

Philipp Adorf

# How the South was won and the nation lost

The roots and repercussions of the Republican  
Party's Southernization and Evangelicalization

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## Acknowledgments

The path to this book has not always been the most direct one. Rooted in an interest of why the American South had been a bastion of the Democratic Party – an odd state of political affairs to anyone only familiar with 21<sup>st</sup> century US parties – it quickly branched out into a variety of other areas, not all of them limited to the political science realm. Gathering information on past developments virtually always led to the discovery of links to the present, allowing the research for this book to provide new and fascinating avenues to explore each day.

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## Introduction

The Republican 2012 primary campaign had entered its crucial phase and the party's supporters could be forgiven for thinking one of their candidates was about to move into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The economy still had not recovered from the greatest recession since the Great Depression. Unemployment stood at more than eight percent, job growth had slowed to a crawl and despite pumping billions of dollars into the economy, the outlook for that year remained gloomy. Hope and "change we can believe in" had turned into indifference, despair, and sometimes outright anger. A perfect environment then, it appeared, for anyone willing to take on an incumbent. The most recent election most certainly provided the party with additional hope. A mere year before Republican candidates were gearing up for the first primary contests, the GOP had been swept back into power in the mid-term elections, taking over control of the House of Representatives in the biggest swing in a Congressional Election since 1948<sup>1</sup> and reducing Barack Obama's Democratic majority in the Senate. The time seemed ripe to drive home the point that Democrats had no clue about how to run the country in general and the economy in particular. The Republican front runner Mitt Romney seemed poised to woo his primary audience with a résumé that included years of business experience and the successful organizing effort of the Olympic Games in his home state of Utah. The fundamentals behind determining electoral outcomes seemed to be on the Republican side – after all as Bill Clinton's campaign manager James Carville once put it, "it's the economy, stupid." In the midst of a de-accelerating recovery, the defining issue of any and all presidential debates surely had to be the economic well-being of the United States, the primary issue that appeared to make President Obama the most susceptible to defeat. Discussions within the Republican Party and its challengers for the presidency would take a different turn though. Instead of keeping their eyes fixed on the economy, the Republican core audience frequently ap-

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1 Cf. Q. Bowman 2012: "Congress Loses Hundreds of Years of Experience – But Majority of Incumbents Stick Around." *PBS*, November 5.

peared more interested in candidates' views on socio-cultural issues such as contraception and abortion.<sup>2</sup> Jobs were cast aside by condoms and diaphragms while the frontrunner and "Massachusetts Moderate" Mitt Romney had to go to great lengths to portray himself as "severely conservative," a process that did not exactly enhance his reputation as a man with strong convictions. In the past, the track record of having been elected as a Republican to the gubernatorial post in the most liberal state of the union might have been seen as an advantage, a sign that one was able to work with opponents from across the aisle, uniting different points of view under a single banner with the sole purpose of advancing legislation in the best interest of the people. Not so in 2012 though.

The reason for this increase in the salience of social issues at the expense of the economy and the visceral loathing of anything resembling compromise can be found in the changes the Republican Party has undergone over the past half a century, a remarkable transformation that has not only changed the GOP itself but caused huge upheaval within the wider American political and party system. It is a story of the simultaneous *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party that has provided it with a group of devoted and easily galvanized supporters while, at the same time, fashioning a partisan core that appears to drag the GOP ever further away from the political center and the views and values of the average American voter. For a significant period, the dual processes of *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* appeared to primarily bear advantages. The 1994 Republican Revolution brought about the first Republican U.S. House majority in 40 years as the party also managed to win a majority of Southern House districts for the first time since the 1870s. For the remainder of the decade, the GOP would control both houses of Congress, providing it with the perfect springboard from which to launch attacks against the despised inhabitant of the White House. As Bill Clinton left the White House, a Southern born-again Christian moved in – in no small part thanks to the candidate's sweep across the eleven states of the South, including the crucial state of Florida. Four years later, George W. Bush was re-elected, once again carrying the entirety of the South, while his congressional Republican compatriots expanded their majority in both houses. The country appeared to be on the cusp of a permanent Republican majority across all levels of federal politics, seemingly disproving the thesis drawn up by Ruy Teixeira and John Judis two years earlier that the United States was heading towards an "emerging Democratic majority." Republican strategists were confident that they had found the holy grail of electioneering:

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2 During the last Republican primary debate of 2012 in Mesa, Arizona the terms "contraception" and "contraceptives" were for example mentioned a combined seven times, compared to ten mentions for "job(s)" – a rather minute difference considering the overall weight that is usually placed on economic matters by the general public. Cf. CNN 2012g: *Full Transcript of CNN Arizona Republican Presidential Debate*, February 22.

Craft a devoted base (primarily found in the South of the nation), get them to the polls with red meat issues such as gay marriage which affect the core of their worldview and win just enough of the remaining electorate to squeak past the line in first place. The following years demonstrated though that replicating this feat was no easy assignment. After the 2004 election, scholars already predicted that “[t]he GOP may have a difficult task in choosing policy positions that will alienate neither their religious conservative base nor the moderate voters who will hold the balance of power in future elections.”<sup>3</sup> As the former continued to increase its weight within the party in subsequent years, the latter slowly but surely began to abandon the GOP in favor of their Democratic counterparts. As a result of this exodus, today’s Republican is more *southernized* and *evangelized* than ever before. This book will depict how the foundations for these processes were laid, just how heavily dependent on the South the GOP is today, and what sort of problems these developments inherently entail in a country that is increasingly moving away from the South and its evangelical and deeply conservative values.

This book has right to the very end been a work in progress. Starting off with the intention of explaining why the South had remained Democratic in congressional elections right up until the early 1990s, it evolved into a story of how yesterday’s decisions and choices shape today’s politics – developments that have in a sense culminated in the rise and success of Donald Trump in the 2016 Republican presidential primary on the back of white Southern voters who were drawn to the northeastern billionaire by his brand of anti-federal government populism and nativism. The changes we have witnessed in white Southern partisan behavior have been nothing short of awe-inspiring particularly when the light is shone on the last two decades during which the Republican Party has not just become the majority party of white Southerners but developed into an almost mirror image of the (Southern) Democratic Party of yesteryear in terms of its dominance within this voting bloc. The developments described in the first part of this book started off as the dominant element in this work but over time changed into forming the backdrop of this tale of Southern dominance at the cost of national popularity. While numerous works<sup>4</sup> have explained in great

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3 Abramson, Aldrich, Rohde 2005: “The 2004 Presidential Election: The Emergence of a Permanent Majority?” *Political Science Quarterly* 120(1), pp. 33–57, here p. 56.

4 For the development of the first cracks in the Democratic *Solid South* and subsequent events leading up to and including the struggle over civil rights in the 1960s cf. Frederickson 2001: *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932–1968*. The seminal work on the former Confederacy’s increasing Republican allegiance undoubtedly is the Black brothers’ *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (2002). It tells the complete story of how and why the South became Republican, first at the presidential, then at the congressional and local levels. Shifting the focus to the U.S. House level, Seth McKee assesses a variety of factors that delayed Republican gains below the presidential level for a number of decades – factors like the

detail how and why the South became Republican – and why it took such a considerable amount of time for the congressional realignment to occur – and others have described the manner in which the Christian Right has been able to obtain an ever more prominent role within the Republican Party,<sup>5</sup> attempts to assess the negative impact of the GOP's *Southernization* and simultaneous *Evangelicalization*, particularly in light of the demographic changes America has undergone and will undergo in future decades, in closer detail are rare with such forecasts usually relegated to a final few words in the final chapter. In light of the significant role played by Hispanics and African Americans in Barack Obama's electoral victories, attention in both the media and academic world has also turned towards future electoral majorities and the corner the Republican Party has backed itself into because of its poor performance among those mi-

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continued ability of Democrats to draw their own districts or the simple fact that for many potential Republican candidates there was little appeal in contesting races against seasoned Democratic veterans who could thus frequently count on their incumbency advantage alone to keep them safe and secure. Cf. McKee 2010: *Republican Ascendancy in Southern U.S. House Elections*. Other important and central works that warrant a mention in this area include Aistrup 1996: *The Southern Strategy Revisited: Republican Top-Down Advancement in the South* and Lublin 2004: *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change*. While Aistrup sees Republican success at the presidential level as a precursor for subsequent state level growth, Lublin makes the case that the Republican takeover of the Southern U.S. House caucus could not have been achieved if it had not been for Republican candidates with some previous political experience at the local level running for House and Senate seats – in other words Republican competitiveness at the substate level was a vital prerequisite for success in higher elections although Lublin acknowledges that Republican growth in the former Confederacy indeed followed a path down from the presidential level, taking the longest time to reach offices the furthest removed from the presidency. James Glaser's *Race, Campaign Politics, & the Realignment in the South* (1996) also represents a vital source of information for anyone trying to understand the Southern realignment. As the title illustrates, Glaser places race front and center in this story although he also touches upon a variety of other factors such as the experience of Democratic officeholders and the extent to which this provided them with an advantage over their Republican counterparts.

- 5 The most extensive assessment can probably be found in David Williams's work which explains the increasing role of the religious right and its alliance with the Republican Party since the emergence of the New Christian Right in the 1950s in great detail. Cf. Williams 2010a: *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right*. David Domke and Kevin Coe on their part chart the rise in religious appeals by American politicians from 1932 to the George W. Bush presidency, placing a special emphasis on how the GOP has in recent decades used God and social issues to bring Christian conservatives to the polls. Cf. Domke, Coe 2010: *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America*. A broader approach to the connection between religion and politics in the U.S. is provided by Kenneth D. Wald's and Allison Calhoun Brown's *Religion and Politics in the United States* (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011). Their work also extensively assesses the role evangelical Protestants in particular have played within the Republican coalition in recent years (pp. 201–238). By now in its fourth edition, *Onward Christian Soldiers?* by Clyde Wilcox and Carin Robinson also provides one of the best illustrations of the immense growth in political power by the Christian Right that has been obtained through its alliance with the Republican Party. Cf. Wilcox, Robinson 2011: *Onward Christian Soldiers?: The Religious Right in American Politics*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed.

nority voters – often though without explaining in greater detail the historic reasons behind why Republicans have such a difficult time appealing to minorities. This is where this book will fill the void by combining the different strands of past Republican campaigns, electioneering, and policy to first of all show how the South was won, what sort of continuing impact the decisions of Goldwater, Nixon, and Reagan in particular have on today's Grand Old Party and its quest to win majorities and how the large-scale influx of Southerners and Evangelicals into the party – a steady trickle after the mid-1960s that turned into a veritable tide washing away virtually all moderate remnants in the early 1990s – has transformed the Republican Party into a political organization that is incredibly internally cohesive and ideologically pure. Even more importantly in the context of this book, it is a party that stands in the tradition of the South's unique identity: Deeply religious and deeply opposed to an activist federal government that is frequently deemed to only act on behalf of minorities. While Reagan's decision to forge an alliance with the Christian Right most certainly paid off handsomely in the South, the subsequent *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of his party has come at the cost of electoral support in the rest of the nation. This process has accelerated over the past two decades, ever since the Republican Party won its first congressional majority in the South since 1874<sup>6</sup> in the 1994 House elections. In a country that is rapidly becoming less white and in many parts more secular – with today's younger voters and minorities often far more open to the notion of an activist government lending a helping hand to those in need – increasingly relying and focusing on a white, anti-statist, devoutly religious part of the electorate seriously hampers the Republican Party's chances of forging majorities in nationwide elections today and will only increasingly do so in future decades.

The relevance of this work extends beyond the world of politics. Over the past few years, the U.S. has teetered on the brink of economic chaos and default on a number of occasions, threatening to drive the world economy off the cliff along with it. The reasons for this development are primarily found in the changes the Republican Party has undergone over the past few decades, morphing from a party that used to have sizeable socially moderate or even liberal factions – such as the Rockefeller Republicans – into a political organization that has found a new home in the vehemently anti-statist South while losing significant support in many of its former bastions. Understanding the underlying reasons behind this shift also aids us in comprehending the deep appreciation many Republicans, both within the electorate and among elected officials, hold for the tenets of principled political beliefs. The decades-long process of a simultaneous *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* has driven the GOP ever further to the

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6 Cf. Black, Black 2002, p. 329.



right, culminating – as we will see in the second part of this book – in the Tea Party as an anti-statist, uncompromising, racially resentful, and populist movement in the mold of George Wallace. The Tea Party itself therefore is far from a new phenomenon – it did not burst onto the political scene in 2009. Instead it has been in the making for the last 50 years, a process that began to get off the ground with Goldwater’s attempt to “go hunting where the ducks are,”<sup>7</sup> continued by Nixon’s refined Southern Strategy and provided with a large jolt by the presidency of Ronald Reagan – developments that all ultimately set the foundations for the establishment of what we commonly refer to as the Tea Party, a religiously as well as racially conservative movement that far from representing the party’s lunatic fringe instead serves as its ideological core and guardian of the values that many white Southerners subscribe to as well. If we wish to understand contemporary American politics and venture an estimate as to where it is headed, we need to understand why the Tea Party has not just emerged but been able to drive the GOP into such an uncompromising direction that it facilitated a government shutdown in October of 2013. Portrayals of the Tea Party as a movement that can disappear as quickly as it burst onto the political stage if only the supposedly moderate core of the Republican Party were to push back against anti-statist populism completely misunderstand the underlying foundations and deep roots within the GOP this movement possesses, leading to conclusions about the future path of the Republican Party that are not infrequently widely off the mark.

As this book will show, it would be a gross misunderstanding of the Tea Party to assume that the negative press the GOP has received in the wake of a variety of budgetary showdowns will somehow help moderate Republicans in their efforts to separate themselves from the Tea Party, a pointless endeavor since the Tea Party is not some alien movement that has taken over the GOP but has instead come into existence thanks to the decisions taken by Republican leaders over the course of the last few decades which we will see time and again throughout this book. The Tea Party is therefore here to stay, as are its policies and approach to politics that may not just harm the American economy<sup>8</sup> but have to a certain extent laid the groundwork for the remarkable success of Donald Trump and his own brand of anti-government politics nourished and sustained by a strong dose of racial animus. That is why it is of utmost importance to address the ideological buttressing of the Tea Party and its supporters in closer detail (as will be done in chapter II.3). Their conservative stance on race, economics, and socio-

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7 Quoted in: Hillygus, Shields 2008b: *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*, p. 117.

8 According to S&P, the 2013 government shutdown decreased quarterly growth for the fourth quarter in the United States by 0.6 percentage points. Cf. The Economist 2013d: *Where Next?* October 26.

cultural matters, their vehemently anti-statist agenda as well as their inability to compromise all highlight the movement's Southern lineage and traits while those positions and the Tea Party supporters' high levels of activism also present the Republican Party with a momentous challenge in an electoral environment that is becoming more open to the ideas and concepts of a more activist government.

