not hold similar morals as the voter and that information will have an impact on the voters.

The American nation's historical development as a country and its current role in the world is the foundation for the emergence of these four collective psychological states. Examining each one will help clarify their power. The

next four chapters will take up that examination and look at each pillar in terms of how it was developed and how it impacts political decisions.

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Chapter Two

The First Pillar of the American Psyche

Fear

Whenever fear is mentioned in America, many people recall the brave words of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt after the attack on Pearl Harbor, "We have nothing to fear, but fear itself." While the President was trying to rally the country, the truth is that twentieth-century Americans had a lot of fears from sources both real and imagined. Perhaps that is one reason that the fear is frequently used in American politics and has also been the topic of so much academic study.

Many of the early academic studies on fear appeals came from the field of social psychology. Perhaps the first was published in 1953 by Janis and Feshbach. Their study found that mild fear appeals, i.e., those that do not explicitly emphasize potential harm, were more effective than those messages which detailed specific harms that would befall those who did not follow the recommended action. Most subsequent research has supported the contention that communicators who pushed their fear appeals to too high of a level found that they ran into audience resistance to their messages. Gerald Miller (1963) subsequently provided a summary and analysis of research on fear appeals as it related to communication scholars. While the extent of the studies goes beyond the purposes of this work, the one consistent finding was that fear appeals can be highly effective as persuasive messages, if they don't go too far. Consequently, fear appeals have been frequently used in anti-smoking campaigns (e.g., Beaudoin, 2002; Thompson, Barnett, & Pearce, 2009), alcohol abuse (e.g., Weber, Dillow, & Rocca, 2011), AIDS/HIV messages (e.g., Moscato, Black, Mattson, & Blue, 2001), and a variety of other public health issues (e.g., Averbeck, Jones, & Robertson, 2011; Gagnon, Jacob, & Holmes, 2010; Hyunyi & Salmon, 2006). In addition, advertisers

have continued to use fear appeals to sell a variety of commercial products (e.g., Latour, Snipes, & Bliss, 1996), including toothpaste (fear of cavities), mouth wash (fear of bad breath), deodorant (fear of offensive body odor), and air bags in automobile (fear of injury). Fear appeals have also been a major component of American religious rhetoric (e.g., Ragsdale & Durham, 1986; Jackson, 2007).

Of foremost importance to this book is the role of fear appeals in American politics. Its role is significant, leading to a situation that some authors have called "governing through insecurity" (Gagnon, Jacob, & Holmes, 2010, p. 245). The issue led one group of political researchers to ask, "Is a worried citizen a good citizen?" (Valentino et al.., 2008, p. 247). Political candidates seem to think so, because it shows up in political campaigns in negative attacks designed at scaring voters into voting against the opponent under attack (Carraro & Cartelli, 2010). The result, as Jerit (2004) noted, are campaigns beset by fear with the winner being the one who survives the attacks.

FEAR IN AMERICA

Such fear is nothing new to Americans. Outside of the academic arena, fear was a part of American life for much of the twentieth century. At the end of World War I, America emerged as a world power (Clark, 2013). We were no longer the isolated country that viewed the events of Europe as none of our concern. For a decade, America roared through the 1920s, a good economy, flapper skirts, and bathtub gin (Allen, 2010). Then, the 1929 crash of the stock market ushered in the Great Depression and our first major cause of fear in the twentieth century (McElvaine, 1993).

That fear was real for many Americans. There was a tremendous loss of jobs and the unemployment rate soared to 25 percent according to the U.S. Department of Labor. People lost their homes, their farms, and basically everything they owned. When you live in a time when a large percentage of the population are in need of the basics of life, it is understandable people were fearful. Some of the fears our grandparents felt rippled all the way down to the current generation. The "clean your plate" syndrome at meal time came out of this era when Americans feared they might not eat on a regular basis.

The fear of economics shifted dramatically on December 7, 1941, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (Gillon, 2011). Once again, Americans had a real threat that caused fear to be a part of the American psyche. The country went to war on two fronts—against a fascist madman named Hitler, who seemed to have his eyes on conquering the world, and powerful Japanese armed forces, with values of fighting to the death rather than be cap-

tured; we did not understand. It was the greatest threat to the existence of the United States since the Civil War.

Many books have been written and many movies produced showing the heroism and sacrifice our parents' generation made to save this country. While the young men and women went off to fight a war, their parents stayed home and kept the country going. The anxiety these parents felt must have been incredible. The ability for soldiers to communicate back home was almost non-existent compared to today. Every time a telephone rang or someone came to the front door, the fear of bad news had to arise inside these parents.

After World War II ended, Americans faced more problems in Korea (Hastings, 1988). Despite the great sacrifices of the soldiers fighting in a far-off land under rugged conditions, the Korean War did not really strike fear in Americans. Unlike WWII, there was not rationing of commodities or fears of invasions. It appeared that America had settled down for the "Happy Days" of FDR's campaign promises. But, Americans soon became aware of a new threat—Communism.

In terms of creating fear in the American mental state, there were two very different components: one realistic and one imagined. A realistic fear was the possibility of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union that could destroy mankind. Winston Churchill referred to Eastern Europe as being held behind the Iron Curtain. We were at war, but it was a Cold War, at least for the moment (Gaddis, 2006). During the 1950s and 1960s, books and movies, like *On the Beach* and *Fail Safe*, about the horrible outcomes of a nuclear exchange became popular.

One episode of the popular television show *The Twilight Zone* was a story about a man who worked as a bank teller and loved to read books (Zicree, 1992). At lunch, he would hide in the huge steel vault to read. One day, the vault shook and when he came out, everything in the city, as far as he could see was destroyed. Not a single soul was left standing. He was alone.

At the time, that threat seemed real. Neighbors actually built bomb shelters. In school, students had evacuation drills and practiced getting under their desks (Monteyne, 2011). Meanwhile, images drove our fear of the Communists. Perhaps the most memorable was footage of the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev beating his shoe on the podium of the United Nations and screaming into the microphone, "We will bury you!" News programs also showed the parades in the Red Square with all the soldiers and missiles against the dark, gray sky. Did fear drive Americans? You bet!

That threat of Communism becoming a philosophy that Americans accepted or were forced to accept was the source of political power. "There are Communists everywhere" was the fear line that drove the McCarthy hearing. Richard Nixon exemplified the politicians who initially made their reputations as strong anti-Communist leaders.

There was a pervasive fear that the Communists would brainwash young people. Studies were undertaken to determine how persuasion worked to inoculate the youth from the Communist appeal. The basic research conducted in many of the studies formed the foundation of modern attitude research.

In retrospect, this fear of Communism seems anachronistic. Did people like Senator McCarthy think someone was going to convince a child that his/her parents should give ownership of their comfortable suburban house to the government so they could decide if we could live there? Would a child be in favor of the government taking over a family-owned business to become a government entity? Did they think that the parents of the day, who were part of the generation that won World War II, were not teaching their children, even in many subtle ways, that democracy was the best form of government? Bottom Line: were people like Joe McCarthy insane or just hungry for more power?

The fear of Communism became the rationale for the war of the next generation—Vietnam. The rationale was America had to go to war because of the "domino theory," (i.e., a foreign policy theory that if one key nation in the region fell to the Communists, the others would follow). Former military leaders saying if Vietnam fell, the Communists would take all of Asia, India, and by 1975 they might control Australia.

Many people fondly remember the hippies and anti-war days. What they probably do not remember is public opinion did not turn against the Vietnam War until 1968—some fourteen years after our first involvement. Americans trusted their government and it was not causing stress at home like World War II. We could not just give up and say all those soldiers died in vain. However, as always in America, things change when they start impacting a significant percentage of the population. As the number of casualties increased to the point where everyone knew someone whose family had been impacted by death or injury, public opinion changed.

Vietnam was never officially called a "war." It seemed the military was bogged down without clear direction as to what the U.S. government wanted. Our troops were defending South Vietnam, but had no clear objective. No one was sure what "winning the war" meant. President Nixon became so frustrated that he even considered using tactical nuclear weapons. The fear of Communism became less than the fear of a never-ending battle in which young Americans were seen coming home in body bags. The anti-war movement had moved beyond the young protesters and into the middle class living rooms. The politicians reacted to the dominant fear of the people.

In addition to the anxiety about the war in Vietnam, Americans were trying to deal with a changing social fabric. By the mid-1960s the civil rights movement was visible every night on the nightly news. The old social order was under attack as African Americans began demanding their proper place

as U.S. citizens. Of course, to link the two driving fears, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was suspected to be a Communist, or at least that was the belief of J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI director who wire-tapped Dr. King.

By the mid-1970s, America claimed it had met its objective in Vietnam and withdrew, leaving South Vietnam to fall in a matter of weeks. But, the Cold War was far from over. And problems continued on the domestic front. Probably nobody but political junkies remember the 1966 Georgia Governor's race in which the outcome was eventually decided by the Georgia House of Representatives. They elected the infamous segregationist Lester Maddox as Governor. His major achievement in office was riding a bicycle around the Governor's mansion while seated on it backwards. But, if you like weird political elections, this was one for the books and it is worth a little historical read.

Although defeated in the 1966 gubernatorial campaign, Jimmy Carter put together a young team and won the Governor's race in 1970. No one could guess by 1976 Jimmy Carter would be President of the United States. President Carter was the first leader to see the face of a new enemy who would eventually cause this generation as much fear as Hitler caused the greatest generation. Radical young Muslims took over the American embassy in Iran and held 67 Americans hostage for 444 days. Every night, Americans saw Ted Koppel say it was "day x of the American hostage crisis," in a nightly show that eventually became ABC's *Nightline*.

That crisis would be a major factor in President Carter's defeat in 1980. President Carter had the military attempt a rescue mission that resulted in a disastrous accident in the desert. Probably, if President Carter had simply bombed Iran back to the Stone Age, he could have won reelection. But, there are sixty-six families that were glad he valued those American lives more than the American Presidency. Now, Americans had a new fear. It was an enemy that did not act like Americans, dress like Americans, and practiced a religion that most Americans probably barely knew existed. Americans faced a new enemy that blatantly hated us and referred to us as "the Great Satan."

In 1980 President Ronald Reagan, a true populist rhetorician, came to power. As discussed in the development of the Republican Party, his victory was a major turning point in the political context of American politics. This President would not let America forget about the dangers of the Evil Empire abroad or liberals who attacked prayer in school, supported abortions, and defended so-called artists peddling smut. He proposed the ultimate defense system for America—Star Wars. This scheme was going to put satellites in space with laser weapons that could shoot down any nuclear missile headed for the United States. Although most scientists said the present day technology made this a pipe dream and many military experts could suggest ways an enemy could defeat the system, the President drove the fear of the Commu-

nists and had millions of American tax dollars appropriated for a research program. The defense contractors were, of course, happy to take the money.

The debate over nuclear war, that had been over-shadowed in the 1960s by Vietnam and Civil rights, was once again the front burner fear appeal for the government. In an effort to cool down the Cold War, members of the U.S. Congress introduced the Nuclear Freeze Resolution. It became a huge debate in Congress.

One of the authors was visiting the office of Congressman Jack Hightower during this debate. Congressman Hightower was a west Texas populist who had always been strong on national defense, but he came from a strong Baptist home and always seemed concerned about man's inhumanity to man.

The room was filled with staffers who worked on policy and the debate was lively. What did this resolution mean? Would it limit our production of bombers? How would it affect our various defense programs? Finally, Congressman Hightower turned to the author and asked what the political expert thought. The author I asked one question, "How will this material affect our national defense?" Congressman Hightower smiled and said, "It won't" The author's response? Vote the way he wanted to vote; we would defend it on either side during the campaign.

The key point here, though, is that the issue was a question of who could best reduce the fears of Americans—people who advocated more nuclear weapons or those who were ready to try to limit the ability of the two Super Powers to destroy the earth. Two years later, that debate seemed irrelevant as reform started in the Soviet Union. Eight years later, the Cold War was over with the Soviet Union crumbling from the inside without a single shot from America. It looked like a fear that hung over the Boomer generation from their childhood had ended.

Americans seemed to have nothing to really fear during the 1990s. The world of .com exploded and it seemed no matter what stock you bought, it made money. The Evil Empire was gone and life was good. Then, the new boogeyman appeared suddenly and shockingly.

The numbers 9/11 are all anyone has to say. This event has scarred the psyche of America as much as Pearl Harbor to the greatest generation. This event sent a shock wave of fear throughout America. When a dramatic event like this occurs, the public is suddenly willing to passively accept almost any action the government says is necessary. The public goes into a hyper-patriotic mode and any action that is perceived needed to increase safety is approved.

In 2005, over four years after the terrorists' attack on the World Trade Center, polls clearly indicated that people believe there will be another similar attack within the next year. This fear was not limited by area of the country, race, income, or age. Early in 2005, 45 percent of American adults said the fear of another terrorist attack was causing them stress, and that was

three-and-a-half years after the 9/11 attacks. A majority of women (51 percent) said this fear caused stress in their lives. More than 40 percent of every age group said the fear of terrorism caused them stress (Kitchens, 2005a).

Other polls in various locations within the United States showed similar results. Three years after the attack, a survey of Broward County, Florida, showed 57 percent of the voters thought the United States would be attacked within the next year, with 10 percent saying they believed the attack would be in their county (Kitchens, 2005b). In Louisiana, four years after the attack, 60 percent of the people felt the United States would be attacked within the next year, while four percent thought that either a family member or themselves would be injured or killed; an additional 13 percent thought Louisiana would be a target (Kitchens, 2005c). In 2008, in the area around Norfolk, Virginia, 74 percent of the voters said they thought the United States would be attacked again within the next year (Kitchens, 2008). The situation has become so intense that Unger (2013) argued that the United States has lives in a constant state of emergency in which security is the primary concern.

A comparison of President Bush's rhetoric after 9/11 to Prime Minister Blair's speech after the attack on the London subways provides some insight into how the fear factor drives images of a nation at war. President Bush referred to the attacks of 9/11 as "the enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country." Prime Minister Blair referred to the London attacks as a "horrible murder." Obviously, a society's response to an act of war is different than to a murder.

President Bush framed the motivation as hatred of American democracy: "Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what they see right here in this chamber—a democratically elected government." President Bush described the terrorists in militaristic terms, saying their goal is to overthrow existing governments, drive Israel out of the Middle East, and drive Christians and Jews out of Africa and Asia. For a force to accomplish these goals, they would need a vast army and sophisticated training.

Prime Minister Blair described the terrorists as a global problem and network of murderers who "attacked twenty-six countries, killing thousands of people, many of them Muslims." His description referred to these people as criminals rather than military warriors. And he added, "Neither is it true that they have no demands. They do. It is just no sane person would negotiate on them."

President Bush described his vision for defeating the terrorists in strong, militaristic language:

> Now this war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. . . . Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign. . . . Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.

The President made it clear: no nation can be neutral or have any shades of gray. There are only two sides.

Prime Minister Blair presented a much different view of the world:

> We must be clear about how we win this struggle. We should take what security measures we can. But let us not kid ourselves. In the end, it is by the power of argument, debate, true religious faith, and true legitimate politics that we will defeat this threat.

Citizens in a nation at war think, act, and perceive the world much differently than a nation who sees a rogue gang of murderers that must be stopped. We have color-coded alerts to warn us of impending attacks. We are a nation willing to give up some freedom if it means increasing our protection from the enemy, a la The Patriot Act. Dissenting opinion on anything the government wants is labeled as unpatriotic and helping the enemy.

Interestingly, President Bush defined this war as an emotion, and the media took the bait. We have a "War on Terror"—not on terrorists, not on Al-Qaeda, not on acts of terrorism. Our enemy is an emotion, the feeling of terror. An emotion will not be defeated, so this war can be used forever by the government to drive fear within the American public.

Still, even before 9/11, Americans felt the power of fear. The access to cable news on a twenty-four-hour basis and the sophistication of reporting has helped drive us to this psychological state. Before cable news, few stories were deemed worthy of constant coverage. Even with events like Apollo 13's troubled return from space, the networks did not go on twenty-four-hours with one story. The assassinations of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. certainly received hours of coverage, but not continuous daily coverage. Information about fearful events is available every minute of every day, and Americans are addicted to it. Today, we can see pictures of a tidal wave from half way around the world in a matter of hours, if not minutes.

On a personal level, we see Americans reacting to fear. According to surveys by both the NRA and gun control groups, somewhere between 40 percent and 45 percent of American homes have a gun. Twenty-five percent of American homes have a handgun which is only designed to kill one thing—another person. Somewhere between 10 percent and 12 percent of citizens carry guns when they leave the house.

The way we live in our homes is so different than our parents. The front porch has moved to the back, surrounded by a privacy fence. Electronic surveillance systems are more common than not among suburban residents. Neighborhoods are built behind gates and walls, and have their own private police forces.

Americans are addicted to fear. People buy steering wheel locks, no one will park a bicycle without a chain lock. We buy mace and pepper spray, and a record number of people are taking martial arts. We even view reality shows, like Fear Factor, on television to watch people living out one of our nightmares. No doubt. Fear is one of the mainstays of America's psyche today. And, it shades our perception of politics and our leaders.

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Chapter Three

The Second Pillar of American Politics

Narcissism

Canadians sometimes tell the following joke: "How many Americans does it take to change a light bulb? Only one. He holds it in the socket and the entire world revolves around him." Do Americans think they live in the most important place in the world? Look at world maps printed in the United States. The United States is always in the center of the map. Why not the prime meridian where longitude is at zero degrees? Or the International Date Line? Neither would be appropriate because Americans are used to thinking of the world from an ego-centric perspective.

Pollsters often ask voters an open-ended question about the most important issue facing the country—the issue they want the President and Congress to deal with and try to solve. The only time foreign or world affairs are mentioned is when we are at war. As a rule, Americans worry, think, and obsess about America. Even in the world today, when both Iran and North Korea are developing nuclear capability, concern for these issues is not mentioned by even one percent of the voters. Iraq and Afghanistan are concerns because our troops are there. But, most people probably cannot name a single foreign leader, with the possible exception of Castro. It is apropos that the United States is best known as U.S.

As children, we are taught a societal mantra that America is the greatest country in the world. No one says why or how, and we just accept the concept. In fact, Lewis (2011) says that America's self-occupation with its own greatness is "one of the most prominent political doctrine in the U.S." (p. 19). Historically, the concept can be traced back to the Puritan era when the early Massachusetts Bay colonists believed that God had created a new land as a "redeemer nation" (Madsen, 1998). The concept grew larger during

Thomas Jefferson's administration with the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the West Coast (Ambrose, 1996). By the early eighteenth century, even most European nations saw the United States as different, if not exceptional (Murray, 2013). By 1845, the concept of "Manifest Destiny" had become part of the concept, i.e., the belief that God had intended for America to expand its influence across the width of the continent (Hietala, 2002). That concept became part of the Western Myth as pioneers traveled in wagon trains to open new communities on the western frontier. By the end of the nineteenth century, a combination of America's geography, ideology, politics, and daily life had set the nation apart from those in Europe (Murray, 2013).

The concept expanded in the twentieth century. America's entry in two world wars altered the balance of power in those conflicts, leading to the defeat of militaristic regimes in Germany and Japan. The Cold War that followed World War II, fueled by fears of Communism (McDougall, 2013), enhanced a belief about America's exceptionalism around the globe and in world history (Pease, 2009). Brothers John Foster Dulles (Eisenhower's Secretary of State) and Allen Dulles (head of the CIA at the same time) orchestrated a propaganda campaign on American patriotism as they plotted to expand American ideals across the globe (Kinzer, 2013).

President Ronald Reagan expanded that international perspective to American exceptionalism with his view of the nation as one that was designated by God for greatness (Dunn et al., 2013). Reagan's program for promoting American democracy eventually developed into a $100 million industry that promoted American ideals abroad (Heidt, 2003). Following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the concept of American exceptionalism got redefined again by President George H. W. Bush, who used the concept as part of his justification for invading Iraq and instituting a security state in the nation (Pease, 2009; Unger, 2013) and for the subsequent "war on terror" (Rojecki, 2008; Esch, 2012).

After that, the concept became a mantra for Republican politicians (Gamble, 2012; Silk, 2012), as illustrated by former GOP Speaker of House Newt Gingrich (2011), who described the United States as "A nation like no other." And, while the message is often associated with Republicans, Democrats use it too. Shane (2012), for example, wrote, "Is America the greatest country? Candidates had better say so." And he added, that the ploy allows candidates to avoid discussing major issues because "the reason talking directly about serious American problems is risky is that most voters don't like it" (p. SR6).