## A success story like no other

A little over 50 years ago, the existence of a Republican Party rooted in the South and run by a conservative base upholding the values of the former Confederacy through its staunch conservatism on both economic and social matters was unthinkable. It is difficult to overstate just how dominant the Democratic Party was in the South of the first half of the twentieth century. Control over the political process of the region rested solely in the hands of the party while their Republican counterparts did not even deserve to be considered the opposition party. Even as the national Democratic Party was making its first tacit steps towards racial equality, the party's stranglehold in the region continued. After Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrat insurgency in 1948 for example, Republicans still accounted for none of the region's eleven governors, none of its 22 Senators and just two of the 105 members of the U.S. House of Representatives from the region. Republicans also controlled just 2.8 percent of all state legislators across the South.<sup>9</sup> Expanding the analytical timeframe elucidates the GOP's pitiful state even more vividly. During the three-decade period preceding the civil rights revolution<sup>10</sup> Republicans won just 1.5 percent of all Senate and 7.2 percent of all House races in the region.<sup>11</sup> Things could hardly be more different today, as table 1 illustrates. Over the sixteen-year period between 2001 and 2017, only Arkansas failed to send a Republican majority to the U.S. House as the GOP won 63.5 percent of all congressional races in the eleven states of the former Confederacy during the entire timeframe.<sup>12</sup> Even President Clinton's home state has made the switch to the Republican side though as the party has won eleven of the twelve U.S. House races in Arkansas over the past three congressional elections (2010 through 2014).

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9 Cf. Egerton 2004: "The Southernization of American Politics." In: Dunbar (ed.): *Where We Stand: Voices Of Southern Dissent*, pp. 197–223, here p. 207.

10 1932–1965.

11 Cf. Stanley, Niemi 2013: *Vital Statistics on American Politics 2013–2014*, p. 12.

12 This includes eight congressional elections in total. If one only assesses the four most recent elections, the share actually increases to 67.8 percent. In the 2014 U.S. House elections, Republicans managed to win 73.2 percent of all Southern districts.

Table 1: Party victories in Southern U.S. House elections, 1932–1965 and 2001–2017:<sup>13</sup>

State	Total 1932–1965			Total 2001–2017		
	Dem.	Rep.	Other	Dem.	Rep.	Other
Alabama	146	5	0	14	42	0
Arkansas	109	0	0	16	16	0
Florida	111	8	0	67	135	0
Georgia	170	1	0	40	64	0
Louisiana	139	0	0	13	41	0
Mississippi	110	1	0	15	18	0
N. Carolina	189	9	0	46	57	0
S. Carolina	97	2	0	13	37	0
Tennessee	121	37	1	30	42	0
Texas	365	8	0	102	160	0
Virginia	147	15	0	28	59	1

For political scientists of the period between the 1930s and '60s, the Republican Party thus offered little reason for scholarly analysis. In his seminal 675-page work on the South and its political environment – *Southern Politics in State and Nation* – V.O. Key, Jr. devoted a mere 21 pages to the Republican Party in a chapter to receive the rather disparaging title “A Note on the Republican Party.” The organization itself “scarcely deserve[d] the name of a party,”<sup>14</sup> according to Key, adding that it stood somewhere “between an esoteric cult on the order of a lodge and a conspiracy for plunder in accord with the accepted customs of our politics.”<sup>15</sup> In such an environment voting Republican, particularly in the Deep South, required “fortitude.”<sup>16</sup> Breaking this dominance was going to require hard work and patience. At the time of Key’s assessment of the GOP there was no Republican infrastructure in the South to speak of; as a matter of fact, there were virtually no Republicans to speak of as Trent Lott noted when he commented that growing up in the Mississippi of the 1940s and '50s, he had “never met a live Republican.”<sup>17</sup> This

13 Entries indicate the total number of U.S. House seats won by a party in the state during the period in question. For 1932–1965 data cf. Stanley, Niemi 2013, pp. 32–33. Contrary to Stanley and Niemi’s other dataset which shows Republicans winning 7.2 percent of all House elections during the period in question, the table gives Republicans a share of just 4.8 percent of all elections won. This may be due to also incorporating special elections. 2001–2017 data are own work based on Election Day results. Data obtained from United States House of Representatives 2013: *Party Divisions of the House of Representatives* and New York Times 2014c: *House Election Results*. December 12.

14 V.O. Key, Jr. 1949: *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, p. 277.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., p. 280.

17 Quoted in: Courtwright 2010: *No Right Turn – Conservative Politics in a Liberal America*, p. 168.

“reservoir of power,”<sup>18</sup> among other reasons, allowed the Democratic Party to remain the majority party at the congressional level in the region up until the early 1990s.

Numerous works have delved into the reasons, such as the aforementioned reservoir of power, for why it took a number of decades after the civil rights about-face of the GOP for the party to finally make significant inroads into the political realm of the South below the presidential level. The task of this work is not to recount the work of others in that regard but to use a few specific issue and policy areas to help explain why today’s Republican Party is both *southernized* and *evangelized*. The first part of this book will therefore focus on three primary factors whose significance to both the Republican Party and its activist core, the Tea Party, should be obvious to any observer of American politics. They are the three R’s of race, religion, and Reagan. All three and the interplay and overlap between them played a key role in how the Republican Party managed to win the South both at the presidential as well as the congressional level. Ronald Reagan’s role in particular warrants a closer inspection as his rhetoric and policies sought to use race and religion to fashion a new Republican Party whose base of power would be firmly planted in the South. Separating the three R’s is frequently almost impossible. Reagan’s support of tax exemptions for schools that continued to implement segregationist policies during the early 1980s – such as Bob Jones University (BJU) which had refused to admit black students up until 1971 and continued to ban interracial dating until 2000<sup>19</sup> – for example allowed him to draw support from both the racial and religiously conservative voting blocs (with once again a fair degree of overlap between them). Not only was he defending a traditional cornerstone of the white Southern way of life by backing segregationist private schools that were largely found in the former Confederacy but his battle on behalf of the Protestant Bob Jones University allowed Reagan to portray himself as a great fighter for religious freedoms seeing as the university –

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18 J. Nash, Taggart 2006: *Mississippi Politics: The Struggle for Power, 1976–2006*, p. 8. Coupled with a factor like incumbency advantage – itself acting like an “anchor” that lessens the impact of “short-term tides” – we see quite quickly why it took such a considerable period of time for Republican candidates to make any headway in Southern congressional elections. At the presidential level the changing tides washed away the remaining Democratic advantage that had been decreasing for at least two decades when Goldwater and Nixon ran in the 1960s. Local Democratic candidates were able to insulate themselves quite well from national politics though, as the party and its candidates used their reservoir of power and incumbency advantage to good effect for another twenty odd years. For the description of incumbency advantage as the aforementioned anchor see Petrocik, Desposato 2004: “Incumbency and Short-Term Influences on Voters.” *Political Research Quarterly* 57(3), pp. 363–373, here p. 364.

19 For an apology for those practices cf. Bob Jones University 2014: *Statement about Race at BJU*. In 2000, then president of the university Bob Jones III apologized on television for the university’s policy of not admitting black students until 1971 while also announcing lifting the institution’s ban on interracial dating on the same program.

and many other private educational institutions with similar policies – argued its discriminatory rules were based on scripture.<sup>20</sup> This fusion of the different strains of conservatism was to become the underlying foundation for today’s Republican Party and an ingenious way of drawing support from all sorts of conservative groups who had hitherto often pursued different agendas. For Joseph Lowndes the former actor and 40<sup>th</sup> president was able to “seamlessly combine conservatism, racism, and antigovernment populism in a majoritarian discourse,”<sup>21</sup> making Reagan quite possibly *the* central figure in the establishment of an electoral alliance between fiscal, social, and racial conservatives. At the same time, the three R’s all continue to exert significant influence on today’s GOP – more often than not as will be illustrated in the second part of the work in front of you, this influence tends to be detrimental in a nation that is becoming more secular, less white, and less supportive of Reaganomics and its small government, supply-side policies.

Part I of this book will therefore assess past developments that have made the Republican Party the *southernized* and *evangelized* political organization that it is today. The theoretical as well as historical basis for understanding how and why GOP came to be the party of the white Southerner through employing and exploiting the divisive matter of race in a variety of different guises will be assessed and described in chapter I.1. This course of action has had far-reaching repercussions as to this very day white Southerners continue to be the arguably most racially conservative segment of the American electorate, harboring significantly more negative views towards minorities in general and African Americans in particular than their white counterparts in the rest of the nation possess (see in particular chapter I.1.5). To further clarify and understand these traits and why the GOP has been able to use the continued *Southern exceptionalism* on racial matters to its advantage, one has to look at the theoretical basis behind modern day racial sentiments both south of the Mason-Dixon Line and beyond. This entails assessing the concepts of *racial resentment*, the *white backlash hypothesis*,<sup>22</sup> as well as the *Southern Strategy* that sought to take advantage of both. Chapter I.1.1 will itself focus on and explain the concept of *racial resentment*, a phenomenon sometimes also referred to as modern or symbolic racism. As its latter names indicate, it differs from its old fashioned counterpart. While old fashioned racism has at its center the belief that African Americans are inherently inferior, *modern racism* or *racial resentment* is rooted in the notion that certain ethnic groups often do not share the work ethic found among white

20 For the interplay between Southern evangelical Protestantism and institutionalized racism and segregation see the introduction to chapter I.2.

21 Lowndes 2008: *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*, p. 160.

22 Also referred to as the “racial threat” or “group threat” theory.

segments of the population. Opting for a life on welfare instead, these minorities are seen to violate basic American norms and values through their reliance on the government – a sentiment which illustrates how *racial resentment* represents a cocktail of broader conservative views, nativist positions about what constitutes “Americanness,” and racial prejudice. Understanding how racial resentment is primed in a society that has come to widely accept the *norm of racial equality*<sup>23</sup> is key to understanding how the Republican Party managed to slowly but surely conquer the South while also providing deeper insights into why today’s GOP has such a difficult time winning substantial shares of different minority groups. As will be illustrated in chapter I.1.4, it is a strategy that was to a certain extent perfected by the late Alabama governor George Wallace who carefully sought to ensure that his opposition to equal and civil rights was projected not through racist imagery but instead through a carefully crafted rhetoric that intended to portray civil rights legislation as un-American and on top of that as socialist – an approach copied and refined in particular by both Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. As we will see time and again in this book, such an approach of carefully priming racial resentment without ever explicitly mentioning skin color has become deeply embedded in contemporary Republican rhetoric on the campaign trail and beyond. This manner of framing political issues allows candidates and elected officials to use the continued animosity some white Americans harbor towards other ethnicities and races to their own advantage while being able to brush aside any accusations of playing the race card, a key ability in a nation in which the aforementioned norm of racial equality rules supreme.

Chapters I.1.2 and I.1.3 will then delve into the question how exactly racial animus towards African Americans aided and abetted Republican growth in the former Confederacy as the local Democratic Party became increasingly reliant on black voters and how the GOP sought to take advantage of both *racial resentment* and the evolving *white backlash* against the “darkening” of the Democratic Party in the South through its *Southern Strategy*. After having been the most Democratic region in the nation for almost a century, the national Democratic shift on civil rights significantly altered Southern party dynamics. Over time, white Southerners began to feel like strangers in their own home as African Americans began to expand their role and size in the ranks of the region’s Democratic Party, leading to an electoral environment in which Democratic politicians could ill-afford to run on a racially conservative ticket. The resolutely

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23 This norm represents the rejection of old fashioned racism that sees different races as inherently unequal. The norm of racial equality forces politicians to play the race card in a far subtler manner seeing as overt racial appeals are rejected by even some of the most racially conservative segments of society. Cf. Mendelberg 2001: *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*, pp. 67 ff.

liberal views of those African-American voters and activists on matters pertaining to race and economics meant that Republican partisan affiliation began to become a progressively more appealing prospect for even the staunchest Democratic white Southerner with a (racially) conservative ideological outlook. The Republican Party on its part added to this incentive through an electoral strategy that recognized this group of disaffected conservative voters could represent the foundations of Republican political dominance in both the region as well as the wider nation for decades to come.

The ubiquity of race in the South and the continued framing of policy matters in a racial context both within and outside the region have led to a spillover of race into a host of other issue areas which has made it increasingly difficult to disentangle race and outwardly non-racial questions. “[S]eemingly race-neutral conservatism may itself have become partially racialized,”<sup>24</sup> claim Nicholas Valentino and David Sears due to decades of conservative politicians – particularly in the South with George Wallace serving as a prime example – merging racial policy matters with broader questions related to welfare and crime in particular. Chapter I.1.4 will explain how and why this conflation of race with other issues has come about, what sort of rules officials who wish to use coded rhetoric have to abide by, and what the wider consequences of this strategy have been. For Republicans, the electoral windfalls in the South thanks to this fusion standing at the very center of the *Southern Strategy* have been rather remarkable. Focusing on the continued racial cleavage in the region while presenting minorities as the primary beneficiaries of government programs has allowed the party of the relatively affluent to receive support for the slashing of welfare schemes from the very electorate which often stands to gain from the policies in question. The usage of this rhetoric has had broader, nationwide implications as well though. After decades of making the point that liberal administrations in Washington, D.C. are primarily interested in funding entitlement programs for its core constituency of minority voters, not just the most racially conservative whites see taxes no longer as merely a necessary evil but rather as an extensive liberal ploy to redistribute white wealth to non-whites, a worldview integral to the Tea Party’s ideology on the size of government and its spending habits. Driven by angst and anger over the supposed preferential treatment of minorities, today’s Republican base is more opposed to an activist government than ever before, causing the American political system to lurch from one budgetary crisis to the next – developments than can be traced back to both Republican attempts to win the South and the eventual success of this strategy.

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24 Valentino, Sears 2005: “Old Times There Are Not Forgotten: Race and Partisan Realignment in the Contemporary South.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3), pp. 672–688, here p. 685.

To this very day, white Southerners are notably more racially conservative than their Caucasian counterparts outside the region. Chapter I.1.5 will address these traits in more detail and showcase how the racial cleavage continues to remain the dominant fault line in contemporary Southern politics as illustrated by a 2000 referendum in Alabama on the removal of an interracial marriage ban from the state's constitution. This continued existence of a *Southern Exceptionalism* on the divisive racial topic has far-reaching consequences as we will see throughout the second part of this book which addresses the extent of the GOP's *Southernization* as well as the demographic changes that will play a key role in how future majorities are fashioned in America's political system. The Republican reliance on a region that stands out for its racially resentful whites is a development that will hamper Republican efforts of improving its vote share among minorities, a group that has increased its electoral clout to a remarkable extent in recent years and is set to expand it even further. The chapter will moreover also provide an initial assessment of the role race played in the Republican conquest of the South, a conclusion to be elaborated upon in subsequent chapters that reveal the racially divisive legacy of both the Christian Right and Ronald Reagan.

The white South is not just known for its racial but also for its religious conservatism. The region provided the foundations for the establishment of the (New) Christian Right in the 1970s and subsequently proved to be fertile ground for the movement and the various organizations associated with it. Chapter I.2.1 will explore the strong links between the South and the Christian Right, in the process demonstrating the strong religiousness of the region to this very day. As was the case during the 1960s and '70s when the nascent Christian Right began its first forays into the world of politics, the South is still the unquestionable center of white evangelical Protestantism, a group whose adherents have been described as the "principal target audience"<sup>25</sup> of the Christian Right. While the movement is home to other denominations as well, white Evangelicalism (being the overwhelming religious denomination of the South) has provided it with its religious and ideological core tenets. The ties between the white South and the Christian Right have therefore been profound from the very moment the latter was born.

Republican politicians almost immediately realized that appealing to the Christian Right was going to almost inevitably lead to gains among the white Southerners they coveted as well. Chapter I.2.2 will explain this rationale behind the Republican embrace of the Christian Right in more detail and illustrate how the GOP quickly adopted the positions of the latter on key "value voter" issues such as abortion or questions concerning the role of women in society. Over the

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25 Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 55.



course of a mere few years, Republican platforms began to reflect the party's shifting positions on these matters which ultimately put it on course towards becoming the *evangelized* political organization it is today. This alliance would also prove to be a substantial pillar in the GOP's conquest of the South as it provided the party with an inroad into the vast group of Southern white evangelical Protestants who increasingly saw Republicans as their natural home as the alliance between the Christian Right and the GOP grew ever closer. The effect this galvanization of the region's white evangelical population had on the realignment of the former Confederacy beyond the presidential level is difficult to overstate. The political marriage between the Republican Party and Southern Evangelicals "transformed Republican candidates in the South from the recipients of occasional protest votes into competitive candidates"<sup>26</sup> as the hitherto weak GOP state parties in the region saw a momentous influx of white evangelical activists, donors, and voters throughout the 1980s, setting the stage for the Republican domination of the congressional South in the 1990s and beyond.

Following this we will turn our attention to Ronald Reagan, a towering political figure who combined the two strains of racial and religious conservatism described in chapters I.1 and I.2 unlike any other politician before or since. His appeals to both racial and social conservatives played a pivotal role in helping Southern Republicans establish a foothold beyond the presidential level in a region that had remained largely Democratic at the state and substate level even into the late 1980s. While Reagan most certainly cannot be credited with bringing about the Republican Revolution of 1994 and the culmination of the realignment of the South as the party won a majority of the Southern congressional vote for the first time since the end of Reconstruction that year, the former actor was instrumental in making Republicanism a political brand that was increasingly seen by white Southerners as reflecting their most deeply held values. This was achieved through continued and convincing appeals to both their racial and religious preferences by Reagan. Through his rhetoric and – not infrequently to a lesser extent – policies, the 40<sup>th</sup> president therefore laid the foundations for today's *southernized* and *evangelized* Republican Party which is finding it increasingly difficult to appeal to the non-white and secular elements of society. Despite his overtures to Christian conservatives, Reagan ultimately delivered little in terms of tangible legislation, leading Steven Miller to arrive at the apt conclusion that "Reagan was more an evangelical's president than an evangelical president."<sup>27</sup> This role of making white evangelical Protestants feel that their views and values were important to the person sitting in the Oval Office

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26 Nesmith 1994: *The New Republican Coalition: The Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals*, p. 97.

27 S. Miller 2014: *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years*, p. 64.

nonetheless sufficed in establishing bonds between the Republican Party and Christian conservatives that have not only endured into the twenty-first century but were strengthened and expanded in the years following Reagan's time in office.

Part II of the book will present the results and repercussions of the historical developments described throughout part I. These changes in Republican policies and electoral strategies have made the party ever more reliant on the South in both congressional (chapter II.1.1) and presidential elections (II.1.3). As the region has increased its weight in a momentous manner within the Republican congressional conferences, the party in Washington, D.C. has adopted a distinctly Southern approach to economic matters (particularly related to welfare and the general size of government) and social questions which, as we will see in the demographics section of chapter II.4, limits the Republican appeal to an increasingly narrow segment of the electorate. The chapter will also reveal – based on a variety of data gauging the ideological lean of U.S. House Representatives and recent House roll call votes – how Southern Republicans stand out for their brand of conservatism even within the GOP House Conference as well as when compared to non-Southern Republicans who hail from similarly partisan Republican districts (chapter II.1.2). Moreover, an assessment of the 2012 Republican primaries will illustrate the extent to which today's Southern and deeply religious GOP base makes it more difficult for candidates to appeal to the party's core constituencies without simultaneously alienating significant parts of the general electorate (chapter II.1.3), a trend that will in all likelihood only become more prominent in future election cycles.

A central consequence of these trends has been the establishment of a political party system defined by clear ideological boundaries that are crossed on fewer and fewer occasions. The decades' long defection of white Southerners from the Democratic into the Republican camp has in its process created two parties that are ideologically cohesive and provide little room for bipartisan compromise across a broad range of issue areas. Chapter II.1.4 will explore how the influx of Southerners into the GOP both at the mass and elite level has created an asymmetrical polarization in America's party system, the reasons behind which can first and foremost be found within the Republican Party. The chapter will showcase the consequences of these developments inherently linked to the *Southernization* of the GOP and what they will mean for the establishment of possible future Republican majorities as voters find it increasingly hard to cross the partisan divide themselves.

In light of the central role religion played in the Republican conquest of the South, it does not come as a surprise that *Evangelicalization* and *Southernization* are essentially two sides of the same coin. Chapter II.2 will therefore assess the former in more detail, looking at the extent to which white Evangel-

icals play a central role in today's Republican alliance. The data undoubtedly indicates that this group of voters has become the backbone the Republican Party, as chapter II.2.1 illustrates by having a closer look at the Republican electorate in recent elections and the extent to which Christian conservatives play a role in the national Republican Party. Even more important than the national level are the states though where governments possess the tools to determine and enact a significant share of socio-cultural policies. Unsurprisingly then, Christian conservatives have focused a lot of their attention and work on shaping GOP state parties in environments that are far less hostile than the one they tend to encounter in the nation's capital. Chapter II.2.2 will assess how the Christian Right has been able to shape Republican state parties – particularly in the South – and use its newfound clout to pass legislation pertaining to matters standing at the very center of Christian conservative concerns (such as abortion) in recent years, in the process providing the national party with an image of the incessant culture warrior that is increasingly difficult to shake.

Today's Republican Party is not just known for its social conservative credentials but also for its hatred for compromise, a trait that severely harms the party's appeal among many moderate voters. Chapter II.2.3 will make the case that the influx of Evangelicals lies at the root of this phenomenon. The Christian Right's core issues (such as abortion and the general moral decline of America) have undoubtedly never lent itself to compromise, providing the movement from its very inception with an "all or nothing"-attitude towards politics. As the clout of white Evangelicals within the party has grown and as a variety of policy issues have come to be increasingly seen within the framework of a broader culture war, the uncompromising attitude of the Christian Right and its adherents has become the standard manner of approaching policies within the Republican Party – a development that is doing increasing damage to the party's image among many less ideological voters.

Chapters II.2.4 and II.2.5 will provide a detailed assessment of the white Evangelical position on two key policy areas (economics and gay rights) while illustrating the gap that exists between this particular group and the wider public on both matters. Particularly as we move on to chapter II.4 and the demographic changes the country is undergoing, it will become abundantly clear that the conservative views of white Evangelicals represent a major impediment to conquering young and minority voters who have a far more favorable view towards the concept of an activist government that protects the less affluent and sexual minorities. Ultimately, what all of the chapters pertaining to the *Evangelicalization* of the GOP will demonstrate is that today's Republican Party is heavily influenced by Christian conservatives and the ideology that guides them. In light of the fact that America's youngest generation is the least religious one,

these facts provide a central pillar of the argument that the wider nation has been lost through the conquest of the South.

No assessment of today's GOP and its future electoral chances would be complete without having a closer look at the movement that has been a cornerstone of its ideological foundations in recent years: the Tea Party. The movement is of particular interest in the context of this book because it represents the culmination of the trends that will be described in chapters I.1 through I.3 with its adherents subscribing to a racial and religious conservatism and a vehement anti-statism which undoubtedly have their roots in the South. These chapters will clearly demonstrate how the Tea Party stands in the tradition of both George Wallace and the Christian Right, two key ideological influences on the GOP in recent decades. Far from being a new movement, the Tea Party therefore represents the "natural outgrowth of the growing size and conservatism of the activist base of the Republican Party during the preceding decades"<sup>28</sup> – an activist base that has become so staunchly conservative precisely because of the Republican attempts to win the South and their ultimate success.

Whether it is the movement's conservatism (economic, racial, and social [chapter II.3.1]) or its views on compromise (chapter II.3.3) that also stand in the tradition of leading figures of the religious right, the verdict that the Tea Party is the *consequence* rather than the *cause* of the rightward shift of the Republican Party stands on a sound footing. Precisely because the South and Christian conservatives stand out for their views on socio-cultural as well as to a lesser extent economic conservative matters, so does the Tea Party. In combination with the movement's high levels of activism (chapter II.3.2) this presents a major challenge for the Republican Party as it looks towards the future and has to contend with an electorate whose own ideological preferences possess little overlap with those of the Tea Party. Chapter II.3.4 will therefore try to assess to what extent the Tea Party represents an asset and a burden – a conclusion that also helps us understand how the South helps and hurts the Republican Party.

As the title suggests, this work will not just delve into the past but instead also assess – as best as possible in a political environment that bestows a limited shelf life on any forecast – how the future of the Republican Party has been affected by

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28 Abramowitz 2011: "Partisan Polarization and the Rise of the Tea Party Movement." *Prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Seattle, Washington, September 1–4*, pp. 14–15. In the same text, Abramowitz expands upon this central finding. In his view, "the Tea Party movement can best be understood as a product of the increasing conservatism of the Republican Party's activist base over the past several decades. While only a small fraction of this base has actually participated in Tea Party protests, the expansion of the activist conservative base of the Republican Party has produced a large cadre of politically engaged sympathizers from which such participants can be recruited." *Ibid.*, p. 2.

its past decisions and the various repercussions that those actions entailed. America's basic demographic composition has always undergone momentous changes as a prime destination for immigrants from all corners of the globe, a fact that will continue to hold true in future decades as well (the specific details of which will be described in chapter II.4.1). By the middle of this century the country will in all likelihood have become a majority-minority nation, meaning that non-Hispanic whites will for the first time find themselves in the minority. Whether or not Republican supporters and activists ought to have plenty of sleepless nights ahead due to their party's position as the party of the white electorate will be addressed throughout chapter II.4. Seeing as Hispanics hold the key to future majorities, special emphasis will be put on this demographic group and their views and values. After all this sole minority group already was responsible for over 55 percent of the United States' population growth between 2000 and 2010 despite only constituting 16 percent of America's total population at the end of that period.<sup>29</sup> Ronald Reagan once famously quipped that Hispanics were Republicans, "they just don't know it yet."<sup>30</sup> This assertion will be put to the test by assessing Hispanic positions on a variety of key issues, ranging from economics to social matters (chapter II.4.2). Suffice it to say, the conclusions do not lend much support to Reagan's rather optimistic outlook.

Building on this assessment we will also try to find a silver lining for the GOP though. Contrary to claims made by Samuel Huntington for example, Hispanics do not stand out significantly when compared to previous large immigrant groups and have been shown to adopt quintessentially American "small government" values the more integrated into U.S. society they become – just as has been the case with many other communities who came to the country's shores before them. Chapter II.4.3 will thus look at what the future Hispanic community might look like in terms of its ideological preferences. The following chapter assesses some of the demographic changes key battleground states in the United States have undergone; states such as Virginia or Colorado that were up until recently relatively safe Republican territories. Although the influx of Hispanics has only had a limited bearing on their partisan shifts, changes in the demographic composition of these states illustrate the uphill battle Republicans will find themselves in in future years. Looking ahead, the state of Texas warrants a closer inspection due to its size, its current status as a Republican stronghold, and its burgeoning Hispanic community. Losing Texas to the Democratic camp would make it all but impossible for a Republican candidate to come out on top

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29 Cf. Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert 2011: "The Hispanic Population: 2010–2010 Census Briefs." *United States Census Bureau*, May, p. 6.

30 Quoted in: Falcón 2012: "A Rise in Latino Conservatism?" *National Institute for Latino Policy*, July 6.

in presidential elections. Whether or not continued Hispanic population growth might just spell the end of Republican dominance in the Lone Star state will therefore be assessed as well.

Of course Hispanics do not constitute the only significant segment of what one could broadly call the “electorate of the future.” Chapter II.4.5 will explain the views and values of today’s younger voters (who of course also are the most ethnic diverse part of the voting public). Just as is the case with Hispanics, the *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the GOP has put the party at odds with this demographic group – a group more secular (see chapter II.4.6), more socially liberal, and also more open to the notion of an activist government than its generational predecessors. Chapter II.4.7 will assess a variety of additional changes – even within the white electorate (such as an increasing share of college educated whites) – that present the Republican Party with future challenges. Chapter II.4.8 addresses one of the demographic developments that could actually favor the Republican Party: the “graying” of the United States. At least in the short term, having become the party of choice for white American seniors is not necessarily a worrying trend considering the turnout record at the ballot box of this particular demographic.

The book will conclude with a final assessment of the GOP’s current state that has been shaped by the party’s *Southernization* and the strategy that brought about this remarkable realignment of the former Confederacy. Ultimately, it appears that a course correction is necessary if the Republican Party wishes to obtain national majorities beyond the immediate future. In light of the fact that today’s Republican Party is the product of a process that has been transpiring for the past half a century, any sort of significant reversals will in all likelihood also take years to materialize.

Political developments in the United States that transpired towards the tail end of the work on this book of course throw up the question to what extent broad claims like the ones made here are valid – not just because of Donald Trump’s surprising ascent. This is especially true given how forecasts pertaining to the future of both parties have not infrequently oscillated between two extremes. The 2002 and 2004 elections were cited as evidence that Republicans had found the holy grail of electioneering as the party retained the presidency while expanding their majorities in Congress on both occasions, giving the GOP unified federal government control. Incorporating white Evangelicals into the Republican fold appeared to have given the party a group of devoted and staunchly conservative voters that could provide it with majorities in future years regardless of the changing political tides of the day. 2006 and 2008 on the other hand appeared to prove that John Judis and Ruy Teixeira’s “emerging Democratic majority” had indeed emerged as the first black president of the nation could work with a Democratic supermajority in the Senate and a 78 seat

majority in the House. Two years into his first term, Republicans responded with historic gains in the House as conservative outrage over supposed government overreached fueled a new right-wing populist movement that was not infrequently portrayed as a possible new third force in U.S. politics if it did not succeed in taking over the GOP – as mentioned earlier, a depiction that clearly misunderstands the Tea Party’s roots. By 2012, the Tea Party’s meteoric rise appeared to have fizzled out as Barack Obama was re-elected comfortably. Two years later, Republicans regained control over the Senate while capturing an historic majority in the House. There undoubtedly are advantages to the *Southernization* of the party that were demonstrated quite vividly by the 2014 congressional races and will be discussed in chapter II.1 as well. The party that was once hated across the South controlled 19 of the 22 senate seats in the former Confederacy after said election, providing the party with a comfortable majority despite controlling only around 45 percent of all senate seats outside the region. A similar story has transpired in the House where victories in almost three quarters of all Southern congressional districts in 2014 meant that wins in around half of all non-Southern districts gave the GOP its highest number of U.S. House representatives since the late 1920s. Snapshots of contemporary majorities should not deflect attention away from the broader evolution and trends of the American party system. Ultimately, these victories are built upon fleeting foundations that will not necessarily crumble away over the coming years and decades but will lose enough of their strength to make it far harder to replicate these results.