Some have argued that America's national narcissism is a key premise behind the efforts of some Republicans to question whether President Barack Obama was born in the United States (Kumar, 2013). Yet, while Republicans have criticized President Obama for not having the same "crusader exceptionalism" that describes their form of national narcissism, Obama has con-

tinued the tradition with his own form of "prophetic exceptionalism" about America that involves "the possibility of equality, solidarity, and unity among people from around the globe" (Gorski & McMillan, 2012, p. 41). In fact, Obama successfully used the idea of American exceptionalism in his 2008 presidential campaign (Ivie & Giner, 2009) and in his subsequent presidency (Pletka, 2013). In addition, Americans' pride in their nation was further enhanced when the Obama administration ordered and successfully killed Osama bin Laden (Hasian, 2012).

Statistics, however, indicate that most of the people who believe that America is special have never crossed the ocean to see another country. We are still a nation where a large percentage of people do not see other cultures. The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that between 1990 and 2000, Americans made a record 27 million trips overseas (International Tourism . . . , 2000). However, even if every one of those trips were made by a different person, it would mean only about 1 in 10 people have been overseas. That statistic is unlikely because some people have traveled overseas on business and European vacations more than once in a decade. With the population of the United States being around 300 million people, we can conclude that less than ten percent of U.S. citizens have traveled overseas.

Looking at our history and geography, our national narcissism is somewhat understandable. The nation covers a huge land mass due to the foresight of President Thomas Jefferson. Stephen Ambrose (1996) pointed out that President Jefferson thought the United States needed to control all the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean or this continent would develop like Europe, with a number of different countries and cultures. At the time of Jefferson's presidency, the French controlled the Gulf Coast and claimed land to the headwaters of the Missouri River. This was in spite of the fact that no European explorer had traveled to that area. The Spanish still had a strong presence on the Pacific Coast and west of Louisiana, and the British were firmly in the Canadian provinces.

If America had developed in a way that reflected Europe, a person from the East Coast might have traveled through ten countries with five or six different languages before reaching the West Coast of the continent. But, that did not happen. America became a geographically large country, with people from other nations all over the world coming to settle here. Hence, our nation is commonly referred to as a "melting pot." In some ways, that term applies; in others, it is a myth that seems like we have not completed the melting and are more like a tossed salad (Smith, 2012). Many Americans cling to their ancestral past, and, as a result, ethnic neighborhoods still exist in every major city in America. People fondly remember "the old country" and show great pride in the place from where they or their family immigrated.

Still, we don't always view other citizens as equally American. Examples of racism, with one group showing hatred for another, are evident in the news

virtually every day. One reason for the problem is that many Americans feel swamped by the large number of immigrants coming into the nation from other cultures (Barone, 2001). Obviously, this indicates not everyone believes we are all equal and the same. A 2005 *Wall Street Journal*/NBC survey reported that President George Bush's approval rating among African American voters was two percent. Their analysis indicated that the African American voters felt that the Federal government's failure to get help to the people of New Orleans, in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, was an indication of racism.

On the other hand, the melding of religious, cultural, and racial groups is occurring in America. Most U.S. citizens of foreign dissent identify themselves and their culture as purely American in nature (Felto & Gardyn, 2001). The U.S. Census Bureau says interracial marriages in the United States have more than doubled since 1980, up from 651,000 to 1.4 million. The Bureau is bemoaning their efforts to racially classify people. What race is the child of a man whose parents are African America and Hispanic and a woman who is Asian American and Caucasian? Additionally, in the Jewish Community, since 1985, 52 percent of Jewish children are marrying out of the faith (Rosenblum, 2003).

It is fairly amazing immigrants from so many different backgrounds have developed such a strong and exclusive view of themselves as a nation and their role in the world. Some writers believe this national narcissism is a national hangover from the nineteenth century idea of "Manifest Destiny." This phrase, originated by New York journalist John L. O'Sullivan in 1844, expressed a belief the United States had a divinely inspired mission to expand and spread its form of democracy and freedom (Hietala, 2002). This idea fueled the westward expansion of the United States. It was a factor behind the Mexican–American War of 1846, in which the United States captured California and New Mexico from Mexico (Greenberg, 2013). This rationale was also used during the displacement of Native Americans (Miller, 2011). In the twenty-first century, it was the underlying concept that President George W. Bush used to justify the war in Iraq, i.e., he believed it was our national duty to spread democracy—a theory outlined in one of his favorite books (Sharansky & Dermer, 2006).

Manifest Destiny not only drives our national narcissism, but it plays very well into another pillar of the American psyche—religiosity—which will be discussed later. This idea would seem outlandish to European and Asian countries who have had centuries of history that include invasion, occupation, and changing national borders. How absurd it must seem to countries in the Middle East whose borders were drawn by the British after World War I without any consideration to history and culture, but mainly a concern about oil resources. But, as we examine our national behavior, it is hard not to conclude that the idea of American manifest destiny is part of our national

consciousness. As Americans, we generally think we are so different and so special. Let's look at some examples.

Americans like to say we celebrate diversity, but there are many signs we want to be all the same and part of our Manifest Destiny. An important part of any national identity is language, and Americans support having one official language—English (Baron, 1992). This insistence is in spite of the British observation that we have not spoken English for generations. There is even a lobby group, U.S. English, Inc. that pushed a bill in Congress to make English the official language, a move that was part of a larger English-only movement. Their website cites a 2004 national survey by Zogby International that indicates 82 percent of Americans support making English an official language, while only 16 percent oppose the measure and two percent are unsure. These results are not strongly partisan or regional. 92 percent of Republicans support the proposal, but 76 percent of Democrats also support it. More than 80 percent of Americans in every part of the country support this proposal (U.S. English, 2004). This movement is representative of an attitude that Thompson (2008) label "language chauvinism" and merely reinforces negative images of Americans to citizens of other nations.

It is amusing to see how Americans behave abroad. Not only do Americans think English should be our official language, but they expect everyone in every other country to speak English. That is just one of the problems faced by Americans who travel abroad for the first time; they often find that they cultural expectations of the country they visit catch them by surprise (Gruber, 2012). Even universities fall victim to cultural centrism when they send students abroad to study or professors go abroad to teach (Dolby, 2007; Getty, 2011). As Dolby concluded, "Although universities often promote study abroad through paradigms that emphasize global awareness, national sentiments and identity are still fundamental elements of how Americans see and position themselves in the world, particularly in the post—September 11 context" (p. 141). In the past, even American diplomats and their staffs are often unprepared for the cultural and political situations to which they are assigned (Kondracke, 1979).

Not surprisingly, the citizens of many other nations have negative attitudes toward the United States even as they hold positive attitudes about the individual Americans they know (Nada, 2010). The issue is severe enough that the federal government has considered launching programs to improve our national image (Devarics, 2008) and President Barack Obama delivered a major speech to address the issue (LaFranchi, 2008).

One of the common negative attitudes that other nations associate with Americans is that of cultural arrogance (e.g., Cohen & Tucker, 2006). Perhaps Americans are treated rudely abroad because we expect everyone to cater to us in terms of language and culture. We fulfill their stereotype that

we are arrogant Americans. If we are traipsing around France, is it too much for the French to expect us to know some basics of their national language?

During a short stay in Italy, one of the authors and his wife tried to find a bus to get back to their hotel. In their best Italian, which was not very good, they tried asking a ticket seller nearby for some assistance. He smiled and in perfect English answered, "Bus 321 is over there on the left." Can you imagine finding average workers in this country who could communicate with foreign visitors in their native language? Unlikely.

Americans expect every other country to follow our lead. One of the arguments advanced by the Bush Administration when it was arguing for war in Iraq, was that we should not ask anyone's permission. Further, extremists within the Republican Party have shown little or no respect for the United Nations and have pushed for the United States to withdraw from the United Nations. That overall goal hasn't come to fruition, but they have taken incremental steps. For example, in 1995, Republicans in the House passed legislation to reduce U.S. payments to the U.N. for peacekeeping operations (Towell, 1995). In 2004, House Republicans opposed the U.N.'s "Law of the Sea" Treaty, despite support for the plan from the Bush White House (Skomeck, 2004). In 2011, the GOP attempted to tie U.S. support for the U.N. to America's foreign policy goals (MacFarquhar, 2011).

When France refused to join the invading coalition in Iraq, Republican Members of Congress took their anger out on France (Cogan, 2004; Hoffman, 2004). The party played public relation stunts like renaming French fries to Freedom fries in the House cafeteria (Kiely, 2003; Rawson, 2003; Swartz, 2009). In the long run, though, France seems to have made a smart decision. France now has no national debt from that war, no obligation to pay for rebuilding Iraq, its soldiers were not killed in the conflict, and the weapons of mass destruction used to justify the invasion were never found.

One definition of narcissism is that it is a psychological condition characterized by self-preoccupation. In nationalistic terms, this manifests itself with a total preoccupation with flags and nationalistic bumper stickers. French writer Bernard-Henri Levy (2005) spent a year in the United States, traveling and writing his observations for *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. His first observation was about our obsession with the American flag:

> In the end, it's the American flag that dominates. One is struck by the omnipresence of the star-spangled banner, even on the T-shirts of the kids. . . . It's the flag of the American cavalry in westerns. It's the flag of the Frank Capra movies. It's the fetish that is there, in the frame, every time the American president appears. It's the beloved flag, almost a living being. . . . It's a little strange, this obsession with the flag. It's incomprehensible for someone who comes from a country where the flag has, so to speak, disappeared, where any nostalgia and concern for it is a sign of an attachment to the past that has become almost ridiculous (p. 56).

As well as supporting English as the official language, Americans also support a law that punishes people who burn the flag, a protest that was shocking during the Vietnam War era. Like the English language group, there is a lobbying group called the Citizens Flag Alliance. Opinion Research Corporation's poll for this group showed 81 percent of Americans would support a Constitutional Amendment to make it a crime to burn a flag (Citizens Flag Alliance) Further, Americans spend a lot of money buying flags, banners, and emblems of the flag. The U.S. Economic Census says Americans spend about $349 million annually on items with images of the American flag.

Another sign of America's national narcissism is the bumper sticker that that reads, "God Bless America." Why not, "God Bless the World"? This bumper sticker is a clear indication that our culture has a deep-seated hold on the Manifest Destiny idea.

The psyche pillar of narcissism also has become part of us as individuals, enhanced today by modern technology. Everyone has cell phones, Blackberries, and laptops. We are never off work. While for some people, the work schedule is closely connected with the consumerism part of the American psyche, discussed in the next chapter, many people simply love the feeling that they are indispensable. Not surprisingly, many Americans are simply working too much (Sorohan, 1984). The problem is so severe that some employers have to consider their potential liability from having workers who work too much (Kobayashi & Middlemiss, 2009).

Some political consultants include as part of their sales pitch to candidates the statement, "I am available 24 hours a day, seven days a week." What difference does that promise make? What could a campaign possibly do at 3:00 a.m. that would make any difference in the outcome of any election?

The United Nations International Labor Organization once determined that Americans put in more hours than anyone else (Anderson, 2001). They noted that the average Australian, Canadian, Japanese, or Mexican worker was on the job roughly 100 hours less than the average American in a year, or almost two-and-a-half weeks less. The Brazilians and British work 250 hours less or five weeks less than Americans. Germans work 500 hours less, or over three months less than Americans. In other words, the dream that machines would give us more time to be with our families or develop interests, other than work, has happened in other industrialized countries but not in the United States. In one national survey in 2007, 69 percent of people who have a full time job said their work was a significant source of stress in their life (Kitchens, 2007).

The pillar of narcissism has driven politics into a total exercise of self-interest appeal. When Ronald Reagan asked his famous question, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?," his campaign showed an under-

standing of the growing American narcissism. He did not ask if the nation was better off, if your state was better off, or if your community was better off. His message was are You better off? If you are not better off, then it is the leaders' fault and they should be thrown out of office.

Former Senator Bob Dole attempted an appeal like this but it was not as effective. Then First Lady, and now Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (1996) wrote a book about raising children entitled, It Takes A Village. The title is based on an old African value that every adult in a village has a responsibility to help raise every child in the village and to be an example for that child. In his attempt to position himself as the "family candidate" during his convention speech, Senator Dole made the sarcastic remark, "Mrs. Clinton, it takes a family to raise a child." The underlying premise of this statement, as a criticism to the idea that all adults in a community have responsibility, is that other people's children are not your problem or responsibility in any way. It is also an allusion to the idea that a "family" consists of both parents who take responsibility for their children. With the large number of single parent families and blended families based on second marriages, this 1950s stereotypic idea does not really resonate with the voters.

Political candidates sometimes forget the campaign is really about the voters, not the candidate. Each voter will listen to the communication and evaluate it in terms of the relevance and importance to their everyday life. Voters will evaluate if the information reinforces the idea America is the greatest country and that the voters' individual beliefs and values are the correct ones. If they don't make that evaluation, the candidate loses.

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Chapter Four

Pillars of the American Psyche

Consumerism

As David Halberstam (2012) pointed out in his book *The Fifties*, America became an economy based upon consumerism after World War II. Prior to that time, America was in the Great Depression. There was little money and few goods. At the end of World War II, America had a large number of manufacturing plants available that had been geared to the war effort. Afterward, the tank factories could go back to making domestic cars. Uniform textile mills could begin making cloth for fashion. The experimental chemical labs could now go back to making plastic, cosmetics, and toys. Beyond the goods, however, Madison Avenue learned the power of a new emerging medium—television. With this new, mass media, advertisers could reach millions of people and the reactions were clear. The consumer economy had begun.

Two important concepts related to consumerism are relevant to the political process. First, if the economic growth and stability depend on consumption, then society must continually encourage the population to consume. Therefore, you need more, new, and better stuff. Comedian George Carlin (2009) did a routine that was a commentary about American consumerism. He said you have stuff so you buy a house. As you get more stuff, your house gets full so you buy a bigger house. Now, you need more stuff to fill up the house, so you buy more stuff. He continues this progression on and on (p. 215).

The statistics on our willingness to drive ourselves into debt, as a result of our consumerism frenzy, are staggering. While Americans revere the idea of fiscal responsibility and conservatism, our lifestyle indicates just the opposite. CNN Money observed that the American consumer has become deeply

addicted to spending, running up ever higher level of debt to live in a fashion that is beyond their means (Lahart, 2003). *Frontline* reporter Lowell Bergman (2004) noted that, "with more than 641 million credit cards in circulation and accounting for an estimated $1.5 trillion of consumer spending, the U.S. economy has clearly gone plastic."

Companies spend millions in advertising to get consumers to buy more. Automobile dealers offer a zero-money down payment. Furniture companies advertise a no-payment plan for a year. Telemarketing companies call constantly to get you to borrow money against the equity in your home. It is a "what's-my-monthly-payment" society. The result is that the average family is in debt by $8,000.

In this environment throughout the 1970s and into the twenty-first century, Republicans attacked the Democrats as wild spenders. Their attack was, "Your family must live within the family budget. Your government should do the same." The truth was and is that families are not living within their budget. Most families are living well beyond their means and are deficit spending as much as the federal government. Likewise, the Republicans were seen as the party of spending discipline. However, the Reagan administration's record deficits were replaced by the Clinton's balanced budgets only to be replaced with George Bush's new record deficits. Meanwhile, under Democratic President Barack Obama, the excessive spending has continued. While Tea Party Republicans made some public relations efforts to cut government spending (Weisman & Parker, 2013), mainstream Republicans joined with Democrats to restore most of the cuts that had previously been made. Essentially, the moderates of both parties agreed that money was needed in the economy to maintain the politics of consumerism (Hulse, 2013).

Lest the above analysis sounds like an indictment of the GOP, keep in mind that Democrats also engage in consumerism as a political technique. They merely choose a different approach. The basic Republican approach to political consumerism is to reduce taxes, thus putting more money into the pockets of citizens; that, in turn, allows them to spend more on consumer goods. The Democratic approach is to increase government spending, thus creating more jobs and putting more money into the pockets of consumers. Their basic approaches are polar opposites, but their goal is the same. Both parties assume that more spending by voters is a plus for the political system.

Even that most sensitive of issues, race relations, is influenced by consumerism. Jones (2014), for example, argued that the nation's racial problems are really due to economic exploitation that began with slavery and continues today in the form of economic disadvantages for poor African Americans. Newman (2000) argued that economic issues were behind much of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Vavrus (2000) argued that consumerism influenced political choices via its impact on lifestyles, and that this

was particularly true for women voters. Turner (1995) argued that consumer analysis was a major contributor to political flux in the United States. Even the traditional issue of military spending is ultimately tied to the economic well-being of areas and the manufacturers who contribute to local economies (Borch & Wallace, 2010).

Much of the expansion of consumerism is because products (and therefore advertising) are aimed at kids and teens. Consider the development of one product, such as the "tennis shoe." While the term "tennis shoe" was the dominant name of the product in the 1950s and 1960s, those of the Boomer generation remember them as basketball shoes. They were the shoes your parents were required to buy for physical education in high school, even if you did not participate in the few organized sports teams that were available. Later, the term "athletic shoes" became more dominant and the price increased accordingly.

In the 1950s, the decision of which product to purchase was only a two-dimensional problem. You could have either black or white, high top or low cut. If you were really fashion conscious, you would decide between Converse or Keds. The cost of all of them were about the same, around $10. You normally bought these shoes at department stores, such as Sears.

Today, there are entire stores dedicated to selling "athletic shoes." There are numerous shoes for specialized activities—running shoes, walking shoes, tennis shoes, basketball shoes, softball shoes, soccer shoes, and cross training shoes. Of course there are five to ten brands and styles of each shoe. One side of the store is for men, the other side is for women. And, of course the colors and styles depend upon the shoe endorsement from a super-star. If the shoe is endorsed by a famous athlete, it will obviously be more expensive too. It may not be better for your feet in terms of support on your ankles or arches, but it is more prestigious. But, how could a nine-year-old possibly play basketball unless he is wearing the same shoe as Shaq? Even considering the inflation rate for the past fifty years, it is hard to believe that PE shoes now cost hundreds of dollars.

In addition to the sophistication of one product, think back twenty years and consider all the new products that are available. Two decades ago, there was no mass consumption of fax machines (which are almost obsolete now), iPad's, DVD's, cell phones, Blackberries, and tablets. These are just a few of the thousands of new consumer products to hit the market since the new millennium.

POLITICAL CONSUMERISM

Some academic research has looked at the role of political consumerism in the political process (e.g., Micheletti, Follesdal, & Stolle, 2008; Newman &

Bartels, 2011). Some consumers specifically choose the products they purchase (or avoid) based on political ideologies or issues (Banaji & Buckingham, 2009). As such, political consumerism can be defined as "the use of consumer power to influence politics" (Stroomsnes, 2009, p. 303). Overall, political consumers have more trust in other citizens, are heavily involved in charities, and score high on measures of political efficacy (Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005). Political campaigns have been known to target voters based on consumer habits, as in the famous designation of "soccer moms" in the 2000 election (Vavrus, 2000). More recently, an increasing number of campaigns have targeted young voters' consumer habits based on their behavior on the Internet (Ward & de Vreese, 2011).

THE BROADER ISSUE OF CONSUMERISM

Political Consumerism is a down-up approach to politics, with the intent of the action being to use consumer behavior by ordinary individuals to influence decisions by corporations and politicians. Form the most part, though, consumerism is a broader national factor that impacts how political parties address voter concerns. As noted earlier, both parties take a different approach—approaches that are so diverse that they lead to political stalemate.

The criticisms of the Republican approach is relatively simple, i.e., the "trickle down" method of tax cuts has little benefit for the average person but rather benefits high income individuals. The only major result of trickle-down politics is that it reduces governmental revenues. In Kansas, in 2012, the state adopted two tax reduction techniques (Barro, 2014). First, the state legislature cut tax rates and raised the standard deduction on state income taxes. Then they eliminated any taxes on self-contracting income, i.e., that which is reported on 1099-MISC tax forms. This latter law was designed to encourage small businesses that rely on such income. The idea was that cutting those taxes would lead to more job creation and thus offset the tax revenue that would be lost by the tax cuts. It didn't work. The next year, the state projected that they would get $651 million in state income tax, but the actual number that came in was only $369 million. Those who benefitted from the tax cuts merely accepted the cuts and kept the money to themselves.

The Kansas example is only one which demonstrates that trickle-down economics rarely trickle down to low income voters (Frank, 2007). As commentator Paul Krugman (2014) wrote, "Republicans . . . are having a hard time shaking their reputations for reverse Robin-Hoodism, for being the party that takes from the poor and gives to the rich" (p. A19). Similarly, *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat (2014) wrote that "policies championed on the right . . . have often made it harder for low-income men to find steady

work and stay out of prison, and made women understandably wary of marrying them" (p. SR13).