To summarize, these are the developments and facts that will be explained in a detailed fashion in the second part of this book, forming the basis for understanding the extent to which the Republican *Southern Strategy* has paid off in the region while costing it significant support in the rest of the nation:

- The Republican Party is more reliant on the South for its electoral fortunes than at any point in the party’s history. Southern Republicans in the halls of Congress – just like their non-elected compatriots – stand out for their extreme conservatism on economic and social issues. While the South provides the party with a solid base from which it is able to obtain majorities in the House of Representatives, the exceptional conservatism of the region has alienated moderate and sometimes even conservative voters in the rest of the nation making it far more difficult to forge the broader majorities necessary to take back the White House.
- As a result of its alliance with the Christian Right and the steady influx of Southerners into the party and its congressional ranks, the Republican Party is more *evangelized* than ever before; a perilous development in a nation that is increasingly moving away from religiosity.

- The anti-statist, racially conservative Tea Party movement represents the culmination of the decades long Southernization of the party. The populist assortment therefore is not the *cause* of the party's rightward shift but rather a *consequence* of it, having been in the making for almost half a century. As a socially conservative movement with strong racially resentful tendencies it is the ideological heir to Wallace rather than Goldwater.
- The continued focus on white voters and the racially charged language often employed by Republicans in attempts to gain the support of their activist base (a direct consequence of the party's *Southern Strategy*) has wrecked the party's chances among African Americans and to a lesser extent Hispanics as well. The strong opposition to an activist federal government that has been a defining trait of Southern conservatism will also make it difficult to find inroads into the burgeoning Hispanic community which prefers a government that lends a helping hand. As the United States moves towards becoming a *majority-minority* nation, the GOP's dependence on the South will make it increasingly difficult to win presidential elections in particular, seeing as the rather dismal turnout of certain minority groups is less pronounced in these settings.
- In the mid to long-term the Republican Party will only be able to achieve nationwide success (not limited to but particularly true concerning presidential elections) if it considerably moderates its position on a variety of issues, an endeavor made extremely difficult by the Southern base and its politicians whose success at home provides them with little impetus for a course correction.

Last but not least is the question of terminology. There are numerous definitions for what constitutes *the South*. The most commonly used one that has been adopted in this book as well is a South made up of the eleven states that seceded from the union in 1860 and '61 to form the *Confederacy*. An extended South sometimes also includes Kentucky, which initially remained neutral during the Civil War, as well as Oklahoma which had not yet gained statehood but was nonetheless claimed by the Confederacy. The U.S. Census Bureau on its part uses an even more extensive definition of the South that includes Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. along with the states just mentioned. If and when these competing definitions are used *instead* of the one that pertains only to the eleven original states of the Confederacy, it will be pointed out to the reader. Whenever a reference is made to the *Deep South*, the five states of - from west to east - Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina are meant. This region of the South is home to both the largest black population shares as well as the most conservative whites. Referring to the parts of this region that contained an African-American majority, V.O. Key, Jr. noted that



“[i]n these areas a real problem of politics, broadly considered, is the maintenance of control by a white minority.”<sup>31</sup> The Deep South therefore is the region where the former party of white supremacy clung onto power for the longest period of time while the new party of the white man is now stronger in the *Deep* than in the *Peripheral* South (see chapter I.1.2).

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31 Key, Jr. 1949, p. 5.

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## **Part I: The conquest of the South**



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## 1.1 “Sooner or later the trail of inquiry leads to the Negro.” – The centrality of race in Southern politics and its Republican realignment

It is difficult if not impossible to overstate the role race has played over the course of Southern history along with its politics. Race was the central issue of the Civil War. After the conflict it offered Democrats the chance of one-party dominance through becoming synonymous with white supremacy in the region. Race stood at the center of the conflict that would prove to be the catalyst for realignment. And race has ever since been used to great success by Republicans in their quest to build a Southern stronghold that has stood at the center of their attempts to fashion national majorities both in presidential as well as now congressional elections. In short – to quote arguably the most experienced scholars on the topic, Earl and Merle Black – “[t]he central political cleavage, as ancient as the South itself, involves race.”<sup>32</sup>

To be sure, there are a number of scholars who dismiss this theoretical approach of placing racial matters at the core of the South and its realignment as an antiquated one, stuck in the stereotypes of the ante- and postbellum South. They conclude that Southern politics have become nationalized, leading to a replication of the nation’s dominant ideological and partisan cleavages, namely economics, in the region. As the South has become more affluent, the theory argues, its white inhabitants have simply begun to vote according to their own economic interests that were and are being represented by the party of small government and low taxes. In this environment racial concerns play at best a secondary role.<sup>33</sup> The facts we will encounter over the coming pages make it hard

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32 Black, Black 2002, p. 4.

33 See for example Lublin 2004: *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change*, pp. 134–171, Brewer, Stonecash 2001: “Class, Race Issues, and Declining White Support for the Democratic Party in the South.” *Political Behavior* 23(2), pp. 131–155 and Shafer, Johnston 2001: “The Transformation of Southern Politics Revisited: The House of Representatives as a Window.” *British Journal of Political Science* 31(4), pp. 601–625. Brewer and Stonecash for example find little to no evidence that support for the Democratic Party in the low income bracket of Southern whites has dropped – contrary to what one might expect if race was the dominant cleavage given that these low income whites in particular stand to lose the most from an empowered black minority with new job opportunities and political

to support such a theory though. While rising white wealth in the South most certainly aided and abetted Republican realignment attempts, race undoubtedly offered the most promising Republican strategy for making inroads into the region's Democratic white electorate – particularly when interwoven with economic rhetoric pertaining to the welfare state (in the minds of many whites in the region perceived to primarily benefit blacks) as numerous arch-segregationists such as George Wallace would attest to. Moreover, this conflation of race and economics has made it “a fool's errand [...] to decipher just how many parts a Republican vote is tied to economics and how many parts a Republican vote is tied to race.”<sup>34</sup> Any theory placing economics at the center of the South's realignment will therefore inevitably face a difficult if not impossible task of trying to disentangle race and economics. As will also become abundantly clear over the coming pages, one can contend with a large degree of certainty that race not only played a central role in Republican gains in the South but continues to figure much more prominently in the South today than it does in the rest of the nation, a feature owed to the persistently disproportionately high levels of racial conservatism found among the region's white population. Playing to white fears about the appropriation of their political and economic status by the region's black minority paid off in the 1960s and continues to offer a promising campaign strategy – as long as certain important rules about the implicit nature of such racial appeals are adhered to.

These following chapters on race will provide the theoretical basis to explain why and how the Republican Party was able to conquer the South. The path chosen by the Southern Republicans of yesteryear and its remarkable dividends will allow us to gain a better understanding of why Republicans both in the South

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clout considering that these two groups stand in direct competition with one another. Instead their data illustrates that the biggest decreases in Democratic support in both presidential and House elections could be found among white voters in the top third income group. Of course as we will see in this book, attempting to disentangle economics from race has become quite a difficult task after decades of linking the two in the South. Shafer and Johnston's data reveals similar patterns, leading the authors to also arrive at the conclusion that the economic development of the South created a “changing politics of economic interest” (p. 623) that drove the partisan realignment of the region. Critics of this approach, such as J. Morgan Kousser, point out though that the South saw substantial economic growth before the civil rights battles of the early 1960s without Republicans making substantial gains at the local political level. It was not until the national Democratic Party threw its weight behind the civil rights movement that Republicans were able to make significant inroads into the region's white electorate at the presidential level – and it was not until the 1990s (when even Shafer and Johnston admit that race apparently played a role as “a race effect finally augmented the underlying economic dynamic” [p. 616]) that Southerners overwhelmingly voted Republican at the congressional level as well. Cf. Kousser 2010: “The Immutability of Categories and the Reshaping of Southern Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, pp. 365–383, here pp. 375–376.

34 McKee 2010, pp. 201–202.

and the rest of the nation continue to frequently frame issues in a manner that can be regarded as attempting to exploit racial polarization and animus. The dominance of the racial cleavage in the South most certainly provided Republican candidates with an incentive to stoke the flames of racial conflict and resentment, knowing that as representatives of the party of the wealthy they would fare worse if a class cleavage superseded the racial one in a region that in many places continues to be far poorer than the wider nation to this day. As Robert Huckfeldt and Carol Weitzel Kohfeld note, “[s]outhern conservatives could win a political conflict structured by matters of race, but they were destined to lose a conflict structured around class.”<sup>35</sup> “Race” and its centrality therefore gave Republicans a blueprint for making inroads into the region’s electorate through using the same kind of rhetoric and electoral strategies employed by hardened segregationists like the aforementioned George Wallace. This strategy of appealing to the white South has come at a price though. Minority voters are unsurprisingly repelled by language that seeks to portray them in a less than favorable light. After decades of using this strategy it has become a central tenet and staple of Republican campaigns of the twenty-first century though, as we will see throughout the second part of this book as well. Attempts to win the South have therefore had the momentous side-effect of losing minority voters whose role in determining the outcome of future elections will only increase as the nation is becoming less white with each passing day.

The reasons for why race played and continues to play such a central role in Southern politics are numerous, yet at its most basic level are rooted in the region’s historic foundations. Daniel J. Elazar for example contended that the distinctive Southern conservatism and strict opposition to federal government intervention on behalf of the have-nots was founded upon the plantation based economy of the pre-Civil War South, a social order established with strict divisions between those who ruled and those who were ruled. This rigid state of affairs encouraged and nurtured values that sought to protect the established political order while disapproving of any government programs that did not serve the interests of the political, economic, and social elites.<sup>36</sup> In his intriguing book on the roots of the separate “nations” that can be found across North America, journalist and historian Colin Woodard traces Southern exceptionalism and the dominance of race in the region’s political discourse back to the unique background and evolution of the South within the ethnic patchwork that is America. While other parts of pre-revolutionary America were “societies with slaves” the (Deep) South was from its very outset a “slave soci-

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35 Cf. Huckfeldt, Kohfeld 1989: *Race and the Decline of Class in American Politics*, p. 106.

36 Cf. Breaux, Shaffer 2012: “Southern Political Attitudes.” In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*, pp. 235–254, here p. 235.

ety.<sup>37</sup> The underlying reasons for this important distinction can be found in the manner in which these southern areas of the nascent colony were settled. As wealthy white slave owners from the island of Barbados began to run out of land in the 1660s, they were looking to expand into other British-controlled places in the region: Caribbean islands like Jamaica and the still largely non-colonized parts of today's American South. As they made the leap to the American mainland, they brought with them the customs and rules of their Caribbean homeland, the "most horrifying society in the English-speaking world [...], a place notorious even then for its inhumanity."<sup>38</sup> After the initial settlement of the Deep South during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, whites were not infrequently greatly outnumbered by their slaves in a number of regions. Even after nearly two centuries of white in-migration, slaves comprised 3.5 million of the South's population at the time of the Civil War compared to a white population of 5.5 million.<sup>39</sup> Slaves made up thirty percent or more of the population in nine of the region's eleven states in 1860 while both South Carolina and Mississippi even had a majority slave population as the country was about to be plunged into the Civil War.<sup>40</sup> White Southerners therefore had a vested interest in fighting the empowerment of their black opposites and fought any and all attempts at slave emancipation and subsequent black enfranchisement accordingly.<sup>41</sup>

This centrality of race along with the popular framing of politics as a struggle between the two races by white Southerners managed to survive into the twentieth and, in a more subdued and implicit manner, twenty-first centuries. A great variety of scholars from different academic fields have noted the extent to which the racial cleavage has traditionally superseded all other ones in the region. In 1942, political scientist Marian D. Irish observed that "[t]he elementary determinant in [Southern politics] is an intense negro phobia which has scarcely abated since Reconstruction."<sup>42</sup> No scholar analyzed the South of that era in a more meticulous manner though than V.O. Key, Jr. Assessing the South in his 1949 landmark work *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Key boiled down Southern political discourse to the simple yet accurate conclusion that "[i]n its grand outlines the politics of the South revolves around the position of the

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37 Woodard 2011: *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*, p. 87.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

39 Cf. Woodworth 2000: *Cultures in Conflict – The American Civil War*, p. 30.

40 Cf. Razaghian 2004: "Financing the Civil War: The Confederacy's Financial Strategy." *Yale ICF Working Paper No. 04–45*, December, p. 41.

41 Cf. Woodard 2011, pp. 87–91.

42 Irish 1942: "The Southern One-Party System and National Politics." *The Journal of Politics* 4(1), pp. 80–94, here p. 80.

Negro.”<sup>43</sup> Even when Southern politics was “at times interpreted as a politics of cotton, as a politics of free trade, as a politics of agrarian poverty, or as a politics of planter and plutocrat,” Key contended that “such interpretations [had] a superficial validity” because “[w]hatever phase of the southern political process one seeks to understand, sooner or later the trail of inquiry leads to the negro.”<sup>44</sup> Race – with everything it entailed in the public and political spheres – and conservatism were thus inherently intertwined in the former Confederacy as Key’s figures showed “that the backbone of southern conservatism may be found in those areas with high concentrations of Negro population”<sup>45</sup> where whites stood to lose the most from black enfranchisement. In his 1969 book on the “emerging Republican majority,” political strategist Kevin Phillips also noted the immense opportunity that had been handed to the GOP by the Democratic embrace of civil rights. “The Negro socioeconomic revolution,” Phillips explained as he looked back at the partisan developments of the preceding decade in the South, “gave conservatism a degree of access to Southern poor white support which it had not enjoyed since the somewhat comparable Reconstruction era.”<sup>46</sup> Time has done little to invalidate Key’s or Phillips’ claims and findings. Even more than 30 years after the passage of the 1964 civil rights act, James Glaser for example concluded in his 1996 look at the relationship between race and Southern politics that “[r]ace is always a factor in southern congressional campaigns,”<sup>47</sup> while Seth McKee contends that to this very day “[r]ace remains the deepest fault line in southern politics.”<sup>48</sup> Robert C. Smith takes this intricate association even a step further, going as far as to argue that “southern conservatism [...] has racism at its core. [...] Its militant laissez-faire capitalism, its emphasis on the soil, limited government, states [sic] rights [...] tradition, and all the rest are little more than reactions to modernity and to antiracist movements.”<sup>49</sup> On their part, scholars Nicholas Valentino and David Sears, who have written extensively about the continued impact of race not just on Southern but also on national politics, pinpoint four reasons why race above

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43 Key, Jr. 1949, p. 5.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., p. 43. In this particular instance Key was referring to the voting patterns in the state of Alabama. Cf. also Irish 1942, p. 80. She rightfully notes that “[i]n those states where the negro constitutes from one-fourth to one-half of the population no issue seems more important than [sic] the exclusion of negroes from public affairs.”

46 Phillips 2015 [1969]: *The Emerging Republican Majority*, p. 226.

47 Glaser 1996: *Race, Campaign Politics, & the Realignment in the South*, p. 43.

48 McKee 2012: “Demanding Deliverance in Dixie: Race, the Civil Rights Movement, and Southern Politics.” In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*, pp. 153–178, here p. 176.

49 Smith 2010: *Conservatism and Racism, and Why in America They Are the Same*, p. 39.



everything else (such as economic factors) fed the realignment of the white South in the second half of the twentieth century:<sup>50</sup>

- 1) Race has been a dominant feature of Southern politics from its very beginning, causing the South to adopt positions that elicited severe opposition in many other parts of the nation on numerous key occasions in American history.
- 2) Realignment was kick started by the issue of race, from the civil rights struggle to the Democratic embrace of it and its Republican rejection. Or, as Kevin Phillips observed when this decade of momentous upheaval drew to a close, “[t]he Negro problem [...] is the principal cause of the breakup of the New Deal coalition.”<sup>51</sup>
- 3) Race continues to be an issue that “generate[s] considerable political heat,”<sup>52</sup> being implicitly linked to a variety of policy areas such as crime, welfare, or the general size of government – a matter that will be discussed in more detail in chapter I.1.4 on *coded appeals*, and
- 4) Recent years have actually seen a rise in race related symbolic issues in the South, such as the question of the confederate flag flying above the South Carolina state capitol or the inclusion of confederate imagery in the Mississippi and Georgia state flags, with some politicians using these issues to galvanize white Southerners and old racial divisions once again coming to the fore over these matters.

M.V. Hood III, Quentin Kidd, and Irwin Morris also place the events surrounding the civil rights revolution at the center of the realignment of the South, with a special emphasis bestowed upon on the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. More so than other factors such as economic growth or the in-migration of non-Southerners, Hood III and his colleagues conclude that “much of the enormous political change witnessed in the South during the second half of the 20th century was triggered by a single historical event, namely the 1965 VRA.”<sup>53</sup> While other factors undoubtedly contributed to Republican growth in the region – economic growth and the emergence of a significant white middle class in the region, the changing partisan preferences of young whites, the in-migration of northerners who had stronger ties to the GOP to name but a few – it appears then

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50 Cf. Valentino, Sears 2005, pp. 673–674.

51 Phillips 2015 [1969], p. 17.

52 Valentino, Sears 2005, p. 673.

53 Hood III, Kidd, and Morris 2010: “The Reintroduction of the *Elephas Maximus* to the Southern United States: The Rise of Republican State Parties, 1960 to 2000 (Updated).” In: Kimball, Niemi, and Weisberg (eds.): *Controversies in Voting Behavior*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 359–392, here p. 374.

that the foundations upon which the realignment of the white South was built were, as the evidence would suggest, overwhelmingly race related.

### The Southern opening

Republican efforts to make inroads into the South do of course predate the post-civil rights revolution era that this book will focus on. Not dissimilar to the events that transpired in the late 1950s and early '60s, it was Democratic rather than Republican actions though that set the first foundations for the establishment of a two-party system south of the Mason-Dixon Line. In 1928, the Democratic selection of racially liberal Catholic Al Smith almost cost the party its first Deep Southern state in a presidential race since the end of Reconstruction as Smith was derided and attacked in some parts of the region as a "Negro boot-licker" and "Negro lover."<sup>54</sup> The subsequent Great Depression and New Deal programs to alleviate it would also prove to leave a lasting mark on the former Confederacy as President Roosevelt's massive accumulation of power in the nation's capital "threatened the South's ideal of states' rights and limited federal intervention."<sup>55</sup> While many working class whites in the region approved of the president's course of action, more affluent Southern conservatives, apprehensive of any programs that had the potential to upset the natural order of the region's racial environment, were not infrequently less than enthused about government measures that intended to lift the region's key source of cheap labor – African-Americans – out of poverty.<sup>56</sup> Serious Republican efforts to woo vast swathes of the white South were not undertaken until after World War II though when the national Democratic Party began to adopt an increasingly liberal position on civil rights questions.

Four years after Harry Truman had to contend with a Dixiecrat insurgency in the region, the then chairman of the Republican National Committee, Guy Gabrielson, chose a gathering of Alabama Republicans to outline his vision of the future path his party would chart in the South. Instead of providing a contrast to their Democratic and Dixiecrat opponents through espousing racially liberal sentiments that appealed to a rather narrow group of voters in the region, he proposed that fellow Republicans won over white Southerners whose ties to their Democratic home were increasingly strained by stressing the similarities be-

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54 That state was Alabama which Smith carried with a margin of just 2.8 points. For quotes concerning the candidate cf. Feldman 2013: *The Irony of the Solid South: Democrats, Republicans, and Race, 1865–1944*, p. 78.

55 Frederickson 2001, p. 12.

56 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 11–13.

tween them and the GOP.<sup>57</sup> In a plea for further cooperation Gabrielson argued that, “[o]ur friends call themselves States’ Righters and we call ourselves Republicans. But they oppose corruption in government and so do we. We want the Dixiecrat vote for our candidate.”<sup>58</sup> Gabrielson’s claims pertaining to the shared interests of both political groups would provide a preview of Republican policy stances in the region for decades to come: “The Dixiecrat party believes in states’ rights. That’s what the Republican Party believes in.”<sup>59</sup> Republican Senator Karl Mundt of South Dakota was also one of the earliest proponents of what could be referred to as a nascent *Southern Strategy* for his Republican Party. Making repeated trips to the South, the Midwesterner actively pursued the defection of senior Democratic figures in the region.<sup>60</sup> A central target of his was the 1948 Dixiecrat candidate Strom Thurmond – whose eventual switch to the Republican side in 1964 and role in spreading Republicanism to the South Mundt would later recognize by dubbing Thurmond “one of the great architects of the projection of the two-party system throughout America.”<sup>61</sup> Mundt on his part made the case that “Southern Democrats and rural Republicans in this country have much in common” arguing that “we need to do some political engineering so we can work and vote together.”<sup>62</sup> Speaking in Charleston, South Carolina in 1951, Mundt – with his eye on the following year’s presidential election – elaborated on the potential of this new electoral alliance and called for the nomination of a Republican candidate who was “acceptable to Dixie” along with the purging of any parts of the Republican platform that were “understandably repugnant to the South.”<sup>63</sup>

Despite these early attempts to win the hearts and minds of the white South and the appearance of the first cracks in the Democratic *Solid South*, it was not until 1964 that the essential ingredients to kick start the realignment of the South fell into place with the presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater – a candidacy that “marked the first national attempt to wed racism to fiscal conservatism.”<sup>64</sup> The Republican convention of that year, dubbed a “Woodstock of the right”<sup>65</sup> by

57 Cf. Lowndes 2008, p. 36.

58 Quoted in: Ibid.

59 Quoted in: Ibid.

60 Cf. Hough 2006: *Changing Party Coalitions: The Mystery of the Red State-Blue State Alignment*, p. 156.

61 The quote was made in an eight-page advertisement for the re-election of Senator Thurmond in 1966. See e.g.: Spartanburg Herald Journal 1966: *The Thurmond Story* (Page 26 [page 7 within the Thurmond ad]).

62 Quoted in: Hough 2006, p. 156.

63 Quoted in: Lowndes 2008, p. 37.

64 Lowndes 2012: “The Past and Future of Race in the Tea Party Movement.” In: Rosenthal, Trost (eds.): *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*, pp. 152–170, here p. 154.

65 Quoted in: Perlstein 2008b: “1964 Republican Convention: Revolution From the Right.” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August.

Goldwater Biographer Robert Alan Goldberg, signaled to everyone that the party's ideological tectonic plates were shifting and that it was about to pursue a new electoral strategy which was to radically alter the party's future. The atmosphere in the convention hall in San Francisco was ripe with racial tension. African-American delegates were subject to various threats and verbal assaults with actual physical altercations between black Republicans and Goldwater supporters taking place on a number of occasions during those fateful few days, with the worst incident transpiring when a black Pennsylvania delegate's suit was put on fire.<sup>66</sup> The pronounced and severe shift in attitude led African Americans within the party to reconsider their attitudes towards their hitherto partisan home. One black party member bluntly stated that "[a]ny Negro who helps the cause of Goldwater, should be declared anything but a Negro, because they will be a traitor to the Negro people,"<sup>67</sup> while another African-American delegate responded to the call to vote for Goldwater at the convention by explaining that he would "rather be lynched than vote for this guy."<sup>68</sup> Baseball star Jackie Robinson, a Republican until the late 1960s who also witnessed first-hand how many Goldwater supporters dealt with reluctant African-American Republicans, summed up the anti-black atmosphere at the convention by claiming that he "now [knew] how it felt to be a Jew in Hitler's Germany."<sup>69</sup>

Barry Goldwater recognized that his appeals (whose contents will be addressed on a more detailed manner in subsequent chapters) were going to fall on rather fertile ground south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Both Karl Mundt's vision for an earlier southern strategy and the 1948 Thurmond Dixiecrat candidacy demonstrated that Southern discontent with the Democratic Party had been boiling beneath the surface for a number of years by the time Lyndon B. Johnson signed the 1964 civil rights act. This was a region ripe for Republican gains, particularly in its most conservative areas of the Deep South where whites often felt they stood to lose the most from black enfranchisement as these areas also had the highest concentration of blacks. The candidacy of the Arizona senator nonetheless provided an essential element on the road to realignment. As John Grenier, chairman of the Republican state party in Alabama between 1962 and '65, put it, "[we] had the local leadership without the horsepower, but we couldn't get the voters to switch parties until we provided them with the catalyst."<sup>70</sup> And that catalyst proved to be Barry Goldwater and his 1964 campaign

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66 Cf. Wright 2009: "Conscience of a Black Conservative: The 1964 Election and the Rise of the National Negro Republican Assembly." *Federal History* 1, pp. 32–45, here p. 35.

67 Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 34.

68 Quoted in Kabaservice 2012a: *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, From Eisenhower to the Tea Party*, p. 118.

69 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

70 Quoted in: Lowndes 2008, p. 65.

which employed a number of distinctive Southern white traits (usually related to race) to its advantage.

### 1.1.1 The theory of *racial resentment*

A key component of virtually any Republican campaign strategy in the South during the era of realignment was the active exploitation of the racial views of white Southerners, more explicitly the racially resentful positions they continue to harbor to this very day (see chapter I.1.5 for a detailed assessment). This racial animus not only influenced their views on explicitly racial matters like the integration of schools but remains a predictor of policy preferences on topics that may to the casual observer appear to be relatively unrelated to race such as welfare or more recently health care. The roots behind the theory of *racial resentment* lie in the slow but steady rejection of “old fashioned racism,” in other words the belief that African Americans possessed certain inherent traits that made them biologically inferior. This “norm of racial inequality” began to show its first cracks in the 1930s and had by the 1960s been replaced by the “norm of racial equality,” which at least on the outside was based on the proposition that all men are indeed created equal.<sup>71</sup> This by no means meant though that racially conservative sentiments had disappeared. Particularly for politicians, openly stating them had now become largely unacceptable though. Over the past few decades, as the “norm of racial equality” has grabbed a foothold across society, theorists have tried to find a way of gauging racially conservative sentiments in a day and age in which deviations from this norm are immediately repudiated from all sides as the old brand of biological racism has been consigned to the radical fringes. The answer to this can be found in the theory of *racial resentment*, a phenomenon that has in the past also gone by a number of other names such as *symbolic* or *modern racism* which for all intents and purposes nonetheless share the same theoretical underpinnings.<sup>72</sup> These terms are therefore used interchangeably throughout this chapter and the rest of the book. Instead of holding onto the old-fashioned racist sentiments that African Americans are inherently biologically inferior, this new symbolic racism is “a combination of racial anger and indignation, on the one hand, and secularized versions of the Protestant ethic, on the other.”<sup>73</sup> Racial preferences and views of whites towards African Americans are thus today interwoven with such traditional American

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71 Cf. Mendelberg 2001, p. 67.

72 Cf. Sears, Henry 2003: “The Origins of Symbolic Racism.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85(2), pp. 259–275, here p. 259.

73 Kinder, Sanders 1996: *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*, p. 294.

values as self-reliance and individual effort – an approach in which blacks are judged by how closely they match those time-honored, quintessential American values.<sup>74</sup> For racially resentful whites then, African Americans are often perceived as violating those basic tenets by not sharing the same work ethic, drive for self-reliance, discipline, and individualist values that are regarded not just as a cornerstone of the American way of life but also as the underpinning foundation for the nation's exceptionalism.<sup>75</sup> Of course this difference in attitude does to a certain extent exist as African Americans across the spectrum of social classes are far more open to the concept of an activist government lending a helping hand.<sup>76</sup>

The level of racial resentment a respondent possesses can be gauged by assessing their responses to a variety of questions and propositions that specifically attempt to measure agreement about the decrease of discrimination towards African Americans, the poor work ethic they supposedly hold, their excessive demands towards the government and society to make up for past wrongs, and the disproportionate support they receive from governmental institutions.<sup>77</sup> The specific propositions respondents are usually then provided with look like this:<sup>78</sup>

- 1) Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.
- 2) Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
- 3) Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
- 4) It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

The level of agreement or disagreement to these propositions is divided into five intervals of .25 in a range from 0 to 1 with 0 being the most racially liberal score and 1 representing the most racially conservative stance.<sup>79</sup> A certain level of

74 Cf. Mendelberg 2001, p. 129.

75 Cf. Tesler 2013: "The Return of Old-Fashioned Racism to White Americans' Partisan Preferences in the Early Obama Era." *The Journal of Politics* 75(1), pp. 110–123, here p. 114 or Sears, Henry 2003, p. 272.

76 Cf. Hutchings, Jefferson 2014: *Out of Options? Blacks and Support for the Democratic Party*. The authors find that one of the key underlying reasons for the support of the Democratic Party by African Americans is not for example a general self-identification as liberals but rather the support for a pro-active government that is shared by African Americans of different social classes.

77 Cf. Tesler, Sears 2010: *Obama's Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post-Racial America*, p. 18.

78 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 19.