There is some agreement with this criticism from within the Republican Party itself. Republican commentator Joe Scarborough (2013), for example, argued that Ronald Reagan "rose to power as a Main Street conservative with more in common with Eisenhower and Nixon than people generally recognize" (p. 117). Scarborough called for a return to an ideological view that was friendly to middle America.

Given the ineffectiveness of past trickle-down policies, many Republicans turned to a call for balanced budgets, with the idea that the budget could be balanced by austerity techniques that targeted cuts in unnecessary spending (Cohn & Davis, 2005; McGahey, 2013). This approach labels Democrats as "big spenders" whose policies only increase the national debt (e.g., Cohn, 2005). That, in turn, leads to a gradual building up governmental debt that will have to be repaid by future generations (Siegel, 2014). The Democratic response is simple: Their approach puts more money into the pockets of low- and middle-income Americans, putting more money into the American economy, and thus increasing the nation's gross national product. In the end, the result is increased tax revenue for the government. As a result, there is often a drive to increase government spending in down economic times, under the assumption that increased government spending will stimulate the economy (e.g., Hitt & Mullins, 2009).

Easterly (2014) argued that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans understand global economics. Instead, he argued that governments are inherently biased against the poor, leading to an increased financial gap between the rich and the poor. In his view, the problem exceeds that of any specific nation, but is due to the technocratic nature of global government itself. Still, there is an assumption in his argument that the very nature of government leads to unchecked powers against the poor. Which approach is the best? That's the essence of the debate. However, there is research that argues that different global nations take differing approaches to addressing the issue. Generally, in opposition to Easterly's arguments, Simmons and Nooruddin (2006) found that on an international level, democracies generally increased spending on public services because that helped to meet the needs of a large portion of society, while non-democratic governments could remain in power by simply responding to economic elites.

It is unclear whether Americans really demand these things or if the demand is artificially driven by marketing and advertising. Which is the cause and which is the effect is only a philosophical question. The results are the same—everyone wants more of everything.

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Chapter Five

The Fourth Pillar of the American Psyche

Religiosity

Many of the initial settlers from Europe—such as the Puritans (McKenna, 2007) and the Pilgrims (Marty, 1985)—came to the American continent as religious refugees and that religious influence continued into the Colonial Era (Kidd, 2007). That heritage led the founding fathers to include a plank for religious freedom, i.e., the separation of church and state, into the U.S. Constitution (Lambert, 2003). That attitude was a direct by-product of the motivations that brought the settlers to the New World. Those early religious groups were not initially seeking a place that embraced religious diversity or tolerance. These settlers came from societies where people believed there should be one official religion in a country. If citizens organized a religion that was different from the official religion, then the government punished and persecuted the dissenters. The original American colonists brought these attitudes with them. They founded colonies based upon their religious beliefs and would persecute anyone who disagreed with their religious doctrines. The Puritans, for example, believed that the "true" faith was known only to "visible saints" and others represented false religions (Morgan, 1963). That resistance to other ideas eventually led Roger Williams to settle Rhode Island as a haven for religious freedom—a concept eventually adopted by the founding fathers (Barry, 2012).

Organized religion has always been an important institution in America. Churches were the central place in many towns where people gathered not only to worship, but to consider the issues of the day. During the Revolutionary War, ministers on both sides launched arguments from the pulpits and

published their sermons for distribution throughout the colonies (Van Tyne, 1913).

Church (2002) noted in his "biography" of the Declaration of Independence that the document was based at least partly on religious principles. Gaustad (1987) argued that the founding fathers viewed religion as playing a major role in preserving the social mores of the new nation. The Bible, in particular, has had a major influence on the life of the nations (Miller, 1956; Tuveson, 1968) and on the nation's public discourse (Johnson, 1985; Sandeen, 1982). In the nineteenth century, the concept that Americans were really God's chosen people erupted onto the American public in the idea of Manifest Destiny (Cherry, 1998) This idea says it is our duty to God to spread our form of Democracy across the world. This current of religion in the nation's history continued through the beginning of the twentieth century with orators such as William Jennings Bryant (Cherny, 1994; Kazin, 2007; Leinwand, 2007) and the Prohibition Era of the 1920s (Carter, 2012). In the modern era, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s centered around the role of churches in the African American community (Johnson, 1986).

While different forms and denominations of churches have emerged, declined, or been reinvented over our 230-year history, this does not necessarily mean people adopt the ideas the institutions are promoting. Religiosity means the numerous aspects of knowing, believing, and behaving based on the assumption of the existence of a higher power. The evidence from the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes Americans provide to social science researchers clearly demonstrates religiosity is a strong part of the American psyche and plays an important role in politics (see, for example, Miller & Wattenberg, 1984).

In terms of identification, 76.5 percent of Americans identify themselves with a Christian group. Researchers note, however, "There appears to be a considerable gap between "identification with" a religion and reported "membership" or "belonging" to an institutional embodiment of that faith." An additional 3.7 percent of the population identifies with non-Christian religious groups, such as Judaism, Buddhism, etc. Only one percent of the respondents openly identify themselves as agnostic or atheists. Further, while some Christian groups decry Americans' secular nature, Americans do not view themselves in this manner. When asked, "When it comes to your outlook, do you regard yourself as religious or secular?" Seventy-five percent responded religious and 16 percent responded secular (Kitchens, 2008).

Surveys which examined religiosity, in terms of beliefs, indicated similar results as the survey that asked people to identify themselves religiously. A *FOX News* poll in 2004 indicated that 92 percent of Americans said they believe in God (Blanton, 2004). In terms of religious concepts, 84 percent of the respondents said they believed in Heaven, 74 percent believed in Hell,

and 71 percent of the respondents believed there is a Devil. One interesting finding is that younger people are more likely to believe in Hell and the Devil than older people. A *Newsweek* survey around the same time found many of the same results, with 80 percent of the respondents saying they believe God created the universe and only 10 percent saying they did not believe God created the universe. The other 10 percent were uncertain ("Where we stand on faith," 2005).

While we have a Constitutional separation of church and state, America has never had a separation of politics and religion. From ministers driving revolution against England, Abolitionist preachers admonishing the evils of slavery, and African American churches being the center of civil rights movements, religion has always been involved with politics, in questioning the morality of certain issues. These issues are national and local, as well as, old and new. For example, creation versus evolution has been fought since the famous 1926 Scopes trial in Tennessee (Harrison, 1994; Hostetler, 1998; Marsden, 1980). These matters are still far from being settled today. In 1999, the Kansas State Board of Education deleted the teaching of evolution from the State's science curriculum. Other states, such as Texas, Nebraska, California, Louisiana, and New Hampshire, are having similar battles.

No issue has brought the right-wing Christian movement to the forefront in politics more than legalized abortion (Francome, 1980; Fried, 1988). This concern has become a single-issue vote and a litmus test for groups to either help or attempt to defeat political candidates (Joffe, 1997). In his book, *What's the Matter with Kansas*, Thomas Franks (2004) pointed out how the religious fervor over legalized abortion has made voters ignore their downward economic plight, handed to them by the Republican Congress and White House, to work tirelessly for Republicans who want all legal abortions banned. This so-called life agenda has encouraged these groups to oppose stem cell research (Deckha, 2008), to get involved in a family's agonizing decision involving Terri Schaivo (Kaplan, 2007), and to rail in Congress against human cloning (Stolberg, 2001).

The latest morality drama was played around the issue of gay marriage. In 2004, 64 percent of Americans opposed gay marriage and 32 percent supported allowing it (Gilgoff et al., 2004). This issue was put on the ballot in several states before the 2008 election. Of particular note was Ohio, one of the key battleground states in the 2004 Presidential election. The Republican assumption was that this issue would help them to turnout conservative voters. Polling in Ohio during the campaign clearly indicated the heat of this issue. 71 percent supported banning gay marriages. In addition, a plurality said homosexuality was a lifestyle choice, not something predominately determined by genetics (Kitchens, 2008).

Since then, public support of gay marriage has increased. By 2012, support had increased to 49 percent, while opposition had dropped to 40 percent;

still, the nation remained divided on the issue (Connelly, 2012). The 2013 Supreme Court decision that struck down much of the Defense of Marriage Act, thus supporting gay marriage, served to intensify the debate as opponents promised to keep the issue going. In the week following the decision, support for gay marriage had grown even higher (up to 55 percent) while opposition had dropped to 40 percent (Page, 2013). Still, it remained a divisive issue, but the shift in support of gay marriage seem to be a result of its framing as a fairness issue rather than a religious issue as it was during the preceding decades.

Despite the nation's historical and Constitutional separation of church and state, voters want to mix religion and politics. In a Pew Charitable Trust nationwide survey, when Americans were asked if churches should express views on political matters, 52 percent said yes and 44 percent said no. When asked how they felt about the amount of expressions of faith and prayer by political leaders, 41 percent said politicians expressed too little about faith and prayer and only 21 percent said they expressed too much.

The latest incarnation of religious influence had its roots in the 1970s and 1980s, largely from television preachers. The broadcast preachers of the 1950s, who were considered rather laughable by most of the American public, built a communication empire in the 1970s and 1980s that constantly injected their religious take on political issues and current events. The first of these efforts came under the leadership of Reverend Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority organization, who built a strong following among audiences in the nation's sun belt (Williams, 2010). That effort failed, largely due to it lacked broad-based support and had an ineffective grassroots organization (Wilcox, Rozell, & Gunn, 1996). The Moral Majority finally shutdown its organization in 1988, but its role was picked up by Pat Robertson and his Christian Coalition (Wilcox, DeBell, & Sigelman, 1999).

Pat Robertson's 700 Club on his Christian Broadcasting Network reached more than one million households per day and was seen in 96 percent of America's television markets ("Christian Broadcasting Network"). Robertson used his program as a political pulpit and, by the 1988 election, became a major figure in the Republican Party (Penning, 1994). He also had a broader influence on the national media and the issues that it covered (Huckins, 1999). Robertson once told his audience that Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans because Ellen DeGeneres was chosen to host television's Emmy awards (New Orleans is her hometown) (Duke, Ihssen, & O'Brien, 2012). Similar to Senator Joseph McCarthy's list of "communists," Robertson claimed his employees at the network put together a list of 283 nominees, presenters, and invited guests at the Emmy's known to be of sexually deviant persuasions. Robertson's political strength was significant enough that he influenced the 2000 Republican platform (Schnabel, 2013).

Another religious player in politics is James Dobson. His *Focus on the Family* radio show was syndicated to more than 700 stations across the country ("Christian Evangelicals Proclaim," 2004). He and other politically active non-traditional Christian leaders are often seen on the talk shows and attending political functions.

The influence of the religious right reached its peak during the administration of George W. Bush from 2000 to 2007 (Green, 2009). In Bush, the evangelical community not only had a member of their group in the White House, but his administration openly used religious appeals in its rhetoric (Schroepfer, 2008). Part of Bush's domestic program was faith-based initiatives for community action (Carlson-Thies, 2009). That religious base, teamed with Bush's handling of the crisis following the 9/11 attacks, kept the Republicans in the White House for two consecutive terms. They lost only when the nation's financial problems, including a massive collapse of Wall Street and the banking system, shifted the discussion from religion and patriotism to the pillar of consumerism.

Religion was not a major factor in the 2008 election. The Republican nominee, John McCain, was not an active church-goer, although his vice-presidential nominee Sarah Palin had strong appeal among evangelical voters (Hart, 2013). Of the two nominees, Democrat Barack Obama was more active in religious meetings, but his religious association with controversial preacher Jeremiah Wright was more of a distraction than an asset (Walker & Smithers, 2009). By the 2012 election, the Republican nominee was Mitt Romney—a Mormon whose religious beliefs did not excite evangelical voters (Powell, 2012).

Still, being a Christian has now become "cool." Young people are being entertained by Christian rockers and there is a Christian rock radio station in most major markets (Adedeji, 2006). Religion has always been part of the American psyche. Now, being clearly part of a religious group is a necessity to be accepted as part of what's "in," both for teens and their parents. Instead of finding the discussion of religion and politics as uncomfortable, politicians are now finding it a necessity. Voters can be persuaded with arguments about the morality of public policy.

THE PHARISEE EFFECT

While religion can be a strong motivation for supporting a political candidate, any candidate who overuses religion as his motivational base is at risk of going too far. An extensive use of religion can trigger a voter backlash known as the Pharisee Effect. The label is based on a biblical parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in which Jesus criticizes a Pharisee for being too public with his prayers (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee's mistake is that his

loud public prayers were intended to enhance his own image rather than being an honest expression of internal religious devotion, leading Jesus to rebuke him with the remark that "everyone that exalteth himself shall be abase" (Luke 18:14). Similar language is used to criticize the Pharisees in the book of Matthew (particularly Matthew 23:12), with the section adding the description that the Pharisees "outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:28). The Pharisee, it would be argued, was so openly religious that he was subject to charges of insincerity and hypocrisy. The same thing can occur with the use of political appeals in politics.

This phenomenon was first described by Powell and Neiva in 2004. It was subsequently tested in an Alabama gubernatorial campaign involving Judge Roy Moore ("The Ten Commandments Judge") (Powell, Neiva, & Fuller, 2008). Specifically, the Pharisee Effect hypothesizes that excessive religious appeals subject the user to negative evaluations regarding the speaker's intention or motivations. These potential negative evaluations fall into one of five different categories: (1) self-serving motivations, (2) hypocrisy, (3) inappropriateness, (4) fanaticism, or (5) a "holier-than-thou" attitude.

(1) Self-serving Motivation

The speaker is using a religious appeal for their own purposes, rather than to promote a religious purpose. In this sense, the Pharisee Effect could be somewhat similar to the psychological concept of "intentionality." Intentionality assumes that observers make judgments regarding whether a person engages in a specific behavior for (1) the purpose of achieving a specific outcome and (2) with the belief that the behavior can achieve that consequence (Malle & Knobe, 1997). If the intentionality of the act is viewed as self-serving, the positive attributions that could be obtained from the use of the appeal could be negated. From this approach, the sin of the Pharisee was that he was seeking public recognition for his spirituality; he was, as Duke (1995), "praying with a sideward glance" that monitored public reaction to his prayer (p. 923).

(2) Deception, or Hypocrisy

The speaker is viewed as basing their appeal on a set of religious values that they themselves do not personally hold. Biblical scholars typically identify hypocrisy as the major mistake of the Pharisee in the passage from Matthew 23 (Eddy, 2001; Mason, 1990; Weinfeld, 1990). Hypocrisy has been studied as a psychological phenomenon that reflects an inconsistency between behavior and one's moral principles (Batson & Kobrynowicz, 1997; Batson, Thompson & Chen, 2002) that is related to self-deception (Batson & Thomp-

son, 1999; Statman, 1997) and dissonance reduction (Stone et al., 1997). It may exist in different forms, including pretense, inconsistency, complacency, and blame (Crisp & Cowton, 1994), but is generally viewed as an indication of dishonesty (Bulka, 1976). Gailli (1994) argues that hypocrisy is a constant professional threat for those in religion, and the argument could just as easily be made for anyone in public life. Political hypocrisy, in particular, is a favorite news story for journalists (Hoyt, 1999). Political opposition groups also like the theme, regardless of the group's political ideology. Liberal groups have attacked the right-wing Christian Coalition with charges of hypocrisy (Gilbert, 1993). During the controversy over President Bill Clinton's sex life, for example, one of the Republicans (Congressman Bob Livingston) criticizing the President resigned after it was revealed that he too had engaged in extra-marital affairs (Carlson, 1998; Hosenball & Murr, 1999; Smith, 1998). The information became public after publisher Larry Flynt charged that Livingston and other Republicans were being hypocritical for criticizing Clinton for "sins" that they also had committed (Hosenball & Murr, 1999).

(3) Inappropriateness

Bucy (2000) argued that one dimension that the public uses to evaluate its leaders is that of the appropriateness of the leader's messages and behavior. In some instances, the appeals may be so strong as to be viewed as inappropriate behavior in a nation that values church-state separation (Gedicks, 1995). In fact, some theorists argue that religious arguments are inappropriate in public debates (e.g., Greenawalt, 1988; Nuehaus, 1984; Thiemann, 1996), with one describing religious messages as a "conversation stopper" (Rorty, 1994, p. 1). Carter (1993) argued that "public culture more and more prefers religion as something without political significance, . . . never heard, rarely seen" (p. 9). Hostetler (2000) essentially described an instance in a 1995 speech delivered by Congressman Glenn Poshard in which the congressman responded to an attack from the Christian Coalition by talking of his own religious beliefs; Hostetler further argued that Poshard was hindered because of a "prejudice against religious discourse" in such a situation (p. 88). Similarly, Senator Joseph Lieberman was criticized for airing his religious views, with one commentator describing Lieberman's leadership style as "the religiosity, the sanctimony, the self-absorption" (Nordlinger, 2000, p. 34). Another noted that, in his first campaign speech as the Democrats Vice-Presidential nominee, that Lieberman "invoked God thirteen times" (Gellman, 2000, p. 10). Such comments indicate that the appropriateness of religious discourse is highly dependent upon the context in which it is used. In some instances, including that of political campaigns, religious messages may appear to be out of context.

(4) Fanaticism

Members of a religious community are faced with a constant contradiction in that devoutness is valued positively, and the more devout the better. But one must be devout without being extremely devout. While extreme devoutness might be valued within the religious community, it is viewed negatively and labeled fanaticism outside of that community (Joelson, 1989, 1990). Bruce (2000) argued that any religious involvement in politics that is based on fanaticism or zealotry is doomed to failure since the psychological characteristics associated with zealotry (certainty and dogmatism) "because they create unrealistic expectations and thus generate their own sources of disappointment" (p. 263). For outside observers, though, the presence of the "unrealistic expectations" serves to further identify the zealot as a religious fanatic and thus outside the mainstream of both religion and politics. Such reactions prompted Darsey (1997) to comment that "only madmen talk to God" (p. 126). Thus Johnson, Tammey, and Burton (1990) argued that this factor also makes it difficult for religious candidates to reach a broader spectrum of voters because their religious base creates a paradoxical situation for them. Their moral values provides them an initial base of volunteers and financial support, but the fanaticism label keeps them from reaching a broad range of voters.

(5) The "Holier-than-thou" Attitude

This may have been the real "sin" of the Pharisee in the parable, i.e., the purpose of his loud boastful prayer is to let others know that he is an extremely pious and religious individual. He comes across as a self-satisfied individual who is proud to be so religious and—even more so—not one of those common sinners who represent most of the other inhabitants of his community. This attitude is consistent with social psychological definitions of the "holier-than-thou" attitude, i.e., the rating of the self to be better on religious attributes than others (Rowatt et al., 2002; Taylor, 1999). Willimon (2002) described this attitude as "the sin of smugness" (p. 11), while Galli (1994) considered it a problem faced by the "professional holy . . . (that) can be hazardous to your spiritual health" (p. 106). Thus Liut (1998) criticizes the Pharisee, noting that as we overhear his prayer, "we learn nothing about who God is, what God does; but we come to know the man" (p. 932). As with hypocrisy, there is some debate within the field of psychology as to the extent to which such attitudes are the product of self-serving assessments or a by-product of self-deception (Epley & Dunning, 2000), but that factor has little impact on the negative public impression that is created by such a persona. Public reaction to a holier-than-thou attitude is usually negative, as

evidenced by the glee that so many people take when a religious icon is revealed as a hypocrite.

CONCLUSIONS

Religion is a complicated pillar of American politics. Religious beliefs reflect moral values that have been around since the initial settlement of the New World. Those values and beliefs influenced the founding fathers and have been involved in American politics, to some degree, ever since. Religion played a role in the founding of the nation and in key historical events like prohibition and the civil rights movement. That trend may have reached its peak during the administration of George W. Bush, when Christian evangelicals played a major role in helping Bush win the presidency.

Still, the politician who uses religion as the only pillar of a campaign risks a potential voter backlash. Overuse of religion can trigger images related to the politician's motivations and possible perceptions of hypocrisy, inappropriateness, fanaticism, and a "holier-than-thou" attitude. If that happens, the political candidate loses.

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Chapter Six

Why Voters Frighten Politicians

> "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people. The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves." —Henry Kissinger (1970).

Americans both hate and love government. They like many government services, but they hate much of what government represents. And that hatred is something that can scare politicians.