79 Cf. *ibid.*

coherence displayed across the spectrum of propositions that is frequently found indicates, according to Donald Kinder and Allison Dale-Riddle, that “whites [respond] to the questions as if they [have] one thing – and one thing only – primarily in mind”<sup>80</sup> – that one thing being race. Data compiled by the authors shows that whites who feel that African Americans would do better if they only tried harder also believed discrimination had not created an environment for blacks that made it difficult for them to achieve just that and leave their social class through hard work, a pattern also evident on the other topics included in the scale.<sup>81</sup> The propositions therefore appear to “capture a coherent outlook on the character and culture of African Americans”<sup>82</sup> in the minds of the white audience that responds to them.

In order to understand twenty-first century racism, it is also important to understand what it is not. *Racial resentment* does not serve as a vehicle to hide more traditionalist or “old fashioned” racist views behind a veneer of more socially acceptable ideological positions. Instead, *modern racism* is widely considered to be an expression of sincere beliefs by individuals who frequently see themselves as not harboring racist sentiments and, as already mentioned, a way of fusing general conservatism with negative views towards minorities.<sup>83</sup> David Sears and P.J. Henry’s work on the topic for example demonstrates that while general conservatism and traditional racial prejudice are psychologically distinct from one another, *symbolic racism* is based to an almost equal extent in both of them. *Symbolic racism* thus serves as “the glue that links political conservatism to racial prejudice among Whites in the contemporary era.”<sup>84</sup> In its role as a merger of general and racial conservatism, *symbolic racism* has thus provided countless politicians on the right – from George Wallace to Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan to name but a few – with an ideological blueprint for winning broad segments of the conservative electorate (both of the economic and racial variety) without the danger of falling into the trap of appearing to espouse *old fashioned racist* views which would have serious repercussions for the politicians in question. As will be explained in more detail when the “art of coded appeals” and the spillover of race into a variety of other issue areas are addressed in chapter I.1.4, voters will shy away from any candidate that makes *explicit* racial appeals and is thus seen to be violating the norm of racial equality. In other words, *racial resentment* has to be primed in an *implicit* manner without the respondent ideally actually recognizing the racially charged intent

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80 Kinder, Dale-Riddle 2012: *The End of Race?: Obama, 2008, and Racial Politics in America*, p. 54.

81 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 52–54.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

83 Cf. Valentino, Sears 2005, p. 674.

84 Sears, Henry 2003, p. 264.

and strategy behind those appeals – a goal best achieved by interweaving racially conservative triggers with a broader and more general conservative message. As soon as voters recognize cues as being ostensibly of a racial nature, many of them will actively suppress the matter of race in their electoral decision making process.<sup>85</sup>

### Racial resentment and its emotional foundation

When we assess racial resentment and the implication of its usage for the broader state of American politics, it always warrants remembering the specific relationship it possesses with a certain emotional state: anger, a relationship which makes the exploitation of racial resentment such a powerful tool in the hands of politicians who know how to employ and use it properly. Work done on the matter by Antoine Banks and Nicholas Valentino demonstrates that anger is the primary force in triggering racial animosity among racially conservative whites. As the authors state, “[e]xperiencing anger, independent of thoughts about race or politics, powerfully boost[s] the impact of [symbolic racism] on policy opinions,”<sup>86</sup> namely opposition to policies intended to achieve racial equality. Other emotions, like fear or disgust, were not uniquely correlated with a racially resentful response,<sup>87</sup> leading to the ultimate conclusion “that anger is the dominant emotional underpinning of contemporary racism.”<sup>88</sup> Banks and his colleague Melissa Bell moreover also sought to find out how campaigns can use this to their advantage. Their findings revealed in a similar manner that campaign ads attempting to arouse anger will indeed lead to increased opposition to racial policies among racially resentful whites, a response that is not elicited if the intent of the advertisement is to provoke fear.<sup>89</sup> The implications for specific policies are far reaching. As Banks and Valentino point out, anger is a particularly commonly held emotion, meaning that the impact of racial resentment on policy preferences is far from negligible;<sup>90</sup> a revelation that will become clearer when the Tea Party and its racial conservatism are illustrated in more detail in

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85 Cf. Mendelberg 2001, p. 229 as well as Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002: “Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes during Campaigns.” *American Political Science Review* 96(1), pp. 75–90, here pp. 87–88.

86 Banks, Valentino 2012: “Emotional Substrates of White Racial Attitudes.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56(2), pp. 286–297, here p. 293.

87 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 294.

88 Banks 2014: *Anger and Racial Politics: The Emotional Foundation of Racial Attitudes in America*, p. 3.

89 Banks, Bell 2013: “Racialized Campaign Ads: The Emotional Content in Implicit Racial Appeals Primes White Racial Attitudes.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77(2), pp. 549–560.

90 Cf. Banks, Valentino 2012, pp. 295–296.



chapter II.3.1.1. The centrality of anger in triggering racial resentment, *modern racism's* impact on opposing redistribution policies that are seen to be primarily beneficial to minorities (due to the linkage between such government programs and minorities as detailed in chapters I.1.3 and .4) along with Banks and Bell's finding that ads intending to elicit anger among its target audience prove to be a particularly capable tool to galvanize a certain subgroup of voters also serve to poison the well of bipartisanship and decrease the chances of finding compromises in the political realm. Republican candidates know that a uniquely efficient manner of winning the votes of racially conservative whites is to provoke feelings of anger, an emotional state that may bring these voters to the polls and keep them in the candidate's camp during their time in office but also makes them exceptionally disinclined to support any sort of bipartisan agreement on a wide variety of questions related to government spending. The decades upon decades of framing entitlement policies in such a racialized manner that will be detailed over the coming chapters and when Ronald Reagan is assessed in more detail later on have left the Republican Party with a core electorate that is racially conservative and vehemently opposed to government expenditures that are perceived as giving undue support to African Americans in particular.<sup>91</sup> Republican politicians who fail to abide by the preferences of their base will then bear the brunt of their anger themselves, ensuring these elected officials will think twice before working together with the opposing camp. While the recent rise in gridlock in Washington, D.C. in particular on government spending and the broader question of the government's role and size cannot be traced back to racial resentment alone, the argument can be postulated that it has most certainly played a noteworthy role in hardening the resolve of conservatives not to budge on the matter.

### Racial resentment in practice

To further illustrate the impact this manner of framing policy questions in a racialized manner can have, we should look at two hypothetical advertisements run by the same candidate who is vehemently opposed to welfare spending. Advertisement number one has a voiceover presenting a candidate's positions on welfare programs without any sort of imagery intended to prime racial resentment included. Advertisement number two looks almost exactly the same with one vital difference: The same voiceover is now supplemented with images showing African Americans waiting in line to receive welfare checks. Figure I.1.1 shows what sort of effects both would have with regards to priming racial re-

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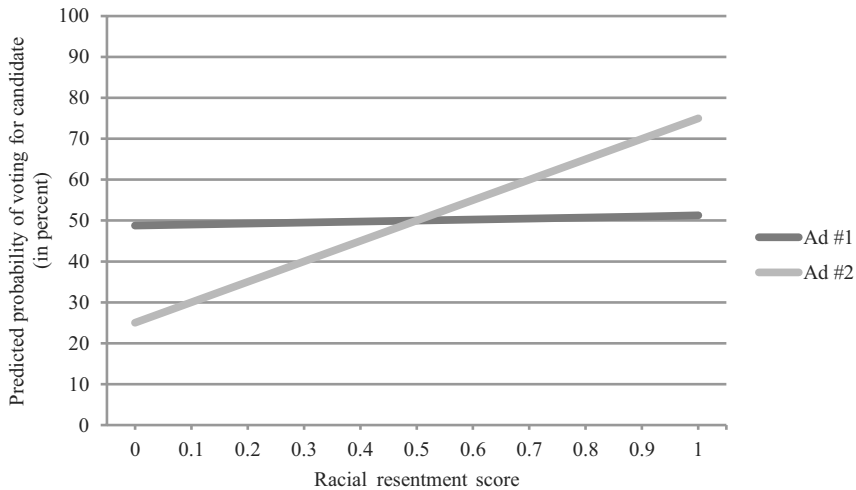
91 See the chapters on the Tea Party (II.3).

sentiment among the white electorate and how this will affect the role of racial resentment as a predictor for the support of the candidate in question if we control for other variables that invariably affect electoral outcomes like income, ideology, partisanship, and several demographic traits. The x-axis shows racial resentment scores (the higher the score, the more racially resentful the respondent) while the y-axis depicts the predicted probability of voting for the candidate in percent. Concerning the first ad, racial resentment will in all likelihood play at best a marginally independent role in the opinion formation process of respondents seeing as no imagery is used to prime it. Other factors, such as partisanship or general ideology, will determine the outcome of the election. The second advertisement on the other hand will trigger a response regarding the racial beliefs of respondents. Racial resentment will now have an impact in determining the outcome of the election independent of other variables, with its role and scope quite possibly being heightened to a level somewhat similar to some of the very same “traditional” variables of income, age, education, partisanship and so forth depending on the extent to which the election has become racialized. Racially liberal respondents will be put off by the imagery and the attempt to depict minorities as welfare takers, decreasing their likelihood of voting for the candidate in question. Racial conservative respondents on the other hand will now be more likely to vote for this particular candidate due to their own racially resentful views being primed by seeing African Americans as the primary beneficiaries of the welfare state (see line for ad #2 in figure I.1.1). The key then for (Republican) candidates is to know what your electorate looks like and what gains can be made by priming racial resentment. Sometimes the general ideological and partisan composition of a given district or area may already be enough to come out on top and no attempts to win over racial conservatives through triggering racial resentment have to be made – after all getting the appeals right can be a delicate business. This is most certainly the case in the white South of the twenty-first century in which appealing to the broadly Republican electorate can usually be done without race. A simple “R” behind one’s name ought to suffice in winning the region’s white vote.<sup>92</sup> In the Democratic *Solid South* of yesteryear though, this approach of priming existing racially resentful sentiments offered quite possibly the most promising manner of conquering substantial parts of the white electorate as racializing elections allowed local Republican candidates to expand beyond their traditional fiscal

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92 Jonathan Knuckey concludes that by today “it is unlikely that southern Republican candidates need raise specific wedge-issues, such as race or cultural values, as they had to in the past to appeal to Democrats and Independents. An appeal as a ‘conservative’ will increasingly be used as catch-all label that resonates with economic, social, racial, and national security conservatives.” Knuckey 2006: “Explaining Recent Changes in the Partisan Identifications of Southern Whites.” *Political Research Quarterly* 59(1), pp. 57–70, here p. 66.

conservative base and win segments of the population (such as lower income whites) that might not have been reached by a straightforward non-racial anti-welfare message. Republican candidates of this era knew that in the absence of these racial appeals, a substantial (and not infrequently decisive in terms of the electoral outcome) number of white voters was going to remain within the Democratic camp.



**Figure I.1.1:** Role of racial resentment (while controlling for other variables) on the probability of voting for Republican anti-welfare candidate based on two hypothetical ads. Ad #1: no priming of racial resentment; Ad #2: priming of racial resentment.

### Criticism of the concept of *racial resentment*

Disentangling the web between broader anti-government conservatism and opposition to government spending rooted in racial animus and prejudice towards minorities in general and African Americans in particular is not always easy after decades of the two being so closely linked. Where race ends and (general) conservatism begins along with the direction of the causal arrow are points of contention that some critics of the theory of racial resentment feel its proponents have failed to properly ascertain. One of the primary charges levied against the concept of racial resentment is that instead of measuring genuine prejudice it only measures racial policy preferences that can be based on broader conservative principles rather than racial hostility<sup>93</sup> – or, to phrase it somewhat

93 Cf. Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter 2011: “On the Meaning, Measurement, and Implica-

differently, the racial resentment scale “is essentially another way of measuring what it purports to explain.”<sup>94</sup> Howard Schuman for example also argues that the propositions used to determine racial resentment scores are not all that different from questions that intend to gauge support for and opposition towards broader action by the government in Washington, D.C. to achieve racial equality – questions that primarily focus on the general attitude towards the role and size of government instead of intending to ascertain racial prejudice. If one for example believes that the government should remain out of the everyday lives of its citizens as much as possible, opting against an activist government working on behalf of anyone – regardless of race – is the natural choice and, potentially if not probably, a reflection of general rather than racial conservatism. For Schuman then, high racial resentment scores in part based on an objection towards a federal government that actively intervenes on behalf of minorities are therefore not necessarily a sign of *racial conservatism* or prejudice driving an opposition to pro-minority policies but a possible artifact of “[measuring] much the same thing under [...] different labels.”<sup>95</sup> Racial resentment studies can thus fall into the trap of misinterpreting “different aspects of the same general construct”<sup>96</sup> – or, if a differentiation can be made, these “constructs [...] overlap greatly in meaning”<sup>97</sup> at the very least. In a similar vein, Edward Carmines, Paul Sniderman, and Beth Easter find evidence to support the assertion “that both the racial resentment and racial policy measures reflect a single and underlying phenomenon, not two different concepts.”<sup>98</sup> In other words, instead of high racial resentment scores obtained due to an opposition towards government programs that mitigate social and racial inequality indicating genuine racial animus, all the symbolic racism scale simply does is to measure and reveal individualist – and not infrequently racially unprejudiced – sentiments that happen to form an integral part of the respondent’s policy preferences related to race policies as well.<sup>99</sup>

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tions of Racial Resentment.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634(1), pp. 98–116, here p. 112. Cf. also Feldman, Huddy 2005: “Racial Resentment and White Opposition to Race-Conscious Programs: Principles or Prejudice?” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(1), pp. 168–183. In an analysis of a survey of 760 non-Hispanic white respondents, Feldman and Huddy found racial resentment among conservatives to be closely linked to their own broader ideological preferences and “only weakly grounded in overt prejudice” (p. 180).

94 Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter 2011, p. 105.

95 Schuman 2000: “The Perils of Correlation, the Lure of Labels, and the Beauty of Negative Results.” In: Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo (eds.): *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America*, pp. 302–323, here p. 304.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 305.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 304.

98 Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter 2011, p. 106.

99 Work done by M.V. Hood III, Quentin Kidd, and Irwin L. Morris on the 2013 Virginia

Proponents of the concept of racial resentment would argue that they are neither intentionally nor unintentionally misrepresenting traditionally conservative “small government” values as racially resentful ones. They understand these pitfalls inherent to the theory that have been established due to the racialization of politics pertaining to the role and size of government, recognizing that modern racism “is neither prejudice, pure and simple, nor traditional values, pure and simple, but rather the combination of the two.”<sup>100</sup> Work done by Christopher Tarman and David Sears also revealed that even when symbolic racism items that could be interpreted as overlapping with general policy preferences were “purged” from their empirical analysis, the cleansed model still “continue[d] to have strong correlations with racial policy preferences”<sup>101</sup> contrary to what one would have expected if these correlations were an artifact of general anti-government conservatism. They thus concluded that “symbolic racism is a discrete belief system, tapping an attitudinal dimension different from other conventional belief systems, such as conservative ideology, [...] individualism, or antiegalitarianism.”<sup>102</sup> The election of the nation’s first black president has moreover provided the academic world with plenty of data that appears to disprove the claims levied by scholars like Schuman. In their attempts to figure out the extent to which individualist supposedly non-racial and quintessentially American preferences drive white opposition to President Obama, Donald R. Kinder and Allison Dale-Riddle on their part ultimately reached the conclusion that “values matter a bit, and racial resentment matters enormously,”<sup>103</sup> a claim buttressed by the findings of a number of other scholars.

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gubernatorial and lieutenant-gubernatorial races adds weight to this assertion and the general criticism directed at *racial resentment*. The race saw the candidacies of two Republicans who were similar in virtually every way bar their racial background (the GOP’s gubernatorial candidate Ken Cuccinelli was white while the party’s candidate for the office of lieutenant-governor, E.W. Jackson, was black – both of them were strong conservatives, particularly on social issues). When controlling for other factors such as partisanship and ideology, racial resentment should have correlated with decreasing levels of support for Jackson. The authors’ analysis revealed though that as a matter of fact increases in racial resentment were *positively* associated with support for E.W. Jackson. Morris and his colleagues therefore arrive at the conclusion that their findings “[raise] questions about whether such indicators [racial resentment] actually are tapping into subtle or hidden racial prejudice or are simply a specific component of ideological conservatism,” adding that “it may be necessary to reevaluate exactly what racial-resentment indicators are measuring in the contemporary political world.” Hood III, Kidd, and Morris 2015: “Race and the Tea Party in the Old Dominion: Split-Ticket Voting in the 2013 Virginia Elections.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 48(1), pp. 107–114, here p. 113.

100 Kinder, Sanders 1996, p. 292.

101 Tarman, Sears 2005: “The Conceptualization and Measurement of Symbolic Racism.” *The Journal of Politics* 67(3), pp. 731–761, here p. 749. For complete analysis pertaining to the question of “content overlap” cf. *ibid.*, pp. 748–749.

102 *Ibid.*, p. 756.

103 Kinder, Dale-Riddle 2012, p. 177.

Jonathan Knuckey's analysis of the 2008 election for example showed that two hypothetical white voters with the same general background diverged quite substantially in their voting habits if one uses racial sympathy and resentment as a predictor for vote choice. A racially sympathetic white voter was 36 percentage points more likely to vote for the then-Senator Obama than his racially resentful counterpart was.<sup>104</sup> Michael Tesler and David O. Sears' analysis of the same election comes up with similar results. Even though Hillary Clinton broadly shared the same liberal preferences as her black primary competitor, racial resentment would have played a statistically negligible role in vote choice and intentions in a hypothetical contest between her and Senator McCain. In the actual election though – as already indicated by Knuckey – racial resentment was a far stronger predictor of presidential vote preferences than in any of the all-white contests of the previous two decades that Tesler and Sears assessed.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, the presidential preferences of the South (to this day home to some of the most racially resentful whites in the nation) in recent years also appear to support the theory that racial resentment is not just an artifact of broader anti-government conservatism. As will be discussed in far more detail in chapter II.1.3, the drop in support for the Democratic Party among Southern whites between 2004 and 2008 was quite remarkable, especially in light of the fact that Barack Obama fared better than John Kerry did among non-Southern whites. Considering the similarly liberal ideological views of both candidates, it is hard not to consider racial resentment as one of the principal reasons behind this Southern shift in partisan preferences.

## Conclusion

As will become more evident over the coming chapters that specifically address the Southern Strategy and the role of Ronald Reagan, *racial resentment* and its priming by Southern Republicans played a key role in Republicans poaching southern whites at a point in the realignment process when the latter were still nominally Democratic but already in the process of loosening their ties to their hitherto political home.<sup>106</sup> Ultimately, the distinctive racial conservatism of the region's whites allowed the party of Lincoln to capture the former Confederacy

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104 Cf. Knuckey 2011: "Racial Resentment and Vote Choice in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election." *Politics & Policy* 39(4), pp. 559–582, here p. 569.

105 Cf. Tesler, Sears 2010, pp. 59–61.

106 As Nicholas Valentino and David Sears conclude, "racial conservatism in particular seems to have played a potent role in the realignment of Southern whites in the late twentieth century, above and beyond the effects of putatively race-free ideology or nonracial issues." Valentino, Sears 2005, p. 686.

across all political levels. This is particularly well illustrated by a rather recent example such as the 1994 midterms when the congressional GOP sought to emulate messages that had proven successful at the presidential level by also running on a platform that emphasized a strong anti-welfare message along with a tough stance on crime, two issues that have racial connotations unlike any other.<sup>107</sup> Jonathan Knuckey on his part arrives at the conclusion that the Republican Revolution of 1994 and the party's first Southern congressional majority since the Reconstruction era were achieved by both nationalizing and racializing those elections. According to Knuckey, "the principal mechanisms in forging this link [between local Democrats and an unpopular President Clinton] were issues that injected racial resentment into the political discourse."<sup>108</sup> The fact that racial resentment continues to remain more widespread in the South (see chapter I.1.5) provided Newt Gingrich and other Southern Republicans with a key advantage in those electoral contests as they sought to sever the last remaining links between the local white electorate and their traditional Democratic home. Throughout the realignment of the South, infusing race and priming racial resentment to the extent that it proved to be an independent predictor of vote choice thus offered Republican campaigners one of the most promising paths to winning majorities in the region. In today's heavily Republican South<sup>109</sup> on the other hand those appeals have not infrequently become unnecessary in general election contests (but perhaps not in the primaries, see following paragraph) as many local Republicans find themselves in relatively safe electoral environments in which white southern conservatives – of whom the vast majority are now Republicans – form a significant majority and will vote for a GOP candidate simply based on their partisan allegiance.

One should nonetheless not underestimate the weight and centrality racially resentful messages can possess in the former Confederacy to this day, as there is evidence to illustrate that the role of racial preferences as a predictor for par-

107 Cf. Knuckey 2005a: "Racial Resentment and the Changing Partisanship of Southern Whites." *Party Politics* 11(1), pp. 5–28, here pp. 10–12.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 12. As Knuckey moreover notes, high levels of racial resentment did not become a strong predictor for Republican partisanship in the South before the early 1990s. Even in 1986 and 1990, after decades of realignment and racially charged Republican appeals, white Southerners with the highest racial resentment scores were still more likely to identify as Democrats than Republicans (as indeed were all whites regardless of their levels of racial resentment). In 1986 as a matter of fact, the probability of Democratic identification actually *increased* as one moved across the racial resentment scale from its minimum to its maximum value. The key reversal occurred in 1994 when the predicted probability of Republican identification exceeded its Democratic counterpart at a racial resentment score of 0.57. The importance of this shift becomes obvious if one takes into account that in 1994 65 percent of white Southerners had a racial resentment score above 0.57. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

109 See data on the Republican strength in the South in chapter II.1.

tianship has increased remarkably in the region over the past few decades. In 1972 for example, increases in *racial resentment* among Southern whites<sup>110</sup> did not lead to an increasing likelihood of voting for a Republican presidential candidate. By 2000 on the other hand, moving from the low to the high end of the racial resentment scale increased the likelihood of voting for George W. Bush by 52 percentage points among Southern whites, a strong and increasing relationship between the two variables not found among non-Southern whites.<sup>111</sup> Associations between ideology and voting preferences remained stable during the period though, leading Nicholas Valentino and David Sears to conclude that “the Southern white presidential vote has become more tightly aligned over time with racial attitudes but not with ideology.”<sup>112</sup> The fact that the most racially conservative Southerners also possess the strongest ties to the GOP today and therefore form the party’s base in the region<sup>113</sup> ultimately means that in certain political contests racial appeals can continue to be a potent tool in attempts to bring the necessary number of white racial conservatives to the polls. Particularly candidates that find themselves in closely contested races may be tempted to trigger racially resentful responses in the Southern electorate. Seeing as many southern Republican districts resemble their earlier Democratic *Solid South* counterparts in their strong partisan lean these kinds of messages would in all likelihood be found in primary contests that determine who gets to go to Washington, D.C. As the Tea Party has grown in stature and influence, it has frequently “primaried” Republicans deemed to be too centrist. In such tight primary battles, more moderate Republicans could very well end up trying to “outracialize” their more right-wing opponents in an attempt to gain the upper hand although Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran’s defeat of Tea Party challenger Chris McDaniel in the summer of 2014 has shown that the opposite approach of reaching out to minority voters can pay off as well.<sup>114</sup> Further research assessing possible increases in racially conservative appeals in tight Southern Republican primaries thus appears to be a necessary and worthwhile

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110 Measured by moving from two standard deviations below the mean of the symbolic racism/ racial resentment scale to two standard deviations above it.

111 Cf. Valentino, Sears 2005, p. 680.

112 Ibid.

113 For specific data on this cf. Knuckey 2005a, pp. 18–19.

114 In this case though, Cochran enjoyed the advantage of contesting the race in an “open primary” which meant non-Republicans were able to take part in the vote as well. This allowed the senator to compete for African-American voters of whom the vast majority are of course Democrats and thus deeply opposed to racially conservative Tea Party candidates. In a closed primary such a course of action does not appear to be possible, forcing moderate candidates to pursue a different path. For an overview of how Cochran managed to defeat McDaniel cf. N. Cohn 2014: “Big Jump in Turnout Is Key in Thad Cochran’s Victory.” *The Upshot / New York Times*, June 25.



endeavor. The impact of racial resentment and its usage by the GOP extends beyond the borders of the South though. The incessant linking of race and outwardly unrelated matters (see chapters I.1.3 and I.1.4) by many notable Republicans in recent decades – with some of the most prominent examples related to attempts to win over white Southerners<sup>115</sup> – means that even those Republicans not intending to play the race card will habitually frame issues in a manner similar to the racists of yesteryear, ensuring a continued prominence of *racial resentment* well into the twenty-first century. That Republicans gaining national notoriety for insensitive racial comments is a problem for them and their party in a country becoming less white by the day goes without saying.

### **I.1.2 Strangers in their own home – African-American Democratic dominance and its white backlash**

Along with the theory of racial resentment, the *white backlash* hypothesis is often cited as another phenomenon that – in a variety of guises as will be seen in this chapter – aided Republican growth in the South. The basis of this theory, also known as the *racial or group threat* theory and the *black belt* hypothesis, is that increased proximity to African Americans will increase hostility by whites towards this racial group and policies that are seen as beneficial to them. Or, to phrase it differently, the higher the concentration of African Americans, the higher the racial conservatism among whites who are living in these substantially black areas.<sup>116</sup> Whites in these areas of large black concentration do not infrequently see politics as a zero-sum game in which increases in influence or power by one ethnic or racial group invariably lead to the demise in influence and clout seen by another one.<sup>117</sup> As a result of this they will naturally oppose any tipping of the racial scales in favor of another group. Scholars widely accept that the theory can explain white voting patterns and partisan preferences in the pre-civil rights era but are divided on whether or not it played a role in the Republican realignment that transpired afterwards and to what extent it can still be found today.<sup>118</sup> During the era of the Democratic *Solid South*, Democratic party allegiance was most certainly at its strongest in areas where the enfranchisement of African Americans would have had the most extensive impact on the dominance of whites. As Gerald Webster's look at pre-civil rights Alabama reveals, the

115 See Ronald Reagan and his usage of race in chapter I.3.2.

116 For a definition and detailed analysis of the *racial threat* presence in the South cf. Glaser 1996, p. 26 (definition) and pp. 25–42 (broader analysis).

117 Cf. Glaser 1994: "Back to the Black Belt: Racial Environment and White Racial Attitudes in the South." *The Journal of Politics* 56(1), pp. 21–41, here p. 23.

118 Cf. Lublin 2004, p. 147.

average Democratic vote in Alabama's black belt counties (named so for the color of its soil and not its significant black population) was well above the state totals between 1920 and 1944. During this era, the top quartile of counties with the largest (largely disenfranchised) black populations was virtually identical with the top quartile of most Democratic counties.<sup>119</sup> Webster thus concluded that support for the old white supremacist Democratic Party of the South "was directly associated with the presence of large African-American populations."<sup>120</sup>

A variety of data does suggest that proximity to blacks continued to exert an influence on white voting patterns even after the passage of the 1964 civil rights act and beyond, creating an environment in which whites could be won over by Republican anti-government campaigns that were infused with racially resentful rhetoric. Using data from the 1980s, James Glaser showed that whites in heavily black areas of the South were more likely to feel that the civil rights movement was proceeding too quickly while also being less supportive of the notion that African Americans ought to receive government help. In counties with a black population below ten percent, 55 percent of white Southerners took a conservative position on the question of government aid to African Americans.<sup>121</sup> White Southerners in counties with a black population of 30 percent or more were far more to the right on the policy question though as 82 percent held a conservative stance on the matter.<sup>122</sup> Positions like these were not rooted in general conservatism though, as the difference in ideological self-placement between respondents from the two areas in question was negligible.<sup>123</sup>

A similar *racial threat*-phenomenon could be witnessed when respondents were asked about their feelings towards Jesse Jackson, candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in both 1984 and 1988. Decreases in support for the African-American candidate were particularly pronounced among Southern Democrats. Gauging the attitudes towards Jackson on a 100-point feeling thermometer (the higher the score, the more positive the feeling) revealed that the mean thermometer score measured among white *Democrats* from low-black counties was 58 degrees while it stood at just 33 degrees in heavily black counties. The difference in attitude among non-Democrats residing in these low and high concentration black counties on the other hand stood at a mere twelve points.<sup>124</sup> Glaser attributed this remarkable difference to the fact that white Democrats in

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119 Cf. Webster 1992: "Demise of the Solid South." *Geographical Review* 82(1), p. 43–55, here pp. 48 and 50.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

121 5 through 7 on a seven-point scale.

122 Cf. Glaser 1994, p. 27.

123 In the most African-American counties, 50 percent of whites considered themselves to be conservatives. In the least black counties this share stood at 49 percent. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 29–31.

124 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 38.

particular regarded Jackson as a figurehead of where their party was headed in the future while symbolizing the growing clout African Americans had begun to possess within the Democratic Party, a development and prospect that made Southern Democrats from areas with large-scale black populations far more likely to dislike the candidate than non-Democratic Southerners who had the same sort of proximity to blacks.<sup>125</sup> Jackson, his race, and the fact that most of his supporters were black therefore represented “a major partisan symbol in the South – centrally polarizing the electorate over racial preferences,”<sup>126</sup> driving many white hitherto Democratic Southerners towards the GOP during his 1984 campaign for the Democratic nomination according to David Sears, Jack Citrin, and Rick Kosterman.<sup>127</sup>

Other authors on the other hand note that a white backlash was particularly pronounced among members of the white population that stood in direct competition with African Americans, in other words lower class whites and some members of the lower middle class that often saw little personal upward movement on the social ladder as their wages stagnated and expenses rose – all the while African Americans supposedly received a government sanctioned unfair advantage. George Shultz, who held various cabinet positions under President Nixon, foresaw that these white voters were particularly open to the possibility of switching their partisan allegiance and embracing the GOP’s policies on race. Shultz told President Nixon that this group of white voters:

*“are immigrants, or sons of immigrants, and feel insecure about their own place in the mainstream of American society. They tend to live in neighborhoods that the blacks are most likely to move into, and whose schools blacks’ children might attend. They sometimes have jobs that they feel blacks aspire to attain, and they get wages that are slightly above liberal states’ welfare payments. They suffer a real sense of ‘compression’ on both the economic and social scales.”*<sup>128</sup>

Micheal Giles and Kaenan Hertz found that social class and standing in direct competition with less affluent African Americans did indeed play a noticeable role in Republican growth among Southern whites. Looking at the racial threat effect of the black voting-age population among whites in Louisiana during the 1970s and ’80s, the authors found the effect to be strongest in areas where low-income whites resided. As a matter of fact, there was no statistically significant

125 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 37.