Why do voters direct so much hatred toward a government that they consider the best in the world? There are lengthy lists of cliches and urban legends used to justify that hatred while also maintaining the hyper-patriotism Americans exhibit to the country. These include such cliches as: government wastes money; the government paid $600 for a hammer; the government takes my money and no one cares how it is spent; all politicians are crooks—if they are honest when we elect them, they become crooks after they are elected; the government is just a pointy-headed bunch of bureaucrats that do not understand average people; and we need to run government like a business.

Of course, some of this criticism is based in reality. A 1997 audit of Medicare uncovered $23 billion in overpayments (Pear, 1997). The lobbying scandal involving Jack Abramoff (Samuel, Pound, & Streisand, 2005) reinforced the belief that most politicians are dishonest or can be bought off. On virtually every survey, if voters are asked to name the most important quality they seek in a candidate for public office, the word "honesty" is always at the top by a huge margin. As Congress scrambled to convince the public they are not a bunch of crooks by passing a lobbying reform bill, the new Republican majority leader was creating more damage.

Representative and later Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-Ohio) and other Republicans defended the relationship between Members of Con-

gress and special interests groups (Lipton, 2010). Boehner said it was important for Congressmen to understand industries because attending meetings of industry groups helped with legislation. Of course, the press pointed out that he had been given more than $150,000 in travel by special interests groups and gone to golf resorts from Scotland to California (Jeffrey & Bauerlein, 2011). Such behavior only reinforced the public's perception that all politicians are crooks.

Now, the urban legend that most people have heard: There is a woman who drives a Cadillac and is sometimes seen with her poodle at the grocery store buying cigarettes and beer or wine with food stamps. She has been seen in every state. In some places, that are not too politically correct, they mention that she is an African American. This story was first presented to the American public in a 1976 campaign speech by Ronald Reagan in which he talked about a fictional "welfare queen" who had stolen $150,000 from the government by using 80 aliases, 30 addresses, a dozen social security cards, and four fictional dead husbands ("'Welfare queen' becomes issue . . . ," 1976). That anecdote was likely triggered by an earlier Top Ten country song called "Welfare Cadillac," written by Guy Drake (1970). The story is a typical "dependency narrative" aimed at attacking those who are viewed as taking money from the government (Cassiman, 2006). This legend has been thoroughly debunked (Seccombe, 2010), with at least one scholar saying the story was created as a way to stigmatize welfare (Kohler-Hausman, 2007). Regardless, the legend persists.

It is somewhat amazing that the people who invent such an urban legend can ignore so much reality. Our government works seamlessly in so many areas that we do not even notice that the government is doing anything. For instance, when you buy gasoline for your car, the pump reads you have a gallon. How do people know it is not nine-tenths of a gallon? How do they know it was really gasoline? When people pulled through the drive-thru to grab a burger, did they ever think, "This might not be beef. This might poison me and I might die?" Probably not. When people drive on those wide-lane Interstate highways, do they ever say the government should never have built these roads? No. The public loves the benefits from the government, but they rarely notice them.

This point was driven home to one of the authors in his own neighborhood. He was playing on a tennis team and one of his teammates was praising the candidacy of George W. Bush and quoting his anti-tax television spots. He argued that the government needed to cut taxes because it was his money. Government just wastes money, and it was his money that the government was wasting. When asked why he did not belong to the private tennis club less than two miles away, he responded that it was too expensive. "It cost more than a grand a month," he said with disgust. When asked how much it cost to belong to the tennis club at the public park, he confessed it

was $50 for a family membership for the entire year. The author just looked at him and said, "Now, do you understand why we pay taxes?" Unfortunately, he probably did not get the message.

As much as Democrats object to the idea, with a little research, you can find government waste, abuse, and fraud. But, if you examine any large corporation or institution, you will find as much or more waste and fraud as in the government. Why? Because all large organizations are composed of people. No person is perfect. Since organizations are made of imperfect people, there are going to be imperfections. It is hard not to smile when you watch the documentary *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* and see both President Bushes on a video birthday card to an executive saying that Enron is a model for corporations of the future (Cox, Friedman, & Edwards, 2009). And, while Enron was a high profile example, such mismanagement is a potential problem in most big companies (Bryce, 2005).

Academic research on voters who hate government has generally fallen into three broad categories—political cynicism, political skepticism, and the hostile media phenomenon. Political cynics generally hate politics and politicians, and they often cut themselves off from political activities. Political cynicism is associated with decreased interest in political campaigns and in civic participation (Capella & Jamieson, 1997). This cynicism is not the same as political apathy. Political apathy is a lack of interest in the political process; political cynics, conversely, have participated in the political process, but they have grown distrustful of that process. Political cynics become so distrustful of politics that they quit paying attention to political messages. As a result, they remove themselves off from politics, since they don't trust the political system or the politicians in it.

That low level of trust distinguishes political cynicism from political skepticism (Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001). The core factor influencing political skepticism is doubt, not lack of trust (Tsfati & Cappella, 2005). Political skeptics pay attention to political messages, but they simply don't believe much of what they hear. They process the information in the message, but they question its truthfulness. That leads them to make delayed decisions, i.e., they don't decide whether they agree with a new political message until they have time to gather more information and evaluate it. Skeptical voters are highly active voters, but slow to act or react. They refuse to accept political messages at face value, but actively seek additional evidence that supports, refutes, or modifies the initial information. They stay involved in the political process, but they don't quickly take sides. Their skepticism typically expands beyond politics to the realm of advertising, where they are skeptical about price claims or other points advocated by a retailer (Hardestry, Carlson, & Beardeen, 2002).

Quite often, people who hate politics also hate political media. More specifically, they often blame the media for negative coverage about their

favorite candidate, a phenomenon known at the Hostile Media Effect. Scholars sometimes trace this effect back to the 1970s and the reelection campaign of President Richard Nixon and his label on-going disagreement with the press (Liebovich, 2003). Nixon pursued a strategy in which he changed references to journalism from "the press" to "the media," under the assumption that the later terms had no connotations of objectivity (Nolan, 2005). The campaign was aided by Vice President Spiro Agnew and his "nattering nabobs of negativism" description of the media (Barone, 1996; Hart, 1994). Research on the hostile media effect has found that perceptions media bias exceeds that of reality (e.g., Kyun & Yorgo, 2007), but exceptions are made of cable channels such as Fox News and MSNBC (Coe et al., 2008), which deliberately seek biased audiences. In addition, Stadler (2009) found the perceptions of hostile media were rarely based on what people heard or saw in the media, but rather what they heard about the media from other people. Such research led Matheson and Durson (2001) to conclude that hatred for the media was largely a perception based on in-group bias. For those who hate political media, though, that doesn't matter. They have an easy scapegoat to blame for political problems and their hatred of politics in general.

Given so much hatred directed toward politics and the political system, many politicians are justifiably worried about how voters will respond to them. Not all, however, hate government. A significant number still like their government and its services. For example, while former Republican Congressman Dick Army of Texas said there was no place in a free society for Social Security (McIntire, 2001), Republicans in Congress have not pushed to eliminate it. When Medicare was first proposed, the American Medical Association (AMA) screamed "socialized medicine." They were unwilling to believe a number of senior citizens simply did not go to the doctor because they could not pay for it. It took less than a year for the AMA to discover that the basic assumption for Medicare was correct. There were many older people who never went to the doctor because they could not afford to go. Social Security and Medicare are now sacred cows to the American people and no politician would seriously propose eliminating them.

Some events clearly show that Americans expect government to rescue them. Consider the aftermaths of hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Sandy. As the former head of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) testified before Congress, the nature of the American disposition was clearly demonstrated. Michael Brown, or "Brownie" as President Bush referred to him, testified that FEMA had been reduced in staff and financial resources by conservatives in Congress. Thus, he did not have the needed resources to do his job after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Brown tried to blame the local governments, saying they did not meet their responsibility. During the same news program, the media produced a FEMA document which said they knew the state and local government would be overwhelmed with a major

hurricane. In fact, public trust in government significantly declined following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (Nicholls & Picou, 2013). That led to a point of political irony: a conservative Bush appointee, Brown, testified before Republican members of Congress, who also voted for less government at FEMA, and all these conservatives tried to place blame somewhere else because the public was in an uproar because the Federal government could not respond with enough resources to handle the crisis (Block, 2006).

The New Orleans debacle was a classic example of people wanting to reduce the size of government but simultaneously demanding that more government intervention was needed. The Republicans in power had aggressively tried to cut the size of many agencies in the federal government (although expanding some others). The result? A massive disaster that only a strong federal government could handle, but a government that was not equipped to meet public expectations. By the time of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, FEMA seemed to be prepared to handle the problem (Krugman, 2012), but Congress (mostly Republicans in the House) was still slow to allocate disaster aid for the area.

Such problems have been created by the attitude that government is bad and we need to get government out of our lives. For example, the following problems were reported on the news during a single three-week period in 2005 and they include:

(1) Most of the National Guard troops were out of the country. Why? Because playing to the idea of government being smaller, there were simply not enough troops to invade and manage the aftermath of a war in Iraq. A number of sources reported that the Bush administration was informed of this fact by military advisors, but it was ignored. When it was obvious that more forces were needed, they had the choice between a draft and taking the National Guard from the states. A draft would have meant an expansion of government power and loss of public support for the war. Thus the only real option was to use the National Guard. Of the 4,000 men and women in Louisiana's National Guard, their commander told the news media that 3,000 of them were in Iraq. Welcome to smaller government. Overall, 40,000 National Guard troops, which accounted for 50 percent of the combat load, were in Iraq in 2005 (Freedberg, 2006).

(2) New Orleans was in chaos after Hurricane Katrina (Whoriskey & Gugliotta, 2005). The people who could not evacuate were given conflicting instructions as to where to go: the Super Dome or the convention center. Frustration and anger lead to violence. As the Insurance Commissioner of Louisiana told one of the authors, "New Orleans is now the law of the Pecos. You better have a gun." Many observers openly questioned the ability of the government to handle the crisis (Sullivan, 2005).

(3) After trying to blame local officials, state officials, the bureaucracy and finding his poll numbers continuing to sink, President Bush said we can't

play the blame game. The downsizing of government was exactly what President Bush and his Party promised the voters during the 2004 election.

Those examples all came from the George W. Bush administration, but plenty examples of governmental dysfunction are also available from Barack Obama's tenure in office. Consider these events:

1. The federal government went four consecutive years with no budget. Partisan bickering resulted in no real effort to address budget needs for four years as the two sides fought over cutting spending and raising taxes (Schlapp, 2013).
2. The House of Representatives rejected a new Farm Bill after negative votes from both Republicans and Democrats. Democrats voted against the proposal because they argued that it cut too deeply into the Food Stamp program. Republicans voted against it because they argued that it didn't cut enough (Nixon, 2013).
3. Congress was unable to pass an immigration package. The failure to pass this legislation came even though it had support from elected officials in both parties. Some in Congress objected because it might be viewed as amnesty bill for illegal aliens. Some wanted tougher control of the borders. As a result, nothing happened.

The head of the Veterans Administration had to resign under pressure after reports that veterans were waiting for months to see a doctor at VA hospitals. Some veterans died before they had a chance to keep their appointment. Overall, the scandal raised serious questions about the quality of care that was provided for the nation's vets.

Ironically, trust in government soared after the terrorist attacks in September, 2001 (Heatherington & Husser, 2012). The voters reelected Bush by more than three million votes, and the President claimed he had a "mandate" for his policies. However, less than a year after his reelection, the voters were upset because there was not enough government to address the hurricane situation (Hsu & Goldstein, 2006). Eventually, trust in government reached such a low level that one observer questioned whether the public could trust government again (Madrick, 2012).

Do these voters' conflicting attitudes about government mean they are stupid? No. It means that most Americans are not political scientists, journalists or political junkies. They are busy people with busy lives who receive contrasting messages on a daily basis. If these messages were analyzed, it would show that they are often contradictory, but sometimes the uninvolved voter simply accepts them both. Psychologists call this phenomenon cognitive dissonance, and it's a common aspect of political attitudes (e.g., Lashley, 2009).

How do voters decide which side of the message is going to be the basis of their reactions at any given time? That depends on their personal situation

at the moment. Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill is credited with creating one of the most frequently used political clichés, i.e., "All politics Is local." That saying was probably true during the time of O'Neill's politics, but political realities are different today. Now, all politics are personal. The voters have shifted their attitudinal anchors from issues to identity politics (Monroe, Hankin, & Van Vechten, 2000). They are more concerned about ideology than about pragmatic performance.

Voters are bombarded daily with messages from advertisers, issue messages, and groups looking for support. Try this experiment. The next time you are filling up your car with gas at the convenience store, see if you can count the number of persuasive-oriented messages you see. Odds are that you will finish filling up your car before you finish counting the messages. Americans get messages only in small bites because they won't take the time to analyze complex messages. Between junk mail, television ads, telemarketing, and visual messages, people have to filter communication and selectively let information into their minds to evaluate. People test communication against one question—Why should I care?

There are messages that people care about. People care about their money. People care about their children. People care about their family's safety. People care about their jobs. People care about their homes.

Average people do not care about governmental processes. Average people do not care about inside politics. Average people do not care about why a politician thinks he/she is the best leader. Average people do not care about government programs, Congressional committee meetings, or white papers from policy groups.

Voters truly pay attention only when an event is so large and has such an impact, either physically or emotionally on the public that everyone knows about it. One of the authors has a friend who said he never reads the newspaper or watches the news. When asked why, he said, "if something important happens, someone will tell me." His observation reflects the average voter. A 9/11, a hurricane, or a tragedy with the space shuttle will result in so many channels of information talking about it, basically everyone will know the details of the story. On a day-to-day basis, however, information comes to people in small bites, slogans, and symbols like the golden arches.

When Americans are deciding upon the person to be President, they do not seek in-depth information. In 2000 and 2004, less than half the number of people who voted watched the Presidential debates (Rutenberg, 2004). In 2004, FOX News did not even cover the second debate because there was a conflict with a baseball playoff game. While participants in focus group research will tell pollsters they want more information about the candidates for public office and how the candidates plan to solve problems, most will not spend an hour-and-a-half learning about Presidential candidates. Imagine

how much less information seeking the voters do about candidates for Congress or the state Legislature?

Voters also tell pollsters they hate political television ads, especially the negative ones. Yet, while voters will not watch an hour-long debate of two Congressional candidates, they will see the television ads for those candidates and those ads will persuade them. The average U.S. home has a television on six hours and forty-seven minutes per day and the average American will see more than two million television ads by the age of sixty-five (Herr, 2012)

Thus the American electorate, the people who political candidates must persuade, is overworked, over-stressed, and sitting in front of their televisions. They are not having political discussions with family and friends or going to debates at the local Rotary Club. They are bombarded with advertisements and handling information in small bites. They both love and hate government and do not see any need to be consistent in their political opinions. These are the people the political parties must persuade to put them in control of the most powerful nation on earth.

Thus the reason that politicians fear the voting public. Those voters hold sets of contradictory attitudes that can shift, during any election, and change the balance of power among the parties. The winner of one election can be the loser of the next. There is little political security, regardless of which party you support.

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Chapter Seven

Republicans versus Democrats

The Democratic Party and the Republican Party have developed along different paths. Further, the events that shaped the two parties are different than the historical events that shaped the country. Regardless, in the modern era, both American political parties can trace their present incarnations to six elections—1964, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2010, and 2012.

1964: JOHNSON VERSUS GOLDWATER

By 1964, the late President Kennedy and President Johnson had started the country on a radical new course. After the "happy days" of the 1950s, with the steady and father-figure President Dwight Eisenhower, the 1960s began a period of rapid change. Political consultants often point to the 1960 Presidential campaign as the beginning of modern political campaigns (Donaldson, 2007), because television became recognized for its potential power to influence electoral politics. Perhaps no political event has ever been the subject of more study than the Kennedy-Nixon debates (White, 1964).

During the period between 1960 through 1964, the Kennedy/Johnson administration pushed the federal government into a much more active role in American life. Civil rights legislation which guaranteed and protected African Americans' right to vote and equal access to public facilities was passed. A universal health care plan for senior citizens was introduced that would eventually become Medicare (Helm, 1999). NASA began its manned space flight program in an effort to beat the Soviets in a race to the moon. Federal funding for public education was greatly increased. The nation had been frightened to near panic by the Cuban missile crisis and the Cold War almost went hot (Dobbs, 2009). Against this backdrop, the 1964 Presidential election rolled around.

The Democrats did not have a primary contestant. Their sitting President, Lyndon Johnson, had stepped into the Presidency as a shocked nation tried to make sense of the assassination of their young President, John F. Kennedy (Swanson, 2013). Johnson chose a traditional liberal, U.S. Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, as his vice presidential candidate (Johnson, 2009).

The Republicans lined up three candidates who reached from right to left of the political spectrum. On the left was Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York, the moderate was Governor William Stanton of Pennsylvania, and the conservative was Barry Goldwater of Arizona. Their nominee was the conservative U.S. Senator, Barry Goldwater. Senator Goldwater was a strong voice against communism and big government (Middendorf, 2008). He believed in maximum individual liberty. Later in his political career, Goldwater expressed extreme dislike of fundamentalist Christian groups, like the Christian Coalition because these groups desired government intrusion in individual's lives (Goldberg, 1995).

While polling was still a relatively new science, and distrusted by many politicians, all the gauges of public opinions suggested a landslide was going to occur. One of the undocumented stories from this campaign concerns President Johnson's refusal to have a live, televised debate as occurred in the 1960 Nixon–Kennedy election. According to legend, a young aide asked the President, "Mr. President, I do not understand. All the polls say we have a large lead. When Senator Goldwater tells the voters where he stands, everyone will know he is too conservative to be President. I do not understand why we would not debate him?" The President turned to the young aid and said, "Son, you have to understand about live TV debates. You might just say oral sex when you meant Australia."

There were no Freudian slips, and it was a devastating landslide defeat for the Republican Party. Senator Goldwater only won five Southern states, basically as a backlash to the civil rights legislation, plus his home state of Arizona. Senator Goldwater lost the popular vote by 15 million votes, and received less than 40 percent of all popular votes cast. For the Democrats, it was confirmation the voters liked the direction of the government. So, it was full steam ahead and focused on running the government. Despite the beginning concerns about a little war in the distant land of Vietnam, everything had come up roses for the Democrats.

For the Republicans, the loss was a rejection of the basic tenet at the foundation of the Republican Party. At the time, the national Republicans had one idea that kept the Goldwaters and the Rockefellers in the same political party, i.e., big government is bad for business. If it is bad for business, it is bad for America. Americans do not like big government. Big government will limit the individual's freedom. Yet, the American voters had overwhelmingly supported a President and party that was expanding the national government in every direction.

However, his campaign is still viewed by many as the beginning of the modern conservative movement (Middendorf, 2013). After this defeat, the Republicans set out on a mission to find a way to sell the message of conservatism. In the decade of the 1970s, the Republicans began attempts to redefine conservatism in two different dimensions—the fiscal definition and the social definition. The effort on redefining the concepts in a way that would persuade a majority of Americans to support the ideas led to the creation of think-tank groups to work on ways to present their message and reach out to voters.

Several new organizations were founded, many of them still very much a part of the extreme right-wing of the Republican Party. In 1972, Phyllis Schlafly created the Eagle Form to fight what she called "radical feminism" in the form of the Equal Rights Amendment (Critchlow, 2005). Ms. Schlafy's group continues in strong operation today. She writes a syndicated newspaper column and has a three-minute radio commentary five days a week that is carried on more than 450 radio stations.

The Heritage Foundation was founded in 1973 (Edwards, 2013). This group's mission statement says they believe in "individual liberty, free enterprise, limited government, a strong national defense, and American values." This group is credited with redefining the estate tax as the "death tax."

In 1974, Paul Weyrich and beer magnate Joseph Coors founded the Committee for Survival of a Free Congress, now known as the Free Congress Foundation (Gizzi, 2010). It was founded for the purposes of examining public policies in social and family areas and to conduct studies of the electoral process. These men wanted to create a new political activist group that was to the political right of the Republican Party, which they viewed as being too moderate.

Direct mail fund raising guru Richard Viguerie founded the National Conservative Political Action Committee or NCPAC in 1975. This group was to become the real political campaign operation of the right wing. In the 1980 election cycle, this operation targeted six United States Senators and fourteen members of the United States House of Representatives for defeat. By using third-party negative attacks, they are given credit for defeating four of the Senators and twelve members of the U.S. House (Kitchens & Powell, 1986).

In 1979, Reverend Jerry Falwell created the Moral Majority to push fundamentalist Christians to action in the political arena (Webber, 1981). It disbanded in 1989, with Reverend Falwell saying he was devoting more time to Liberty University. The Moral Majority's agenda included the censorship of media outlets that promoted what the Moral Majority labeled as "anti-family" programming. In 1989, the organization morphed into the Christian Coalition led by Pat Robertson (Watson, 1999).

In 1977, one interesting conservative group was founded by Edward H. Crane, the CATO Institute (Boaz, 2009). The CATO Institute's mission statement says it seeks "to broaden the parameters of public debate to allow consideration of the traditional American principles of limited government, individual liberty, free markets, and peace." This group is unlike many of the other groups because they are truly interested in public policy related to economics, not in hot button social issues. They are as likely to criticize a Republican as a Democrat. On their Web site they say, "We reject the bashing of gays, Japan, rich people, and immigrants that contemporary liberals and conservatives seem to think addresses society's problems."

All of these conservative groups tested messages, examined new policies, and began taking aim at a broader base of voters. The next critical election rolled around.

1980: CARTER VERSUS REAGAN

The 1980 election was the first time right-wing groups began producing paid communication with groups called "independent expenditure campaigns" (Smith et al., 2010). These groups were supposedly independent of any candidate and were forbidden by law from coordinating with candidates. However, enforcement of this idea was virtually impossible. They were the attack force against the Democrats.

James Earl Carter, the unlikely Naval Academy graduate, peanut farmer and former Governor of Georgia, was elected as President in 1976. He rode to Washington as an outsider in the wake of the Watergate scandal that had forced Richard Nixon to resign as President (Bourne, 1997). The conservative movement inside the Republican Party was stifled by Jimmy Carter. He openly talked about being a born-again Christian and a Southern Baptist. He campaigned on trust and promised to never lie to the American people. After impeachment hearings and a war in Vietnam that seemed to never end, the American people seemed to say they were ready for some gentle Southern style.

However, the world events did not give President Carter or the country a chance to take a breath and relax. As the 1980 election approached, President Carter was being hamstrung with runaway inflation, OPEC's attempt to hold America hostage at the gas pump, and America feeling like the country was helpless in the face of young Iranians storming the American Embassy in Tehran and holding sixty-seven Americans hostage (Wright, 1996).

As the election approached, President Carter was challenged on the political left from his own party by Senator Edward Kennedy. Having a sitting President challenged from within his own party is a political aberration in

American politics. It did not help the public perceptions of President Carter in any way.

The Republicans had a contest that became one of the most significant struggles for the Republican Party. In hindsight, this indicated the battle for the American electorate and how it was going to be different than at any other time in the twentieth century. Representing the far-right and the newly empowered Republican social conservatives like the Moral Majority was former Governor Ronald Reagan. Representing the traditional business Republicans and the moderate wing of the party was former Congressman and CIA chief George H. Bush.

The campaign was spirited. Governor Reagan promised to balance the federal budget, increase defense spending, and cut taxes. Although it was never clear how this would be accomplished; the far right rejoiced. At one point, George Bush referred to this economic plan as "voo-doo" economics. Despite the harsh tone of the primary campaign, the two contenders cut an alliance between the two wings of the Republican Party and George H. Bush accepted the Vice-Presidential spot on the Republican ticket.

When Ronald Reagan received sufficient delegate support to win the nomination, most strong Democratic loyalists were overjoyed and thought the election was over. They felt Ronald Reagan would be another Barry Goldwater; far too conservative for the country. This situation might be referred to as one of those times when you should be careful what you wish for, as you might get it.

From the day Ronald Reagan was nominated to the day he left the Presidency, Democrats and at least some of the press complained that he would simply misstate facts to suit his purpose of the moment. When anyone directly called him on it, he would just smile, shrug and continue telling his version of reality. The public did not seem to mind and it points to the truism that it is not always about the facts. President Reagan earned the nickname of the "Teflon President" because no one could make anything bad about him stick to his image. Democrats hated Ronald Reagan for the same reason Republicans hated Bill Clinton. Both were truly great communicators who could win elections.

The 1980 election is one of the most important elections in the development of the Republican Party for one main reason. Ronald Reagan changed the basic message of the Party. Until 1980, the basic Republican message was big government is bad for business. Ronald Reagan made the new Republican message "big government is bad for you." For years, the Democrats had won elections by making big business the enemy of the average worker. Big business had one ally—the Republican Party. In 1980, Ronald Reagan changed the equation. Big government became a worse enemy than big business.

In his debate with President Carter, Ronald Reagan asked the rhetorical question, "Ask yourself. Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" There are tremendous implications to this question. First, it is the point at which all politics was no longer local. Politics became personal. Ronald Reagan argued that the voters' decision should be based on their personal well-being. He did not ask, is America better off? Is your state better off? Or, is your community better off? Second, Ronald Reagan clearly implied, stated, and argued that if you were not better off, it was because the big federal government had hindered your progress. (Kazin, 1995)

Ronald Reagan blamed the bureaucrats who were greedy and needed the hard-earned money of the taxpayer to expand power and give undeserved benefits to those who did not work. Ronald Reagan was not openly racist, but this rhetoric in the ears of Southern white voters meant the government was taking their money and giving it to African American citizens who did not work.

President Carter won only seven states plus the District of Columbia. While Ronald Reagan won a bare majority of 50.8 percent, President Carter won only 41 percent of the vote. John Anderson won 6 percent with the minor candidates winning the few remaining percentages. But, in addition to taking the White House, the Republicans took control of the United States Senate. Congressman Jim Wright was moving into the Speaker of the House position, and the battle lines were drawn. With Congressman Wright's leadership, the Democrats over-rode the veto of the Public Works Bill and the Clean Water Act. While the great communicator President Ronald Reagan could whip up the right wing fever, Congressman Wright's skills at managing the U.S. House of Representatives kept the policies of the government balanced and aligned with mainstream America.

However, the die was cast. The theocrats of the Republican Party had grabbed control of the Republican Party if not the government of the nation. The new message for the Republicans had worked. They were ready to attack big government, and they controlled two of the three major law making institutions.

Congressman Newt Gingrich of Georgia took the role of irresponsible bomb thrower and eventually brought Congressman Wright's career down with legal technicalities and the Republican propaganda machine. The *Washington Post* joined the attack on Congressman Wright and the Democrats in control of the House. The Post actually appeared to be on a crusade to change the control of the U.S. House of Representatives feeling that thirty years was enough control for Democrats. The Republicans produced their "Contract for America" and the propaganda war for the theocrats continued.

1992: BUSH VS. CLINTON

From 1968 to 1992, the Republicans won five out of six presidential elections. Their only loss was the 1976 win of Democrat Jimmy Carter, and voters quickly knocked Carter out after only one term. Ronald Reagan followed with two consecutive terms for the Republicans, then George H. W. Bush, kept the office with the Republicans by defeating Michael Dukakis in 1988.

As the 1992 election approached, the Republicans seemed poised to win another round. They had an incumbent president running for reelection, and the Democrats were having major problems with establishing a national message. The party apparatus seemed to be controlled by the extreme left and party efforts to expand the message to the middle class was met with resistance by party leaders. That in-fighting was a product of long-term pattern within the party and was one reason the party had been so unsuccessful in the previous three presidential campaigns (Harwood, 2014).

Into that vacuum stepped a young southern governor who campaigned in the primaries as "a different kind of Democrat." Bill Clinton's campaign focused on the economic dissatsifaction that had occurred during Bush's four years (Grant, 1993), talking about jobs and the economy in a way that made it personal for low- and middle-income voters (Kunde, 2009)

2004: BUSH VERSUS KERRY

The third critical election in terms of defining the political parties is the 2004 election. For the Democrats, this election should have felt like an earthquake, rated a 7 on the Richter scale. The truth is, the 2000 election should have felt this way, but the Democrats were convinced the Presidential election was stolen and they made slight gains in Congress. They failed to understand what was really happening.

During the decade of the 1990s, the Republican propaganda machine grew stronger, and it was paying off in terms of elections. In 1992, while Bill Clinton was winning the Presidency, the Democrats lost ten seats in the House of Representatives. In 1994, the control of the U.S. House of Representatives went to the Republicans for the first time in forty years. The House of Representatives has been in Republican hands ever since except for a two-year period after the Barack Obama election. By 1994, 53 percent of the U.S. Senators were Republicans.

The election of 2000 gave the Democrats a ray of hope; although it turned out to be false hope. The Democrats picked up four U.S. Senate seats, so the split in the U.S. Senate was 50-50. They also picked up two seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. However, it remained under Republican control.

The 2004 election created a situation the Democrats had not seen since 1932. John Kerry lost the Presidency to George W. Bush. The Republicans moved to a 55-44 advantage in the U.S. Senate (with one independent). The Republicans picked up three seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, giving them 53 percent of the seats. For the first time in seventy-two years, the Democrats did not control either house of Congress or the White House. For the very first time, Democrats had no power to pass laws, control the agenda, or veto Republican initiatives. The Democrats ability to make laws during seven decades of having at least some power in Washington was gone. For the first time in nearly a century, Democrats were irrelevant in the legislative process.

As bad as the government side of the political equation was for the Democrats, the political side was even worse. The Democrats held a basic premise about electoral politics since 1932. The Democrats believed their agenda more closely matched the majority of voters than the Republican agenda. Therefore, winning campaigns was really a matter of voter turnout. If enough people voted, then Democrats would win. In the 2000 Presidential election, just over 105 million votes were cast, and the election was too close to call. The results eventually had to be decided by the courts. In 2004, more than 122 million votes were cast. With the largest voter turnout in history, the basic assumption for the Democratic Party would indicate Americas would be seeing President Kerry on television. But, George W. Bush won reelection by more than three million votes.

For the first time in nearly a century, the Democratic Party faced the fact that elections were not just about turning out voters. They had to try to win the electorates' hearts and minds. This election was as devastating for the Democrats as 1964 was for the Republicans. The unanswered question at this point was how would the Democrats respond? The opportunity was sitting on the table because the Republicans got what they wanted. They had the power and were a disaster in terms of governing. Inside the Republican Party, the tail, a.k.a. the extreme right, was wagging the dog.

2010 MID-TERM ELECTIONS—WELCOME TO THE TEA PARTY

In 2008, Barack Obama became the first African American President and the Democrats gained control of both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. The 2008 election contest was close for most of the race. While the Democrats had chosen a young, charismatic African American candidate, the Republicans had chosen a much respected U.S. Senator and Vietnam War hero John McCain. The "fresh face" of Obama was gathering support and fascinated voters. Even so, going into the Republican convention, the outcome was not decided.

The Republicans made a high risk strategic move and McCain picked Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin as his Vice Presidential candidate. Governor Palin had the liabilities of being unknown and from one of the two states not part of the lower 48 states. However, she was an attractive woman in her forties which matched up generationally with Barack Obama and trumped the fact the Democrats did not have a woman on the ticket (Barnes, 2008). In addition, Palin was known as a strong conservative with strong anti-abortion views. McCain, always know as a centrist, could shore up the right wing of his own party with Palin on the ticket. The day after her nomination, Rush Limbaugh pronounced on this talk show, "We finally have a candidate that believes in guns, God, and babies."

The Republicans ticket was doomed more by current events than their campaign strategy. On September 29, 2008, the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped by 3260 points, a decline of 29 percent in the index. The major reason for the drop was a crash of the housing market. Through a series of schemes, the mortgage bankers were loaning money to consumers that they knew could not pay the mortgages. The Wall Street investment bankers were bundling good loans with bad and selling them as all good mortgages. An excellent account of the events can be found in Michael Lewis' (2010) book *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine*.

The collapse of the financial markets and the actions of the Obama administration to the crisis gave birth to a new populist movement, the TEA Party. The party's acronym stands for Taxed Enough Already. This movement is somewhat different than other populist movements in America and its impact is still being played out. Historically, populist movements arise during times of economic hardships. William Jennings Bryan's Populist Party in the 1890s and Huey Long's Share Our Wealth in the 1930s are good examples. In his book, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, Michael Kazin finds common elements to populist movements in America. Two of the main elements are an attack on the banking establishment and the government's support of it, and an element of racism, as demonstrated by George Wallace's "Working man" rhetoric during the 1960s and 1970s. The Tea Party movement has some of the same elements, but it has some unique elements.

The beginning of this movement is generally attributed to a comment made by a CNBC correspondent, Rick Santelli. When President Obama announced his mortgage relief plan to help consumers who could not pay their mortgage, Santelli, speaking from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, called the action a plan to "subsidize mortgage losers." The clip of his angry speech went viral on the Internet, probably representing the first time a social movement was created by social media. His appeal aroused average people who had seen billions of tax dollars go to financial institutions who had created the crisis. Unlike previous American populist move-

ments that focus their ire on big business and bankers, the Tea Party focused anger on the federal government and argued the free market would solve the problem. Looking back to the 1980 election, President Reagan convinced the public that big government was more of a problem than big business. Thirty years later, the message still worked. Over a span of only a few months, Tea Party groups begin organizing throughout the country, communicating through social media and cheered on by conservative commentators such as Glenn Beck. Governor Sarah Palin resigned as Governor of Alaska to become the voice of the Tea Party.

In 2009, the Democrats were busying moving government in the direction they wanted to go and handed the Tea Party two issues to help their movement continue. The concern over healthcare insurance was a major talking point for Barack Obama. Democrats railed against the insurance industry on issues denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions and forcing you people off their parents' policies as soon as they finished college. Instead of moving on a few issues, the Congress wrote the Health Care Reform Act, commonly called Obamacare. The law was somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 pages of regulation changes. Before voting for it, some Democrats admitted that they had not read the law.

The conservative media went on the attack accusing the Democrats of a government takeover of the healthcare system, and even charging the law set up "death panels." The claim was the law would deny health care to senior citizens and mentally retarded children. Tea Party leaders organized protests across the country, including in Washington, DC, Congresswoman Michele Bachman (R-MN) called for people to take off work to attend the protests (Kindy, 2009). When member of Congress returned home for the August recess, they were met with angry constituents at town hall meeting (Urbina, 2009).

The other issue that fed the Tea Party movement was immigration reform. This issue became the racist component that Kazin points out is a common element in populist movements. Labeling immigration reform as "amnesty for illegal aliens" became a rallying cry. Heading for the 2010 elections, the populist movement had a clear and simple set of messages for the campaign.

One unique feature of this populist movement is related to its financing. One reporter referred to the Tea Party as an Astroturf movement—meaning a fake grassroots movement (Monbiot, 2010). This charge came because it was discovered the Koch brothers, millionaire industrialists, had provided millions of dollars for the movement. The Koch brothers have been associated with libertarian and anti-government groups for years. However, big business had never financed a populist movement. Other evidence also indicates that the major tobacco companies were providing funding for the Tea Party Movement (Jarvis, 2013).

As the 2010 election approached, the Tea Party began fielding candidates. The Tea Party candidates did not take aim at only Democrats. They entered Republican primary elections, even against incumbent Governors and U.S. Senators (Espo, 2010). Any Republican who was viewed as a "compromiser" with President Obama and the Democrats was not safe.

The Democrats entered the 2010 elections arguing they had kept their promise to change America. As political analyst Charlie Cook pointed out, the election was an up-and-down election on the Democrats (Cook, 2010). The national polls showed that only 30 percent of the electorate felt the country was headed in the right direction. This attitude is always critical for whether the electorate is happy and will likely return incumbents, or unhappy and will vote incumbents out of office.

The Republicans won a huge victory, regaining 63 seats in the U.S. House, the most since 1948. In the U.S. Senate, the Democratic margin was cut from a 58-seat to a 40-seat advantage to a 51-seat to a 47-seat advantage. But, where did the Tea Party fit into this equation. Tea Party candidates won 39 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and five U.S. Senate seats. In the U.S. House, 62 percent of the freshman class were members of the Tea Party movement. Because the Tea Party is part of the Republicans movement, other Members of Congress started falling in line with the Tea Party ideas to protect their political careers from a primary election. Today, estimates of Tea Party sympathizers who are in Congress range as low a 55 to a high of 144. Whatever the exact number, it is clear this political movement is a force in the Republican Party.

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Chapter Eight

The Republican Party

Disaster Inside and Out

> "I am frankly sick and tired of the political preachers across this country telling me as a citizen that if I want to be a moral person, I must believe in "A," "B," "C" and "D." Just who do they think they are? And from where do they presume to claim the right to dictate their moral beliefs to me? And I am even more angry as a legislator who must endure the threats of every religious group who thinks it has some God-granted right to control my vote on every roll call in the Senate. I am warning them today: I will fight them every step of the way if they try to dictate their moral convictions to all Americans in the name of conservatism." —Republican United States Senator Barry Goldwater on the Christian Right (1981)

Ever since the election of George W. Bush as president in 2000, the Republicans have had trouble using their standard argument: "It's the Democrats fault." The election of Barack Obama in 2008 provided some ability to use that argument again, but they still controlled the House of Representatives. Some of the "blame" rhetoric returned when Obama was sworn in, since it provided the GOP with some room to attribute the problems of America on those "liberal Democrats." Their argument was hampered, however, the massive debt problems and economic free-fall that occurred during the Bush administration. As of this writing, the nation is still dealing with the resulting problems.

Still, the election of Obama triggered a major reaction by factions within the Republican Party. Hatred for the president resulted in the rise of the Tea Party Republicans who based their movement on anti-tax, pro-family attitudes that were so far to the right that they bothered establishment-type conservatives. Meanwhile, business interests in the Republican Party have

financed a right-wing propaganda machine like history had never seen (Smith & Powell, 2014). Both groups met with some success, but also some failures. The Tea Party developed their following by using Facebook to establish in-group identification (Morin & Flynn, 2014). This loose collection of voters is often credited with the Republicans gaining control of the House of Representatives in the 2010 midterm election, but their candidates did poorly in the 2012 elections. Some were so extreme that they allowed Democrats some easy senatorial wins and kept the Republicans from winning control of the Senate. Similarly, establishment Republicans raised hundreds of millions of dollars for the 2016 presidential campaign, but were unable to unseat President Obama (Smith & Powell, 2014).

Many problems for the Republicans can be traced back to the eight years in which George W. Bush led the party from the White House. After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, for example, America had support and sympathy from around the globe. Further, when the American military launched into Afghanistan, not even the government of Iran, a neighboring country which shares an equal disdain for the United States, objected. Then, the Bush administration ignored the advice of the military and invaded Iraq (Gordon, 2012). According to a number of books and articles about the decision, the Bush administration (particularly Vice President Cheney and Secretary Rumsfield) had wanted to invade Iraq since the beginning of President Bush's first term. The invasion was strongly supported by Cheney and based on the argument that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, an allegation that turned out to be false (Gelman, 2008). Eventually, even President Bush stopped listening to his Vice President (Baker, 2013). Still, years after the Bush administration was over, Cheney (2011) continued to press and support that argument. Rumsfeld (2011) has similarly insisted that the invasion was justified in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary.

The second problem that the Republicans created was a huge budget deficit during the administration of George W. Bush. When President Bush took office, there was a debate about what should be done with the budget surplus left by President Bill Clinton—a surplus projected to be $5.6 trillion over the following ten years (Peterson, 2010). The Republicans wanted a tax cut, while the Democrats wanted to invest the surplus into social programs. With a Republican in the White House, the Republicans won that debate. By 2005, the Congressional Budget Office projected that the budget deficit for the year was $317 billion dollars; that followed a record deficit in 2004 of $413 billion dollars. Both sets of numbers seemed of minor importance by October 2008 when the banking industry collapsed and triggered a nationwide recession.

Some Democrats believe the budget deficits were part of a Republican strategy to justify cuts in Federal programs and thus cutting the size of the federal government. However, under President Bush, the size of the Federal

government actually grew tremendously (Bartlett, 2006). Instead of cutting the size of government, the Bush administration seemed more interested in (a) maintaining low tax levels for the wealthy, or cutting them even more (Kennedy, 2004), or (b) providing money from the Social Security pool to Wall Street investors (Altman, 2005). The latter proposal died from lack of public support, but the former became a long-term goal for the Republican Party that extended well past the Bush administration. The issue arguably contributed to the election of Barack Obama, who campaigned against tax cuts for the rich in opposition to proposals supported by the Republican candidates in both 2008 and 2012. In any event, the fiscal policy of the Republicans was virtually non-existent, a problem that many Republicans recognize but seem helpless to address in the face of strong opposition from within their own party.

The third problem facing the Republican Party is that many of its members base their support for a candidate on that candidate's religious beliefs. This government-by-theocracy approach alienates many middle-of-the-road voters; and, if it goes too far, it can also alienate a number of Republican voters (e.g., see the discussion in chapter 5 on the Pharisee Effect). In some instances, it has led to the nomination of unelectable candidates (e.g., Powell, 2012), or at least hurt the ticket overall, as happened when Sarah Palin was named the vice-presidential nominee for John McCain in 2008 (e.g., Powell & Hickson, 2014).

Further, if a Republican tries to demonstrate a willingness to move more to the middle on any interest, that person can incur the wrath of the religious right. President George W. Bush, for example, received significant support from the religious right in his 2000 election, but almost immediately got into trouble with the group. During Bush's first post-election press conference, Bush dodged a question about the support he got from the religious right; the move prompted James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, to criticize the newly elected Republican for not crediting evangelical voters for his victory (Gilgoff, 2008). It was just one example of how the right wing of the Republican Party keeps a tight control on its messages (Prior, 2014).

The religious wing of the Republican party was particularly visible on two notable occasions. One involved the case of Terri Schiavo and the question of whether she should remain on life support despite to hope of recovery. While it is understandable that her parents found it hard to give up a child, fifteen years of court battles came down on the ruling that her husband had the right and responsibility to make the decision about continuing life support. As her autopsy later proved, he and numerous doctors were clearly correct in diagnosing her as being in a vegetative state (Perry, Churchill, & Kirshner, 2005). Ms. Schiavo was beyond help by any imaginable medical knowledge. An autopsy could not even be performed for a number of days because her brain was severely destroyed and liquefied.

Regardless, the religious right maintained their protests for thirteen days, received extensive media coverage by doing so (Perry, 2006), and brought the issue to the floor of Congress (Gilgoff, 2008). Republican office holders took to the floor of the Congress invoking Ms. Schiavo's name (Kirkpatrick & Stolberg, 2005). The political overtones of their speeches became apparent when Florida Senator Mel Martinez drafted a memo on how the Republicans could use Ms. Schiavo's cause and make it a central political issue ("Verbatim," 2005). When confronted with the memo, the courageous Senator blamed the staff (Kirkpatrick, 2005). He just happened to be passing it out on the floor of the U.S. Senate. This rabble rousing created a media circus outside Schiavo's hospice facility. The result, argued Gilgoff (2008) was that neither the Democratic party nor the Republican Party benefited from the issue. As he wrote, "It was another example of the Christian Right's agenda being subverted by activists and lawmakers for the sake of symbolic action" (p. 125).

In March 2005, an ABC poll found 70 percent of Americans called Congressional intervention in this situation inappropriate and 58 percent strongly held this view. Even people who called themselves conservatives or evangelical Christians were split on the issue. By a margin of 67 percent to 19 percent, Americans felt the politicians were getting involved because they thought it was good politics, not because they were concerned about a principle ("ABC poll", 2005). In Florida, the state legislature and Governor Jeb Bush also got into the act and met with similar public reactions. A Florida statewide poll in the spring of 2005 indicated 70 percent of Florida voters said the legislature should not have gotten involved in the Terri Schiavo case. They agreed with the statement this act was a clear attempt by the legislature to take away basic individual freedoms and get government involved in personal family decisions (Kitchens, 2005). Most of the politicians behind the actions quickly realized they had misjudged their constituents and went silent. The exception was Governor Jeb Bush, who publicly attempted to smear Ms. Schiavo's husband and insinuated that he may have murdered her.

A second major example of the over-reach of the religious right came when Justice Sandra Day O'Connor resigned from the Supreme Court. The extremists of the religious right demanded that the President to pick someone who would legislate their agenda from the bench. When the President nominated his personal lawyer and friend, Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court instead, the right wing reacted in anger (Vining, 2011). She had no credentials to prove her loyalty to their cause, and they would not take the president's word that she shared their ideology. As Gilgoff (2008) wrote, the Miers' nomination was viewed by the religious right as a vindication of "fears that the four horsemen [former Attorney General Ed Meese, George H. W. Bush's White House counsel C. Boyden Gray, Federalist Society executive vice president Leonard Leo, and evangelical legal advocate Jay Seku-

low] had insulated the White House from the conservative base" (p. 231). Eventually, President Bush was forced to back down, withdrawing Harriet Miers' name from the nomination even before she had a hearing in the U.S. Senate (Bush, 2005). It was a clear signal there were ideological differences between the two wings of the Republican Party.

By the end of the second administration of President George W. Bush, public opinion polls indicated that the voters of the nation had a low opinion of the incumbent. His approval ratings were only in the mid-thirties, and only one-in-four Americans thought the country was headed in the right direction. An NBC/Wall Street Journal poll found that there was no good news on either the foreign or domestic front. But, the President is not taking all the heat. When asked about Congress, only 29 percent of Americans approve of the job they were doing, while 52 percent disapprove ("NBC poll", 2005).

Had this occurred in 1980, analysts would likely predict the Republicans would lose 50 seats in Congress. In 2006, the Republicans did indeed lose seats in the House, a loss that they attributed to "the party's strategy of playing to its base rather than reaching out to moderates" (Gilgoff, 2008, p. 124). And, that was an accurate assessment of their problem. Further, the Republicans did successfully take over the House in 2010 (Bullock & Hood, 2012; Carson, 2013).

However, gaining a majority in the House didn't help Republicans gain control of power in the House, due to their internal fighting over ideology. Further, the Republican edge in House seats is not likely to change soon. Because of the skillful waging of redistricting battles, there are very few competitive seats for Congress. Both Democratic and Republican analysts generally agree that there are only about 25 competitive seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, and that number is too few to shift the balance of power in Congress to the Democrats. However, with the Republican Party effectively split into two distinct ideological camps (Phillips-Fein, 2014), getting a majority of members in the House to support any legislation is difficult.

Further, the Republicans have another internal disaster brewing. The business groups pulled the fundamentalist religious groups into the conservative movement in the 1970's, hoping to take advantage of the grassroots organizations that came with those groups. However, as Hadden and Swann (1981) noted more than twenty years ago, "when you lock horns in social conflict, it's good to have God on your side" (p. 137). Those words were prophetic. While the anti-tax, pro-big business groups wanted to have these church groups declare cultural war on the Democrats, they never intended these groups to become the majority of the Republican Party, dictating candidates and policy. However, that ended up happening. The nation's largest business group, i.e., the Chamber of Commerce, adopted a policy of supporting only Republicans in a plan that lasted through the 2012 election; that changed in

2014 after they realized that they had supported Tea Party candidates who did not share the pro-business attitudes of traditional Republicans—some of whom replaced pro-business Democrats (Nocera, 2014). In 2014, the Chamber again started supporting pro-business Democrats (Nocera, 2014). Further, the Tea Party's ideological rigidity have made it and, as a result the Republican Party, unappealing to voters of racial minorities—thus making it even harder for Republicans to win national elections (Knowles et al., 2013; Zeskind, 2012). That problem could increase in future presidential elections, particularly if Davis (2013) is correct in labeling the 2012 presidential campaign as "the last white election" (p. 5).

Currently, polling data of surveys taken in "red states" where Republicans have control indicates that a majority of Republicans identify themselves as either fundamentalists or evangelical Christians. In every case, more than 40 percent of Republican voters regularly listen to Christian radio, either for music or inspirational messages. A majority of these voters also listen to conservative talk radio for information about current affairs and politics. These voters make up a majority of core Republican voters, and they have learned how to flex their muscle. Republicans still have control of the House of Representatives, but they have little power to institute a Republican agenda in Congress. Their problem is that Republican officeholders can no longer dodge issues like the abortion, prayer in school, and anti-homosexual laws. The religious right cannot be convinced to slow down, even if public opinion polls indicate that their positions are not acceptable to most Americans. That means that the party itself has an internal "identity crisis" that it does not know how to fix (Saunders, 2014, p. 9).

The religious right-wing knows that it is now virtually impossible for a Republican candidate anywhere in the country to win a Republican primary without the support of their voters. What started as a way to expand the Republican Party and to find a pro-business message appealing to a broader spectrum of voters has resulted in Republicans becoming a party controlled by ideological fanatics (Hassett, 2010; Williamson & Skocpol, 2012). Krugman (2014) calls it an "incompetence dogma," and he wrote that the Republican Party finds itself with "a firm conviction that the government can't do anything useful—a dogmatic belief in public-sector incompetence—is now a central part of American conservatism, and the incompetence dogma has evidently made rational analysis of policy issues impossible" (p. A23).

In the final analysis, the Republican Party has created a situation in which its nominees may be unacceptable to broader, general election voters. And, even if those candidates win in November, they go to Congress to participate in a process in which there are at least three distinct ideological groups—all disagreeing about how to handle the problems of the nation. The ultimate result is stalemate, with neither party able to establish or develop a clear vision for the future of the nation.

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Chapter Nine

The Democratic Party

Searching for Unicorns

For centuries, people sought to capture a unicorn. There was no doubting its existence. References to unicorns are made in the writings of Aristotle, Genghis Khan, and even the Bible. These creatures were thought to bring good fortune to the person who could capture one. The horn of the unicorn was believed to be an antidote to virtually all poisons. The beautiful unicorn would signify the birth of a great leader.

Perhaps in the twenty-first century, we would think anyone who was chasing a unicorn is out of touch with reality. But, in the political arena, it seems many Democratic politicians running for office look for a magical unicorn. And, they often commit hundreds of thousands of dollars, and sometimes millions of dollars, looking for a magical beast to take them to power and reverse the Republican trend.

The vast majority of people who seek public office never try to systematically study how and why someone is elected. Because of this lack of knowledge, the candidates for office often fall prey to consultants selling the equivalent of political unicorns. There are no formal credentials. Anyone can hang out a shingle and call himself a political consultant, pollster, media consultant, or general campaign guru, regardless of their lack of qualifications. This factor has lead to an industry where there are some very successful people who are great salesmen and very poor consultants.

As the Republican approach to campaigns altered the context of American politics in the 1980s, Democrats saw their power slipping away. The Democrats and their allied interests wanted a quick fix. They wanted a piece of magic to return them to the position of power they once knew. They want a magical unicorn to fix the nightmare.

Part of the continued success of people who are not very good consultants is that they know how to sell the unicorn. Democratic candidates, Democratic Party operations, and interest groups who are aligned with the Democratic Party hold certain beliefs in the magic, so they want to hire people who tell them the magic is real. There are several common varieties of unicorns Democratic interests seem more than willing to buy.

THE UNICORN WITH THE SILVER BULLET

Candidates often ask polling consultants to find a "silver bullet" in a public opinion poll. The candidate wants the one sentence—the one turn of a phrase—that will make the voters reject the opponent and embrace his or her candidacy. Unfortunately, that unicorn rarely exists. The opponent rarely casts the one vote or utters the one phrase that changes the dynamics of the campaign. Normally, the opponent is not engaged in some antisocial behavior that the voters will view as making him unfit for office. There is rarely one thing contrasting the candidate and the opponent that makes it an easy choice for the voter.

Campaigns at all levels fall into the search for this mythical message. The 2004 presidential campaign of Senator John Kerry indicated how a candidate can get hung up on one message. As a result, they not only miss messages that should be used, but fail to properly deliver the intended messages. In Kerry's case, he thought the magic unicorn was his military service in Vietnam. In the end, not only did this message not win the election for him, but the Bush campaign was able to undermine it with an independent group that put out the swift boat ads (Reyes, 2006). Meanwhile, public opinion research indicated Kerry had a problem. Focus groups conducted with undecided voters and voters leaning toward voting for President Bush had a consistent finding: The only positive things they knew about John Kerry was that he served in Vietnam and he was then a U.S. Senator. The only other consistent image comments from the groups were from a Bush campaign attack ad, i.e., several people said John Kerry was a "flip-flopper" on issues (Kitchens, 2004). A week before the election, *Newsweek* published an article pointing out the Kerry strategists had made the Vietnam factor the central message and intentionally ignored his record as a U.S. Senator. Senator Kerry's record in the U.S. Senate was purposely excluded including his "groundbreaking investigation into money laundering, drug dealers, terrorists, and secret nukes" (Wolfe et al., 2004, p. 38)

Not only did the Kerry campaign make the mistake of believing his service in Vietnam versus President Bush's getting into the National Guard (to avoid the war) was a silver bullet, they did not even explain to the voters why they should care. They never translated the information as to how this piece

of biographical information, while a good way to introduce the candidate, was at all relevant to how he was going to help, serve, or represent anyone in a way that should concern them.

In politics, as in any other choice people are asked to make, a variety of information is filtered through a maze of values, beliefs, and perceptions and the outcome is an opinion. The opinion may be changed as new information and images are provided to the voter. Or, new information may be rejected if it too strongly challenges an important attitude or belief. As a result, the outcome of an election rarely comes down to one statement, one event, or one piece of opposition research that will cause a majority of voters to accept one candidate and reject another.

THE UNICORN WHO CAN ORGANIZE AND OUTVOTE THEM

Republicans spent more three decades getting the definition of their political party down to four words: Less Taxes, Less Government. This "bumper-sticker" philosophy plays well into one side of the voters' perceptions discussed earlier. Voters want to pay less in taxes and they believe government wastes money. On the other hand, they want a fully functioning government that provides Social Security checks, Medicare payments, keeps a first-class military force, and knows how to handle a natural disaster such as hurricanes. Polling data consistently reflect this bipolar response of the voters.

Democrats always took comfort by looking at polls with a laundry list of issues and coming to the conclusion: "More people agree with our issues, so all we have to do is get more people to vote and we win." This major premise has been the foundation of the Democratic Party logic since Franklin Delano Roosevelt was president. At times, it has also been very successful, as demonstrated by the wins at the presidential level by Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012. But in 2004, the Democrats suffered a loss equivalent to the landslide defeat of Barry Goldwater in 1964. On election day, 122,293,337 voters cast their votes—16 million more votes than in the 2000 election. Based upon the assumption that increasing voter turnout assured a Democratic win, Kerry should have won. But, George W. Bush won reelection by more than 3 million votes.

THE UNICORN WITH ENOUGH FACTS TO WIN THE ELECTION

One problem with many campaigns is they believe elections are only a battle of facts. Knowing facts and the details of public policy is important for a candidate, *but* facts are not the basis of voting behavior. Voters do not view the candidates and say, "I agree with candidate A on three issues and candidate B on two issues, so I am going to vote for candidate A." Even a brief

examination of psychological research on how people make choices will dispel this notion.

In one sense the reliance on turnout to win elections has turned the Democrats into a party of technicians. In addition, the Democrats seem to be much more the party of lawyers than the Republicans. Both technicians and lawyers think in a linear fashion. Most lawyers, for example, go to court believing the judge will decide a case based on the facts of the case and the law.

More importantly, the Democrats *want* to be the party of facts, ideas, and the champion of the debate. However, Democrats only have to look back to the big debates of 2004 to see the flaw in this thinking. The ABC news poll, after the first Bush-versus-Kerry debate, showed 45 percent of likely voters felt Senator Kerry won the debate and 36 percent thought President Bush won the debate (Langer, 2004). The second appearance was a town hall meeting-style, joint appearance that did not really even simulate a real debate of issues. The third debate was back to the traditional style. The CNN/USA Today survey, conducted shortly after the debate, indicated 53 percent of the likely voters said Senator Kerry won the debate and 39 percent said President Bush won ("Bush, Kerry . . . ," 2004). Still, despite the public perception that Kerry won two of the three debates with the incumbent President of the United States, these perceptions did not translate into voters changing their candidate preference. The reality Democrats must come to grips with is that issues are vehicles to talk about the candidate as a person. There are seldom situations where one public policy or problem is so dominant the election is a referenda on that issue. Command of facts is a prop for a campaign. For example, a candidate for governor must be able to name the ten largest employers in his state if he is going to talk about jobs, but, this command of facts does not win votes. It is the impression of competence coming from a command of facts that is important for the candidate to provide to the voters.

THE UNICORN WITH MAGIC VOTER DELIVERY SYSTEM

Most consultants can relate any number of times that a candidate has said something like, "I just got the support of Joe Jones over in Smith County. He'll deliver that county for me." In reality, why should a candidate could believe that one person has the power to deliver the votes from an entire county? The folly of this attitude emerges from the belief in old political machines and the flawed premise that big turnout means Democrats win. It is commonly referred to as the "two-step process" where opinion leaders get information and then pass it down to the regular people. In this age of mass communication, this over-simplified system of opinion leadership rarely exists or works.

In the early 1980s, The Kitchens Group conducted some extensive polls for a business group in North Carolina. The business leaders were convinced the working class people were conservative. Since they also viewed themselves as conservative, the business leaders were convinced if they escorted a candidate through their factories, shops, and business headquarters, all of the employees would get the message: "This is our candidate." When the poll was completed, the business leaders were shocked. While their blue collar employees did consider themselves conservative, it was not conservative in the way the business leaders defined conservative. In fact, they opposed tax cuts for executives. They did not want the government to "get off the back of business" in terms of workplace safety. They did not believe if their boss got a tax cut it would mean more investment in the company that would increase their pay and quality of life. The blue collar workers did not believe the executive running the companies really cared about them at all. Therefore, the message of the opinion leader had exactly the opposite effect as the intended one. The workers saw a candidate with the boss and thought, "I'll never vote for that guy" (Kitchens, 1983).

Even the traditional Democratic organizations running strong endorsement campaigns for candidates, such as labor unions, have seen their impact diminish. In the 2000 and 2004 elections, most organized labor unions worked hard for the Democratic nominee, but, their endorsements did not automatically lead to their workers' support. In 2004 alone, the AFL-CIO and its affiliated union poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the campaign to defeat George W. Bush. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) alone brags that it is spending a cool $65 million in support of the Democratic Party Presidential ticket (Kelber, 2004). But the effort simply didn't work. Quite the contrary. Polling data from that election found that Democrats did not even win a majority of votes from union households ("Unions couldn't deliver . . . , 2004)

These examples don't mean that there are no groups where voters will take a strong cue from their leadership. In many places in the South, there are strong African American groups who have leaders the people feel they can trust. The Republicans have countered the traditional Democratic dependency on organizations with organizations of their own. The National Rifle Association and religious groups know where to find their supporters and how to provide them with information. Since the party has shifted to appealing to social conservatives, they have used the same techniques as the Democrats have used for years. The by-product of the Republican action is to nullify traditional Democratic organizations' impact in some elections.

In his book, *What's the Matter With Kansas*, Thomas Frank (2010) points out that traditional union workers in Wichita whose unions fought for good paying jobs switched sides and backed Republicans who were helping ship those jobs overseas. Why? Because they are also strong religious voters and

many are gun owners. The ability for other groups to deliver a more persuasive message than the unions have now persuaded people to vote against their economic self-interest.

Still, that's only a piece of the political puzzle. If Democrats continue to buy into the idea that individuals can "deliver" a large block of voters, they are chasing a myth. For groups to be effective, the candidates must first win the hearts and minds of the group members with good messages. The real value of these groups is the potential for volunteers, money and the ability to increase voter turnout among their group. However, if any candidate thinks the groups can deliver in the face of a poor message, the candidate is wrong.

The judgment a candidate must make is whether the people saying they have an organization and can help voter turnout really has a system that can help the campaign, or if those people are simply looking for a little cash for their pockets. The bottom line is, even if the group leadership supports a candidate, it will not translate into support of the individual group members unless the message is right for the individual voter.

THE UNICORN WITH THE MAGIC SPELL OF CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Former political consultant and now successful novelist Mike McClister had a common statement that he introduced to candidates at the beginning of any campaign: "if it is conventional wisdom that we should do certain things in this campaign, then you can count on it being wrong." In every campaign, there are people who have learned some conventional wisdom about running political campaigns, and they try hard to get the candidate to buy into it. Unfortunately, they are often successful. Further, based on the authors' experiences, this particular myth appears more common among Democrats than Republicans. Here are some examples of some conventional wisdom that can be heard by Democratic candidates in every part of the country and at every level of politics.

Never mention your opponent's name, because it will increase his or her name identification. In reality, name identification does not equate to winning an election. Even today, Adolf Hitler's name identification is close to 100 percent in the United States, but if he returned and tried to run for public office, he would have no chance of winning. It is not unusual to hear news commentators push this conventional wisdom, offering the opinion that a candidate has an advantage because he or she has name identification. However, name identification is only an advantage if the name also brings a positive image into the mind of the voter. Only at the lowest level of the ballot, such as a local judicial race, is name identification a major factor.

Campaigns from the state legislature to the White House are more about the candidate's message than simple name identification.

You must have a good sign program to win. The idea of having a massive sign program for a campaign may be the biggest waste of money in politics. Why? See the above comment about name identification. Signs do not carry a message, and their only major function is to increase name identification, and—as noted above—you can't win many races just on name identification.

Consider this true story of two candidates, for the same statewide position in Louisiana during the same election year, that one of the authors had to evaluate. The first candidate came to the meeting and said he knew he had a big lead. He had spent nearly all his campaign funds on billboards, 4' x 8' signs, and yard signs. He pointed out his opponent did not have a single sign. He was killing the opponent in the sign war.

The second candidate said he had spent very little of his campaign money. His plan was to have a strong television blitz during the final three weeks of the campaign. He was starting to purchase the air time and would have as much advertising on television as the leading candidates for Governor.

It was easy to predict which candidate was going to win. The first poll in the race found that both candidates had about the same level of name identification, i.e., the candidate who spent all his money on signs was no better off than his opponent on that factor. But all of the first candidate's money was gone. The candidate, Richard Ieyoub, ran his television and became the Attorney General of Louisiana.

People are different here. Any time a political consultant from another state arrives at a campaign, some pusher of conventional wisdom will say, "Well, people are different here." There are indeed differences in the political ideology of people in different states, with some states having more Democrats and some having more Republicans. And there are also some local cultural elements that are distinctive to some areas. Beyond that, however, polling data consistently shows that people in different states hold similar values. As a nation, we are more alike than different. The persuasion techniques used by political campaigns or commercial advertisers that work in one place will work in another place.

Our attitudes and values have been greatly dictated by the development of Western civilization. We all use Aristotelian logic, even if we do not know it. As children, we are taught to think in logical sequences, such as "If I touch the hot stove, then I will be burned," or with the use of classical deductive logic, i.e., major premise, minor premise, and conclusion, such as "All German Shepherd puppies grow up to be big dogs. Spot is a German Shepherd puppy. Therefore, Spot will grow up and be a big dog." The reasoning process is common in all Western culture. For this reason, we sometimes have trouble understanding Eastern cultures who do not think in these classical logic sequences. There may be different customs or traditions in different

parts of the country. There may be ethnic or racial subcultures in parts of the country. But, anybody who has been in this country for more than a generation has probably been assimilated in a way of thinking and perceiving the world that is similar to the rest of America.

We have to have (a specific campaign trinket). In every state, there seems to be a group of trinket salesmen who are ready to pounce as soon as a candidate announces for office. These people are really good salesmen. They sell candidates and their campaigns a variety of items, most of which are a waste of money. Take T-shirts, for example, buying a few T-shirts for people walking door-to-door or volunteering at the campaign headquarters is fine, hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of T-shirts is a waste of money. T-shirts are as useless as signs stuck on the side of the road. Worse, they are expensive to buy. Further dollars often go for a T-shirt that will be only worn by someone already supporting the candidate. T-shirts are merely yard signs made of cloth.

Still, T-shirts seem really sane compared to some other trinkets, such as sponges printed with the candidate's name, nail files, refrigerator magnets, and books of matches. Possibly the most unusual item for any campaign was in the 1993 campaign for governor between legendary governor Edwin Edwards and avowed racist David Duke. The Edwards campaign spent a lot of money to pay for fly swatters with a logo saying, "Swat Duke."

THE UNICORN WHO IS THE ULTIMATE GURU

Every campaign and organization with a problem is looking for the guru who can turn things around. Every campaign cycle, some consultant becomes "hot property" because of great success in the previous cycle. The campaigns falsely believe if they hire a certain pollster or media consultant, large contributing groups will give them money because they know they will win with this consultant. And, political consultants selling their wares certainly would not do anything to dispel the myth. Regardless, the truth is that political consultants are like jockeys, and you don't win the Kentucky Derby riding a mule. However, even if the candidate is a thoroughbred, the consultants must be able to guide them around the track. The most successful campaigns normally involve a team of good professionals and a dedicated candidate. In a team approach, a good idea can come from any member of the team and there is no professional jealousy.

However, even with a great team and a good candidate, a campaign for public office may not be successful. Winning and losing campaigns happens because of many factors, not the least of which is the political context or the way the voters are viewing the world at the moment. No example is better than the defeat of George H. W. Bush by Bill Clinton in the 1992 Presidential

election. Clinton almost won the Democratic nomination by default. At the beginning of primary season, the Gulf War was on and President Bush's approval ratings were around 90 percent. It looked like the entire country was rallying around the President and the thought of confronting him in an election seemed like a suicide mission to most potential Democratic candidates.

Then, the war ended, the troops came home, and the economy took a downturn. Suddenly, public opinion turned on the President. One of the most quoted political clichés was born from Clinton's campaign manager James Carville when he said he kept a sign in his office that read: "It's the economy, stupid!"

Were President Clinton's consultants geniuses and President Bush's consultants idiots? Doubtful. How did the Bush consultants, just four years earlier, make President Bush the only sitting Vice President ever to win the Presidency? The truth is the consulting team on both campaigns was comprised of highly competent professionals in this business. The country had Republican Presidents for twelve years and there was a slight economic downtrend. Bill Clinton was probably the best campaign politician the Democrats had fielded at that time. The Clinton campaign was well executed, and it all added up to a win. But, there was no one magical guru.

Success for the Democratic Party in the future depends upon the party's ability to stop searching for unicorns. The magic does not lie in one message, one person, one extra voter per precinct in Ohio, or conventional wisdom from the past. They must clearly define their message in understandable language to win the hearts and minds of the voters.

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Chapter Ten

Practical Lessons

Why Some Candidates Don't Win

The four pillars are the driving forces to the psychology of the voters. When political candidates or political parties activate these forces, they are normally successful. When they do not activate these forces, campaigns usually fail. When the four pillars are used to analyze some recently past and potentially future campaigns, the current state of politics in America can be better understood—particularly in terms of why candidates don't win.

THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: GEORGE W. BUSH VERSUS JOHN KERRY

Democrats assumed George W. Bush would be easy to defeat in 2004. They reached that conclusion because they focused on him as a person, not President Bush as a leader. President Bush was often criticized in the press for misusing words (or inventing new words) (Finn, 2004). He was portrayed as a man who was not very intelligent and being run by an evil Vice President Dick Cheney. The economy was still in poor shape from the downturn that occurred after the attacks on 9/11.

The Democratic Presidential nominee was U.S. Senator John Kerry (Kranish, Money, & Easton, 2004). Senator Kerry was a Vietnam War veteran who had volunteered and served as an officer. The Democrats felt this was a real strength because Democrats are generally seen as less supportive of defense spending. The conservatives often define this policy position as merely a lack of patriotism. In the wake of the attacks on 9/11, being willing to wave the flag was a must for any candidate for public office.

Political opponents of George W. Bush called him a draft dodger because he was in the reserves. Democrats pointed the John Kerry's record as a hero of the Vietnam War while claiming Bush got into the reserves during the Vietnam War using the family's political connections (Apple, 2004). There were even questions about his service in the reserves.

The Bush campaign had one major strength and one major weakness. The strength was they understood the pillar of fear and how to use it. The Democrats underestimated the psychological impact of the attacks on 9/11 or were too politically correct to use a strong fear appeal about a future attack. In 2004, polls indicated that Americans did not question whether another attack would come; the only question was when. Additionally, 41 percent of Americans believed it was likely that they or a member of their family would be a victim of a terrorist attack (Gallup, 2004). Cheney boldly claimed, "If Kerry is elected, the terrorists will attack." This appealed to both the fear and narcissism pillar.

In April 2004, the news media reported that American interrogators were using aggressive techniques, or torture, to question prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Democrats decried torture as an interrogation technique. The Republicans defended the techniques as necessary to stop future attacks. A majority of Americans told pollsters they did not approve of the techniques. However, some of these reactions were based upon a socially desirable response pattern. That is, Americans do not think that support of torture is socially acceptable. However, the fear of a terrorist attack being imminent was still high. The Democrats were put in the position of failing to support anything necessary to defend the homeland.

The Democrats believed they could gain an advantage with presenting the military service record of John Kerry. They had commercials which showed John Kerry in Vietnam with his troops. The Democrats' overall attack could be translated into John Kerry is a patriot and George W. Bush is a coward.

The Republicans took the Kerry strength and used it as an attack point. An independent group produced and aired television commercials that became known as the "swift boat" ads. John Kerry commanded a riverboat in the Mekong Delta, known as swift boats. The commercial presented men who served with Kerry in Vietnam questioning his command and leadership during their missions. This attack was effective at neutralizing the Democratic advantage on the narcissism pillar. During the campaign, it became Kerry, not Bush, defending his service to the country. The technique was so effective, using hard personal attacks in political campaigns has become known as "swift boating" ("Swiftboating," 2007).

In the end, George W. Bush won the election by a bigger margin than he won in his first election as President. This campaign is a classic example of a campaign understanding how to drive the electorate using the pillars of fear and narcissism.

THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: BARACK OBAMA VERSUS JOHN MCCAIN

The Republican Party faced a challenge in the 2008 election. President George W. Bush was completed his second term and couldn't run again, but his popularity had dropped as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan became increasingly unpopular (Stolberg & Myers, 2008). Peter Baker (2008) wrote that Bush was "arguably the most disliked president in seven decades" (p. 29). Republican legislators running for reelection found that they had to distance themselves from him to increase their reelection chances. Republican nominees for president tried to run on other issues that appealed to their partisan base, while the Democrats, with Hillary Clinton and John Edwards as the major candidates, focused on their opposition to the wars that were blamed on Republicans. A third candidate, Barack Obama, was also running, but he was given little chance of winning—even by African American voters (Steele, 2008). Meanwhile, the voters seemed more concerned about another problem: a stagnant economy that had led to economic hardships for many workers, including the middle class (Andrews, 2008; Broder, 2008; Page & Risser, 2008). As Kevin Sack (2008) wrote, the voters' "politics are driven by the powerlessness they feel to control their financial well-being, their safety, their environment, their health and the country's borders" (p. A16).

Initially, Barack Obama campaigned on his vote against the invasion of Iraq, distinguishing himself from Hillary Clinton who had voted for the war. Eventually, though, Obama switched to the economic pressures facing the middle class (Leonhardt, 2008). In the end, Arizona Senator John McCain beat out Rudy Guiliani, Mitt Romney and others to win the Republican nomination (Bumiller, 2008), while Illinois Senator Barack Obama surprised pundits by running away with the Democratic nomination (Kristol, 2008).

The 2008 campaign started as a generational campaign—the older, war hero who carried the Republican banner versus the new generation and anti-war candidate of the Democrats. Obama selected Joe Biden as his running mate (Healy, 2008a), and also picked up campaign help from his former opponent, Hillary Clinton (Healy, 2008b). McCain pulled a surprise and selected Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his running mate, and that choice dominated the news for a while and helped McCain solidify support among religious conservatives (Cooper & Bumiller, 2008) and those whose voting was based on patriotism (i.e., narcissism) (Friedman, 2008), but her appeal with swing voters diminished following ridicule by the press and devastating impersonations on TV's *Saturday Night Live by comedian Tina Fey (Fairbanks, 2008). Meanwhile, the underlying problems with the economy remained (Krugman, 2008). The Republicans tried to keep a focus on abortion* as an issue, an approach that relied on the religiosity pillar of politics (Seelye, 2008a). But that issue simply wasn't getting any traction with the voters,

partly because of their personal economic concerns and partly due to the media's focus on Sarah Palin.

The Republicans tried to repeat their 2004 success by using the pillars of fear and narcissism. The result was a series of false attacks (often through alternative media) that attacked Obama for being either a radical liberal, a Muslim, and/or someone who was not born in the United States (Rutenberg & Bosman, 2008). To the disappointment of the GOP, these lines of attack only worked with the hardcore base, while most voters turned their attention to other issues—including the economy. This issue was sparked by an increasing unemployment rate that exceeded six percent in August (Uchitelle, 2008). The basic issue for voters was whether George W. Bush and the Republican Party should be blamed for the slow economy, or whether the tax-and-spend policies of Democrats should be blamed for not doing enough to get the economy back on track.

Eventually, an outside event dominated the final days of the campaign—the failure of several large banks and other financial institutions (Broder & Cooper, 2008; Hulse, 2008). The ultimate remedy advocated by both candidates was a government-sponsored bailout of those institutions (Cooper & Zeleny, 2008). Obama, though, had the edge as many voters blamed Republican-led policies toward big business for the problem (Cave, 2008; Nagourney & Zeleny, 2008). That situation caused Healy (2008c) to write that "Obama wraps his hopes inside economic anxiety" (p. A21). Meanwhile, the McCain campaign launched an attack based on Obama's association with a 1960's radical, William Ayers (Seelye, 2008b)—an attack based on the pillar of fear. It didn't work. Obama's reliance on consumerism and the economy dominated and resulted in the election of the first African American president in the history of the nation.

THE 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA VERSUS MITT ROMNEY

The 2012 election opened with the United States still mired in a sluggish economy and high unemployment rates. The Republican Party sensed and opportunity, especially if they could select a nominee who could challenge the president on the consumerism issue. The Republican primary season opened with a series of candidates hoping to capture the banner for the party.

From mid-2011 through the early part of 2012, a series of Republican candidates surged briefly into the spotlight only to fall under the glare of media attention. Early front-runner congresswoman Michele Bachmann had the advantage of being the darling of religious conservatives in the caucus state of Iowa, but fell victim to a series of gaffes and the perception that her religious views were out of the mainstream eventually knocked her out of

contention (Bruni, 2011; Burke, 2011). Pizza businessman Herman Cain had a brief flirtation with Republican voters until rumors of illicit affairs with several women derailed his bid (Henry & Jackson, 2011). Congressman Rick Santorum inherited the conservative mantle and did well in the Iowa Caucus, but he had trouble raising money to continue his campaign. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich appealed to some Republicans, but his past problems with an ethics violation and a history of serial adultery eventually doomed his chances (Saunders, 2011). Texas governor Rick Perry entered the fray and seemed to have potential, but a series of poor debate performances doomed his chances (Shear, 2011).

The eventual nominee was Mitt Romney, the man who finished second for the nomination in 2012. Romney got the nomination despite one major problem, i.e., Republican concerns that his Mormon religion would not sit well with many voters (Powell, 2012; Powell & Hickson, 2013). The fact that the billionaire was also seen as an example of Republican big-money interests didn't help either (Brooks, 2012; Krugman, 2012a).

The Obama campaign's major strategy was to blame the sluggish economy on the previous administration of Republican George W. Bush, arguing that electing Romney would lead to a return of the Republican policies that created the problem. That argument was enhanced by the fact that, despite the slow recovery, most voters felt more economically secure than when Obama took office (Lowrey, 2012). As Douthat (2012) wrote, "Americans don't yet trust the Republican Party given how little the party seems to have learned and changed since 2008" (p. SR11).

A number of side issues emerged during the election but, as election day approached, the focus returned to that of the economy (Page, 2012). That issue continued to benefit Obama, as the nation's economic news was buoyed by an improving housing market as the election approached (Schmit, 2012). Meanwhile, Romney's economic positions drew criticism from the media, with economist Paul Krugman (2012b) writing that Romney's economic plan "is a sham. It is a list of things he claims will happen, with no description of the policies he would follow to make those things happen" (p. A27). In the end, the pillar of consumerism was the major issue of the campaign, and Barack Obama was reelected.

GOVERNOR CHRIS CHRISTIE: HOW A TRAFFIC JAM SLOWED A PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

In 2013, New Jersey Governor Christie was viewed as the front runner for the Republican nomination for President in 2016 (Moore, 2013). He was a Republican who won in a northern Blue state. His populist style seems to strike a chord with the middle class voters in New Jersey. The former federal

prosecutor brought straight talk to issues, but also had a likable side to his personality. He seemed like a regular guy.

The extreme right did not like Christie. His cardinal sin was his refusal to attack President Obama after Hurricane Sandy destroyed significant areas of the New Jersey coast. While the right wing did not like it, most Americans saw a public official who was working in a bipartisan manner to solve a serious problem. Many political analyst felt Christie had the philosophy and appeal to win a national election.

Then came the "Time for Some Traffic Problems" scandal. In September 2013, at the height of Governor Christie's reelection campaign for Governor, the George Washington Bridge, which connects Fort Lee, New Jersey and New York City, closed two lanes for "a traffic study." The closure of these lanes caused massive traffic jams, delaying workers from their jobs and school buses from getting to school. Democrats began speculating that the lane closure was a retaliation by the Christie campaign against the Democratic Mayor of Fort Lee Mark Sokolich because he would not endorse Christie's reelection bid (Flegenheimer, 2014).

For months, Governor Christie treated press questions about the lane closure's connection to campaign politics as a non-issue. He joked about the guy in the bright orange vest putting out traffic cones was really him. Then began the worst nightmare a politician can have. In January, the press released emails between top Christie staffers and Christie appointees confirming the lane closings were, in fact, a politically motivated act against the Democratic mayor. Governor Christie made all the moves that political pundits would advise clients when the scandal broke. He fired everyone involved (Zernike & Santora, 2014) and spent almost two hours apologizing for the incident (Barbaro, 2014). He stood and answered every question the press gave him. It was a classic and strategically sound attempt for damage control.

How is it possible that the actions of staffers that seem like an exaggerated sophomoric prank could derail the campaign of the person who potentially would be the next President of the United States? At the time of this writing, the 2016 Presidential campaign had not started in earnest. The debate of whether or not this scandal can disqualify Governor Chris Christi continued. Still, this incident had potential to derail the Governor's campaign? An analysis using the four pillars will show how this scandal can be used to persuade voters to reject Governor Christi as unacceptable.

The first line of attack that can be made against Governor Christi is using the pillar of religiosity, i.e., the concept of right and wrong. This incident reflects some of the worst stereotypic descriptions about politicians, such as they misuse power to their own benefit, they don't really care about people, they have no real morals. One of the most damaging stories from the incident is that emergency workers could not get onto the bridge and a woman died. Even if Governor Christi could not be directly tied to ordering the stunt,

opponents will point out he surrounded himself with people who don't know right from wrong. As might be predicted, people caught in the scandal will claim that Governor Christi knew about the plan in an effort to save themselves (Zernike, 2014).

The second potential line of attack on Governor Christi would use the pillar of consumerism. Thousands of workers could not get to their jobs. Many of them were not paid because they were not at work (Brumfield, 2014). A class action suit was organized to sue the state of New Jersey to recover lost wages for the people who missed worked. The attack would be based on the argument that Chris Christi said he cares about working people, but this incident could be used to say he was willing to make people lose their pay to play politics. In addition, if the lawsuit is successful, the opponents will argue that Christi's political stunt cost the taxpayers millions of dollars. The conclusion will be drawn that Chris Christi cared more about politics than the taxpayers, driving the attitudes around the pillar of consumerism.

The third line of attack on Chris Christi would use the pillar of fear. His opponents will argue that Americans cannot trust Chris Christi to keep them save. The argument would be: What would happen if Chris Christi and his people used this poor of judgment in the time of national crisis, such as another terrorist attack or major economic crisis? The natural psychological reaction is to mistrust someone you fear. The attack will tie the strongest fears of voters to the traffic jam issue, and in this context, raise a specter of mistrusting his judgment.

The fourth pillar of narcissism can also be engaged to attack Governor Christi—an attack that will charge that Governor Christi is not "one of us." The attack will associate Governor Christi with the "political class." That is, Governor Christi is not like you and me, or this incident would never have happened. Attack language could be framed around the idea that leaders who love their state and their country do not engage in this unpardonable behavior. To make matter worse, Governor Christi never took the issue seriously, was unsympathetic to the problems the traffic jam caused, and only became serious about what had happen to us when there was no denying the fact that incident was a political dirty trick played by his highest and closest advisors.

The images, hearings, and lawsuits created by this famous planned traffic jam will make it impossible for Governor Chris Christi to escape and find a positive message for himself. Opponents in either a primary or general election will understand how to exploit this situation.

All of the examples in this chapter refer to actual or potential presidential campaigns. They were chosen for illustrative purposes because of their national influence. However, the examples can easily be expanded to state and local campaigns. If a candidate or campaign does not understand the four pillars of politics, winning an election becomes increasingly difficult.

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Chapter Eleven

Why Some Public Figures Can't Lead

> ''Sometimes I wonder whether the world is being run by smart people who are putting us on, or by imbeciles who really mean it.'' —Anonymous, but often incorrectly attributed to Mark Twain

Losing an election is often caused by not understanding the four pillars of politics. Still, winning an election is no guarantee that an elected official will be able to provide leadership to the public. The problems here are based upon the idea of checks and balances that dominate our constitutional government and the increasing role that money plays in modern campaigns.

To prevent too much power in the hands of one person, our founding fathers deliberately divided the government into three distinct branches—executive, judicial and legislative—with each branch providing some balance to what the leaders of the other two might do. What the founders did not anticipate, however, was the amount of animosity that could be generated by two major parties who approached the four pillars from totally different orientations. Over the past decade or more, the result of that balance has been stalemate and inactivity. While the examples in this chapter are again from the national level, the principles also apply to many states.

THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS WITH NO HOPE FOR LEADING

Congress is in such total gridlock that in his 2014 State of the Union address, President Obama promised the American people he would lead the country forward, with or without Congress (Milligan, 2014). While the two major political parties have always been combative, until the last few years the leaders of both parties have found a way to compromise and make major

strides on both foreign and domestic policies. President Nixon with a Democratic Congress opened relationships with "Red China" (MacMillan, 2008). President Reagan with a Democratic House and Republican controlled Senate passed a major and sweeping change in the tax system (Matthews, 2013). President Clinton passed welfare reform with bipartisan support (Hamilton, 2007).

So, why has Congress become dysfunctional? There are two reasons—a mathematical reason and an attitudinal reason—and both reasons are tightly intertwined. The mathematical reason is tied to the one truly bipartisan issue that still exists in Congress—the Congressional redistricting process. Every ten years, following the U.S. Census, all 435 U.S. House of Representatives District lines are redrawn. The original intent of the process was to insure that then number of people each U.S. Representative represented was approximately the same, and states with larger populations had the appropriate larger number of representatives.

The process also helped to account for geographic shifts in the population. For example, in 1980, year period, the state of Florida went from being the seventh largest state by population to the fourth largest state by population. During the same time, the population of Pennsylvania declined and it went from being the fourth largest state to being the sixth largest state. The district lines of both states were drawn by the legislatures in each state. It is not unusual for Members of Congress to send paid staff or outside consultants to lobby for the lines defining their district. It is also very common for the two major political parties to suggest the definition of particular districts to the members of their party serving in the legislature.

Modern technology has also changed the process. In 1982, districts were hand-drawn on precinct maps with magic markers. Today, with advanced algorithms and detailed voter data-bases, the lines of Congressional districts are drawn virtually down to the voter household. In addition, civil rights litigation required legislatures to produce "minority access" districts. This step was taken to stop legislatures from fracturing African American or Hispanic populations in a way that diluted their strength as a voting bloc and made it impossible for an African American or Hispanic to be elected to Congress (Miller et al., 2013).

The goal of Congressional incumbents is to have a district where the voters are so supportive of candidates from their own party that a general election challenge will be viewed as virtually impossible (Drew, 2013). Most of the money for Congressional campaigns is generated from special interest groups in Washington. These groups are constantly analyzing the Congressional races to determine where they need "to play." This means that groups who are most likely to support Democrats, such as organized labor and trial lawyers, will not give money to a Democrat which they view as having little chance of winning. By the same token, groups who primarily fund Republi-

cans, such as the Chamber of Commerce, will not give money to a Republican they feel has no or little chance of winning. These groups study voting patterns and read expert analysis of races from sources such as The Cook Political Report.

For the 2014 elections, political experts estimated only 15 to 30 of the 435 Congressional seats will have a serious contest in the general election (Silver, 2012). When incumbents know they are safe from a serious general election challenge, they know there is a 99 percent chance of being reelected. While a member of the same party could challenge them in a primary election, this has been almost impossible until the recent split in the Republican Party between the Tea Party wing and the established wing of the party (Lipton, 2014). Primary challenges are so difficult because there is an unwritten rule during political meetings that the job of the party is to protect the incumbent.

The ultimate result of this redistricting is that most districts are not only partisan in nature, but they also often reflect the ideological extremes of both parties. In such a system, moderates—who account for the bulk of voters in the nation—can be underrepresented. As Black and Black (2007) argued, the result is that the parties as represented in Congress have both been reduced to minority status with approximately equal levels of support. The resulting dysfunction has led to what conservative columnist David Brooks (2014) calls a "spiritual recession" in which neither party has faith in its ideological core, and, "Without the faith, leaders grown small; they have no sacred purpose to align themselves with" (p. A23). With no sense of purpose, the two parties have also lost the willingness to compromise. As Archibald (2014) noted, "That's not civic leadership. It's a competitive team sport" (p. 26). Similarly, Friedman (2014) wrote that "Today, we would be best served in meeting our biggest challenges by adopting a hybrid of the best ideas of left and right—and the fact that we can't is sapping our strength" (p. SR11). Bruni (2014) was even more cynical when he wrote, "Behold Congress, the saddest costume party there is" (p. SR3), while Wehrman (2014) simply wrote, "There's a whole lotta politics, but there's not much policy" (p. 15). Not surprisingly, the public has become disenchanted with this situation, leading to a national sense of "chronic disillusionment" as voters become increasingly disappointed in the ability of the government to function (Dowd, 2014, p. SR11).

Since most major interest groups always have legislation that they want to pass or stop, there are two pressure points that keep interest groups from funding challengers. The parties can pressure their leadership to withhold or push legislation in opposition to the interest groups desire as a way to discourage or punish them for funding a challenger. Second, the Member of Congress can use his or her legislative power, legislative procedures, or a legislative deal to punish a group who is funding an opponent.

Once an incumbent feels safe from the opposition party, the goal become to make the core voters of his or her own party happy. Primary elections normally have a small percentage of voters participating. These voters are the true believers who expect their candidates to take a hard line on their issues. This is the point where the four pillars and attitudes associate with the strong partisans comes into play.

To understand how the nation came to this situation, it is important to understand a bit of the history of news media. Prior to cable television, there were only three networks; ABC, NBC, and CBS. These networks and all the local television stations were bound by the Federal Communications Commission's "Fairness Doctrine" which required that news coverage had to report both sides of public issues in a fair manner. If a television or radio station editorialized about a public issue, the other side must be provided with equal time to present their side of the issue. Failure to abide by the fairness doctrine could lead to a loss of the broadcast license. Because network affiliated local television stations were highly profitable, they were not interested in having their license challenged over a political debate (Simmons, 1978).

In 1980, cable television was starting to explode. The laying of coaxle throughout the country meant the creation of many new networks, including news, sports, and entertainment. In 1982, the Reagan administration eliminated the fairness doctrine. The rationale was that the number of networks were now virtually unlimited, resulting in enough news outlets that all political positions could have a voice and these outlets could have total First Amendment freedom of speech rights (Ruane, 2011).

For the past two decades, the extreme conservatives have had a news network that reports news with their point of view, FOX News, and liberals have had a news network that reports the news with their point of view, MSNBC (Carr, 2013). Studies of information seekers indicate that people want to receive information that reinforces their current attitudes, not information that challenges their preconceived beliefs (Klapper, 1960).

This phenomenon has meant that conservatives and liberals become more convinced that their view of the world is correct and the other side's view is totally wrong. Further, that's unlikely to change in the near future. On the Republican side, the Tea Party forces are not a fringe group within the Republican Party that can be ignored. These populist groups, though opposed to the Republican establishment, are the top Republican fund-raisers while groups like Karl Rove's American Crossroads struggled after the lost in 2012 to Barck Obama and the Democrats (Confessore, 2014b). On the Democratic side, the left wing will continue to push its agenda with an aim of getting moderates to cater to their positions. The result: The extreme sides of both parties will continue to have a major impact on the functions of those parties. Even those news outlets which try to stay in the middle have been influenced.

Rosenthal (1993), for example, argued that the mainstream national media have increasingly seen their function as analyzing, rather than simply reporting the news.

The chart below shows how the four pillars are diametrically interpreted by the two extremes.

CONSUMERISM

Democrats: The wealth in the country needs to be redistributed. There is too much wealth concentrated in the top one percent of the population. Government must find a way to regenerate the middle class. Government should increase taxes on the rich.

Republicans: Government takes money from the people who create jobs and those who work to give it to people who will not work. Government hurts the middle class by taking their money. Taking more in taxes from anyone hurts the economy.

FEAR

Democrats: The enemy is a group of people who want to limit the rights of certain Americans, enslave the working class, and use fear of foreigners to keep the military industrial complex draining resources needed for domestic programs.

Republicans: There are forces in the world who hate us because we are a democracy. The most important job of the government is to protect us. We need more military and stronger laws to limit foreigners from entering the country. If we have to forfeit some part of our rights for national security, we are willing to do it.

RELIGIOSITY

Democrats: We should have a strict interpretation of the separation of church and state. All religions should be accepted as part of America. There are forces who are trying to impose their religious values on us by restricting women's reproductive right and opposing the rights of gays to marry and have full rights in society. America should be concerned about what is fair for all people.

Republicans: America was founded on Judeo-Christian beliefs, morals and values. These beliefs are the basis of our laws and create order in our society. America has gone too far in limiting the display of Christmas trees and prayers at public events. Liberals want to pass laws which destroy the

basic structure of the family. This behavior has caused many great societies to fall, and it could destroy America.

NARCISSISM

Democrats: We are intellectually sound in our policies. We represent thinking people, not people who act with knee-jerk emotions. We believe our communities have a responsibility to take care of the people who cannot take care of themselves. In our view, what makes America great is embracing a multi-cultural society where differences are not only accepted but celebrated.

Republicans: America is a nation built upon people who are exceptional. We are superior to most societies because of our dedication to work. We should not radically change our society. If people want to be a part of our society, they should speak English. We believe in the individual. The individual should be free to excel. No one should have the government take from one person's success and give it to someone who does not earn it for themselves.

The two factors of redistricting and media catering means that both Republicans and Democrats must reflect the extreme right and extreme left of the party to be elected. There is little doubt about the outcomes of most general elections—only party primaries. This structure has created a number of factors which makes political leadership difficult. First, the term "compromise" has become a dirty word for true partisans. There are now numerous examples of incumbents who have been defeated because they acted in a "moderate" or "compromising" manner. For example U.S. Senator Richard Lugar (R-Indiana) was defeated because of he was considered too bipartisan (Farrell, 2012). In the 2014 election cycle, U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell, the Republican majority leader, was challenged in the primary election for his failure to "be conservative enough," as was U.S. Senator Lindsay Graham in South Carolina (Newton-Small, 2014). Similarly, in interviews with four lawmakers—two Republicans and two Democrats—who retired after 2014, the *New York Times* reported that all four noted the inability of Congress to compromise as a source of gridlock in Washington (Hulse & Pear, 2015).

This uncompromising position of both parties has divided the states and regions of the country into primarily dominated by one of the two parties. Currently, there are no Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives from the New England states. Likewise, there are virtually no Southern white Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Democrats from the South are dominated by African American and Hispanic representatives representing districts that are overwhelmingly dominated by voters from these ethnic groups.

Additionally, the rules of both Houses of Congress make it impossible for either party to have a functioning majority. The entire House of Representatives has to run for reelection every two years. Up until the last redistricting in 2011, there was a shift of power almost every two years during the 21st century. However, ever since that redistricting, the number of limited districts that are really "swing" districts has decline to the point that the shift of power will be less frequent.

The U.S. Senate requires the vote of 60 U.S. Senators to end debate. Neither of the two parties has had 60 U.S. Senators since the Democrats had 61 Senators in 1977 to 1979. Thus for 33 years, neither party has had a functioning majority of 60 U.S. Senators. However, during much of the 1980's and 1990's, the U.S. Senate was functional because Senators found a way to compromise. A bipartisan effort provided America with legislation such as major reforms such as the Child Tax Credit, amendments to the Clean Air Act, and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

If the President vetoes a bill passed by Congress, it requires a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress to override the veto. That scenario has become increasingly difficult to achieve; especially when Members of Congress are afraid that working with the members of the other party could mean a defeat in the next primary. An examination of the White House and Congress since 2000 clearly indicates the nature of this gridlock:

- In 2000, Republican George W. Bush won the Presidency. When he took office, the U.S. House had 212 Democrats, 221 Republicans, and two independents, while the Senate was split with 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans.
- The 2002 mid-term elections changed the composition of Congress slightly. The House ended up with 205 Democrats, 229 Republicans, and one independent; the Senate had 48 Democrats, 51 Republicans, and one independent,
- In 2004, Republican George W. Bush was reelected as President. The House had 202 Democrats, 232 Republicans, and one independent. The Senate had 49 Democrats, 49 Republicans and two independents.
- The 2006 election saw little change in power. The House was composed of 233 Democrats and 202 Republicans, while the Senate had 49 Democrats, 49 Republicans and two independents.
- The election of Democrat Barack Obama as president in 2008 saw an increase in Democratic legislators, but still not enough to ensure no gridlock. The House had 257 Democrats and 178 Republicans, while the Senate had 51 Democrats, 47 Republicans, and two independents.
- After the 2010 mid-term elections, the power in the House of Representatives shifted to the Republicans and gridlock was virtually ensured. The House had 193 Democrats and 242 Republicans, while the Democrats had

a small majority in the Senate: 51 Democrats, 47 Republicans and two independents

- In 2012, Barack Obama was reelected as President, but Republicans retained control of the House with 233 members compared to 200 for the Democrats. The Senate remained under Democratic control with 53 Democrats, 45 Republicans and two independents.

Thus neither party has had a comfortable and over-whelming majority since the turn of this century. President Obama had a two year period (2008–2009) with a significant majority, but still did not have the 60 partisan votes in the U.S. Senate to truly have control. The result is a picture of a Congress in gridlock; and no party or political institution leads during gridlock.

Further, that gridlock is likely to continue. Thirty-six of the fifty states have legislatures and state officers that are dominated by one party (Confessore, 2014a). With legislatures dominated by one party, it will be impossible for the minority party to have influence in drawing Congressional districts. When the people elected to public office are only concerned about representing a set of values in an uncompromising manner, the values that they see define American, leading the country becomes impossible.

THE GROWING ROLE OF BIG MONEY

The final factor that has led to political dysfunction is the growing role of big money in political campaigns. That change started in January 2010 when the United States Supreme Court made a historic ruling in a case known as Citizens United v. FEC (Smith et al., 2010), a ruling that provided campaigns with the ability to form political action committees funded by unlimited donations from corporations and individuals. That ruling led to the development of "Super PACs," in which candidates could solicit unlimited funds from high-dollar donors (Smith & Powell, 2013). Hypothetically, the raising and spending of these Super PAC funds could not be coordinated with the campaigns themselves, but the barrier separating the two has been at best a thin façade. Candidates or high campaign executives often help to raise those Super PAC funds. Further, while there is supposed to be no coordination between the two in expenditures, campaigns and Super PACs often operated out of the same offices at the same addresses.

As a result, the total cost of running a campaign escalated to the point that it has been described as "obscene amounts of money" are now required (Faulk, 2014, p. 6). Many candidates find themselves raising money for their campaign and for related Super PACs. Millions of dollars could flow into the PACs. In 2010, the Democrats did not use such PACs because of their ideological objection to the ruling. That resulted in Republicans taking con-

trol of the House of Representatives. Since then, both parties have actively used them in campaigns. Thus, people like hedge fund manager Tom Steyer donates millions of dollars to PACs for Democrats (Confessore, 2014c), while the Koch brothers (Charles and David) do the same for Republicans and conservative causes (Schulman, 2014). For political consultants, the change has meant that it is now more profitable to work for a Super PAC than for a campaign. For the public, though, the result is that politicians of both parties find that they rely more on money from big donors than from average voters. And, while representatives of both parties deny that it influences their political decisions, that money has at least an indirect impact since all incumbents know that they need to raise more money from the same donors for the next election.

WHERE DOES THIS LEAD IN THE FUTURE

While predicting the future is a hazardous business, there are several possible paths based upon history. Scenario 1: Continued gridlock for the next fifteen to twenty years. The strength of the Tea Party and the conservative movement in the country comes from people in the Boomer generation who are white and middle class. They truly feel that they are "Taxed Enough Already." They are not, like many others, accepting social changes such as gay marriage. At this point, these voters control politics in the deep South, some western states, and are a force in the Midwest. They control a sufficient number of Congressional seats and U.S. Senate seats that the liberals cannot win a functioning majority.

In twenty years, many in this generation will die and a number of changes may occur. The Boomers are the last generation who remember racial segregation in the United States. Desegregation occurred when this generation was coming of age. Today, one-in-five marriages are "inter-racial." The younger generation does not view the country in terms of race. Likewise, the memory of women's lib, the Vietnam War, and anti-draft rallies will disappear. When that occurs, the values of generation X and the millennials will become dominant in America. Whether this generational passing leads to a more moderated society is impossible to predict, but it is clear that they see the errors of their parents.

Scenario 2: Another major crisis. During the first year of this century, American suffered a huge blow to the perception of its strength when the 9/11 attacks occurred. In 2008, the economic collapse of the housing market created havoc in the middle class because people took out loans they could never repay. But, the lending institutions encouraged it. As a result, we are no longer a society that feels totally safe from terrorists' attacks or an economic collapse. As the Republicans learned in 2008, you may not be respon-

sible for the crisis, but if you are in power when it occurs, the voters will punish you. If there is another crisis, the voters could give the party out of power a ruling majority, which would break the gridlock in Congress and move America in one direction or another.

Scenario 3: A major structural change in American Democracy. American-style Democracy is difficult and has not been embraced by other countries when given the opportunity. The Soviet Union collapsed and many people thought democracy would take hold. However, Russia is now run by a political strong man who is basically a dictator. Several years after the collapse, a majority of people in that nation still want a dictator, not democracy. Looking at the results of the U.S. war in Iraq, it would be impossible to argue that the U.S. gave them a functioning democracy. The "Arab Spring" has not lived up to a democratic expectation.

The United States has not had a war of survival since World War II. We assume the citizens are devoted in their love of our democratic system. But, if the system does not work, at least in their perceptions, what will they tolerate or embrace? A broken economic system brought a communistic government to Russia and fascists to power in Hitler's Germany. We should never assume gridlock is good. Without compromise on the interpretation of the basic values, the world's greatest experiment may undergo significant changes. Examples of such changes could include, but are not limited to, term limits, increased public financing or matching funds to offset independent groups, a return of the fairness doctrine, or no two-term limit for Presidents.

Currently, the four pillars of politics form the basis of our national system of democracy. But that system has led to a situation in which many candidates have no chance of winning. Even worse, those who do win find it difficult to provide leadership to the nation and its states. Both candidates and public officials find themselves more fearful of the extreme voices in each of their parties. As a result, politicians are more interested in pandering to those interests rather than addressing the problems of the day. Meanwhile, neither party is providing effective leadership, a situation that Street and DiMaggio (2012) described in terms of national representation by "radical Republicans" and "dismal Democrats" (p. 549)

Late in the 20th century, Michael Janeway (2001) predicted that our democratic system would become increasingly dysfunctional as the nation's media and politicians increasingly appealed to the base instincts of voters. Janeway (2004) later blamed part of the problem on a trend that he traced from the Roosevelt administration to that of Lyndon Johnson in which power brokers grew increasingly manipulative and highhanded. But the problem does not seem to have stopped with the Johnson administration. Instead, the nation's leaders have become increasingly focused on winning reelection instead of serving the public. The problem has been apparent in the adminis-

tration of President Barack Obama; even though the president criticized Republicans for kowtowing to special interest groups, his own administration was full of lobbyists and former lobbyists who represented similar special interests (Malkin, 2014).

Beinart (2001) argues that the ineptness is due to the polarization of the parties and the resulting loss of influence by moderates. Columnist John Archibald (2014) may have aptly described the problem when he wrote that "Politics is seldom about leadership anymore—if it ever was. It's about manifest ideological destiny. Seize power and hold it" (p. 26). Regardless, at some point, the nation needs candidates who will address the issues facing the nation and leaders who can provide leadership on those issues. Similarly, political scientist Richard Skinner (2008/2009) argued that the problem can be traced back to Ronald Reagan and a trend that Skinner labeled the "partisan presidency" (p. 605), a trend that reached full bloom in the twenty-first century and the presidency of George W. Bush.

If it was bad under Bush, it seems to have gotten worse under President Obama. It has reached a point where partisanship is now a toxic element in the political process. Historically, our democratic system is based upon the concepts of competition during election campaigns, but collaboration after the elections. That second stage has vanished, but both parties continuing the partisan competition while they serve in office. The victim of all this fighting is the ordinary American, the lower- and middle-class voters who work and seek a better life (Herbert, 2014). As commentator Michael Gerson noted:

> America is in desperate need of a politics of repair, not a politics of demolition and rebuilding. We need leaders who take populist discontent seriously, but direct it toward projects of practical reform. . . . The proper response is the renovation of institutions that allow us to live a decent, compassionate, orderly life together. This is the dignity and importance of the political profession. (p. 22)

That's a worthy goal, indeed. What if our government could become a mechanism for improving the lives of ordinary Americans. What if Republicans and Democrats could still express their ideological differences, yet unite in a common goal of improving the life of its citizens? What if a candidate possessed both the skills to be elected and those need to provide leadership? Is such a process possible? Not in the current political environment.

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