126 Sears, Citrin, and Kosterman 1987: “Jesse Jackson and the Southern White Electorate in 1984.” In: Moreland, Steed, and Baker (eds.): *Blacks in Southern Politics*, pp. 209–225, here p. 222.

127 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 222–223.

128 Quoted in: Sugrue, Skrentny 2008: “The White Ethnic Strategy” In: Schulman and Zelizer (eds.): *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, pp. 171–192, here p. 187.

data to suggest that racial concentration had an impact on the partisan realignment in high-income parishes in Louisiana.<sup>129</sup> The impact of class represents an important distinction vis-à-vis a broader white backlash effect that other authors have elaborated upon. Thomas J. Rudolph and Elizabeth Popp for example also note that minority concentration by itself may not be the best criterion for measuring racial threat. They find that interracial trust among whites decreases as the economic privileges of minorities increase, leading them to conclude that the concept of “minority empowerment [...] more faithfully represents the power threat thesis.”<sup>130</sup> More specifically their data shows that as the proportion of minority-owned businesses increases in a certain region, interracial trust among whites declines.<sup>131</sup>

Perhaps a different theoretical basis is thus needed to explain and define the white backlash. James Glaser summed up the definition of this hypothesis as such: “Where blacks have more opportunity to exercise political power or to demand a larger share of societal resources, southern white attitudes reflect greater hostility to black political aspirations.”<sup>132</sup> Glaser used this definition to argue in favor of the centrality of *black concentration* or *context*, referring to the specific threat blacks posed to white dominance in select regions. An alternative proposition would be to move away from this focus on simple black *concentration* and instead shift the attention towards the broader construct of black *mobilization* and the – to use Glaser’s *context* definition – increasing “opportunity [of blacks] to exercise political power” within the Southern Democratic Party in particular, an approach not dissimilar to the emphasis Rudolph and Popp place on black (or more broadly speaking minority) *empowerment*. As has already been noted, Jesse Jackson and his viable 1984 and 1988 candidacies proved to be a particularly poignant symbol of how far African Americans had come over a mere two decades. For conservative white Southern Democrats though this advancement of black political influence was anything but a welcome sign. Through their increasing levels of mobilization (which subsequent paragraphs in this chapter will address in more detail) African Americans had by the early 1980s become a key component within the Democratic Party that few of its candidates could do without, particularly in the South. Slowly but surely, racial conservatives began to feel like strangers within their own Democratic home. In their work on the state of racial and class cleavages in the United States, Robert Huckfeldt and Carol Weitzel Kohfeld specifically contend that racial polarization

129 Cf. Giles, Hertz 1994: “Racial Threat and Partisan Identification.” *American Political Science Review* 88(2), pp. 317–326, here p. 322.

130 Rudolph, Popp 2010: “Race, Environment, and Interracial Trust.” *The Journal of Politics* 72(1), pp. 74–89, here p. 87.

131 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 81.

132 Glaser 1996, p. 26.

is not just caused by the “density of blacks in the population” but also by the “strategically crucial role”<sup>133</sup> African Americans have played in Democratic coalitions in the South since the advent of large scale black mobilization and the largely uniform Democratic voting habits this group displays. As the ranks of the Democratic Party swelled with African-American voters and activists, white Southern conservatives grew to become increasingly “disenchanted”<sup>134</sup> with the racial composition of their party and thus chose to defect. As Huckfeldt and Kohfeld point out, this process turned out to be “self-accelerating”<sup>135</sup>: With every defection of white conservatives, the Southern Democratic Party became an even less welcoming home for the remaining racially conservative whites because it relied even more on African Americans to obtain majorities. This has created an environment in the South in general and the Deep South in particular in which racial and partisan cleavages are frequently identical.<sup>136</sup>

Scholars like M.V. Hood III, Quentin Kidd, and Irwin Morris have also expanded upon this vicious circle that served to deplete the white ranks of the Democratic Party in the South. In a manner similar to Huckfeldt and Kohfeld, the trio of authors places black *mobilization* rather than *concentration* front and center regarding the realignment of the partisan preferences of white Southerners, as the increasing electoral muscle of Southern African Americans served as an immense catalyst for the growth of Republican state parties across the region. According to their analysis, increases in black mobilization accounted for more than a quarter of the increase in Republican growth across the entire South.<sup>137</sup> Kevin Phillips, one of the architects behind the Southern Strategy that will be discussed in the next chapter, recognized the importance of black mobilization for GOP growth quite early on despite the Democratic voting habits of this particular group. Phillips claimed that “Republicans would be shortsighted

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133 Huckfeldt, Kohfeld 1989, p. 47.

134 Ibid., p. 106.

135 Ibid.

136 See the fact that the last white Democrat from the Deep South in the U.S. House – John Barrow – was defeated in the 2014 congressional election. The remaining eight Deep Southern Democrats are all African Americans. For additional specific data on how African Americans have become the face of the Democratic Party in the South cf. Bosisis 2011: “Resegregation in Southern Politics?” *Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies – Research Brief*. After the 2010 elections for example, African Americans made up a majority of all Democratic officeholders in both state legislative chambers in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, while being in the majority in South Carolina’s Democratic state house caucus and representing 50 percent of Democratic members in Florida’s state senate (p. 4).

137 Republican growth is measured by increases in Republican *strength*. Strength itself is measured by a composite state-level index that is made up of vote percentages of Republican candidates in gubernatorial, state, and congressional elections. Cf. Hood III, Kidd, and Morris 2012: *The Rational Southerner: Black Mobilization, Republican Growth, and the Partisan Transformation of the American South*, pp. 103 and 111–113.

if they weakened enforcement of the Voting Rights Act” because “[t]he more Negroes who register as Democrats in the South, the sooner the Negrophobe whites will quit the Democrats and become Republicans. [...] Without that prodding from the blacks, the whites will backslide into their old comfortable arrangement with the local Democrats.”<sup>138</sup> Hood III, Kidd, and Morris also note that in the Deep South (but not the periphery) increases in Republican growth once again led to increases in black mobilization, accounting for nearly a quarter of African-American mobilization in the most conservative part of the South by 2008.<sup>139</sup> This has led to a “feedback loop” in the region where the two variables feed off one another, making the Deep South in the process more Republican than its peripheral cousin.<sup>140</sup>

There are of course scholars who dispute that the group or racial threat theory had anything substantial to do with the realignment of the South. David Lublin’s central point of contention is that Republican gains coincided with an out-migration of African Americans from the South, in other words the realignment of the region transpired during a period of a decreasing threat context.<sup>141</sup> As has just been demonstrated this approach of primarily focusing on black concentration may be somewhat misguided though. Furthermore, the decrease in African Americans as part of the Southern population after the passage of the 1964 civil rights act was rather negligible. The black share of the population in the South certainly dropped quite considerably from 32.3 percent in 1900 to 20.6 percent in 1960, the last census before the Republican about-face on civil rights. It did not drop substantially though during the next three decades, with the African-American share still standing at 18.5 percent in 1990.<sup>142</sup> It is somewhat hard to imagine then that whites saw blacks as a threat when this racial group constituted 21.7 percent of the Southern population in 1950 or 20.6 percent in 1960 but no longer viewed their presence as a challenge to white power when it had dropped to below 19 percent in the 80s and 90s.<sup>143</sup> As table I.1.2.b (*Share of the African-American population in the South, 1990 through 2010*) also indicates,

138 Quoted in: Boyd 1970: “Nixon’s Southern strategy ‘It’s All In the Charts’.” *New York Times*, May 17, p. 3. In “The Emerging Republican Majority,” Phillips also elaborated upon this centrality of black enfranchisement and mobilization for the Democrats, claiming that “[m]aintenance of Negro voting rights in Dixie, far from being contrary to GOP interests, is essential if southern conservatives are to be pressured into switching to the Republican Party – for Negroes are beginning to seize control of the national Democratic Party in some Black Belt areas.” Phillips 2015 [1969], p. 543.

139 Cf. Hood III, Kidd, and Morris 2012, pp. 169–171.

140 Cf. Hood III, Kidd, and Morris 2010, pp. 378–380.

141 Cf. Lublin 2004, p. 148.

142 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2002: *South Region – Race and Hispanic Origin: 1790 to 1990*. September 13.

143 Cf. *ibid.*

the share of African Americans in the South has actually increased over the past twenty years, coinciding with remarkable Republican gains at the congressional level. Another notable skeptic of the role *racial threat* may have played in the transformation of white Southern voting patterns is D. Stephen Voss. Assessing three different campaigns of Ku Klux Klansman David Duke in Louisiana, Voss also found that whites in racially heterogeneous areas were no more likely to back the candidate than whites living in less diverse parts of the state.<sup>144</sup> Vincent Hutchings and Nicholas Valentino contend though that Voss' findings, seeing as they are based on the support of a single candidate in a single state, lack the necessary breadth to arrive at the conclusion that in the *New South* racial proximity no longer negatively influences white attitudes towards African Americans. According to their assessment of a variety of data and scholarly analyses, "the general thrust of the evidence suggests the continuing importance of racial context variables."<sup>145</sup>

Regardless of the reasons and factors that have been elucidated in this chapter which might trigger a white backlash or the question if it is limited to the social class of those who perceive an actual "group threat," there is ample academic evidence to suggest that proximity to African Americans continues to play a role in the policy and electoral preferences of whites not just in the American South. Using data from the 1990 General Social Survey as well as the U.S. Census Bureau, Marylee Taylor found that increases in black population shares were positively correlated with increased white opposition to policies specifically aimed at helping African Americans, along with increases in traditional prejudice as well as also affecting broader policy-related views concerning blacks (such as the racial resentment proposition of whether or not African Americans had a harder time finding good employment due to continued discrimination).<sup>146</sup> Others have noted the impact a *white backlash* can have on actual exercises in democracy. An analysis of two Southern referenda conducted by Byron D'Andra Orey, Marvin Overby, Pete Hatemi, and Baodong Liu for example revealed that white support for retaining the Mississippi state flag with its confederate components as well as approval for keeping a section of the Alabama state constitution in place that called for the establishment of segregated schools along with a poll tax for voting was particularly high in areas with large black populations. Orey et al. therefore conclude that "even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, racial context still exercises a profound

144 Cf. Voss 1996: "Beyond Racial Threat: Failure of an Old Hypothesis in the New South." *The Journal of Politics* 58(4), pp. 1156–1170.

145 Hutchings, Valentino 2004: "The Centrality of Race in American Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7, pp. 383–408, here p. 395.

146 Cf. Taylor 1998: "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count." *American Sociological Review* 63(4), pp. 512–535.

effect on the behavior of Southern whites.”<sup>147</sup> Similar patterns have been spotted outside the former Confederacy as well. Caroline Tolbert and John Grummel for example found evidence of a white backlash in a referendum in California that amended the state constitution to prohibit public institutions from (positively) discriminating on the basis of race, sex, or ethnicity (Proposition 209). While Marylee Taylor found no evidence of high Asian-American or Hispanic concentrations inciting greater hostility towards these groups among whites, leading her to point out “the unique position of blacks in U.S. society”<sup>148</sup> when it comes to eliciting a racial threat response, Tolbert and Grummel’s work showed that white support for Proposition 209 was higher in areas with high African-American *and* Asian-American as well as Hispanic concentrations even after controlling for other significant variables such as partisanship or socioeconomic conditions.<sup>149</sup> This potential extension of a white backlash towards other ethnic and racial groups is of particular interest in the context of this book considering the demographic developments that will be discussed in chapter II.4. While the black population will remain relatively stable over the coming decades, both Asian Americans and Hispanics in particular will significantly increase their shares of the U.S. population, turning America by the middle of the twenty-first century into a nation in which today’s minorities (i. e. all groups except *non-Hispanic whites*) will constitute a majority of the population. There is some evidence to suggest that these demographic changes and the consequences they entail do indeed trigger a racial threat response among whites. Confronting (non-Hispanic) white Americans with the prospect of this “majority-minority” nation has for example been shown to increase both Republican partisan affiliation as well as conservative policy preferences (pertaining to both race-related and race-neutral matters) among them.<sup>150</sup> Far from being a memory of a distant past, the *white backlash* appears to be a phenomenon that still affects white voting patterns and policy decisions both within and outside of the South.

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147 Orey, Overby, Hatemi, and Liu 2011: “White Support for Racial Referenda in the Deep South.” *Politics & Policy* 39(4), pp. 539–558, here p. 553.

148 Taylor 1998, p. 531.

149 Cf. Tolbert, Grummel 2003: “Revisiting the Racial Threat Hypothesis: White Voter Support for California’s Proposition 209.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 3(2), pp. 183–202.

150 Cf. Craig, Richeson 2014: “On the Precipice of a ‘Majority-Minority’ America: Perceived Status Threat From the Racial Demographic Shift Affects White Americans’ Political Ideology.” *Psychological Science* (published online April 3, 2014), pp. 1–9.



## Black mobilization

Data on black political engagement in the region most certainly lends credence to the assertion put forward by Huckfeldt and Kohfeld as well as Hood III, Kidd, and Morris that increases in black mobilization along with the racial group's uniform Democratic voting patterns served as a catalyst for white defections from the Democratic Party in the South. While the African American share of the population of the South may have decreased in the decades following the civil rights revolution, the registration rates of Southern African Americans underwent a remarkable transformation. In the 1950s, whites still made up 95 percent of all Southern voters despite only representing roughly three quarters of the region's population.<sup>151</sup> At the time of the passage of the 1964 civil rights act, African-American registration rates in the *Old Confederacy* stood at 35.5 percent of all eligible (black) voters before nearly doubling to 64.8 percent by 1969.<sup>152</sup> A year earlier, majorities of eligible blacks had already registered to vote in every single Southern state.<sup>153</sup> The state with the largest African-American population share also saw some of the largest surges in black mobilization: The registration rate among African-American Mississippians jumped from 6.7 percent in 1964 to 59.4 percent four years later.<sup>154</sup> Over time, the African-American share of the registered electorate thus began to resemble their share of the population. African Americans constituted 4.1 percent of the Southern electorate in the 1950s, 12.3 percent in the 1960s, 16.0 percent in the 1970s, and 21.8 percent in the 1980s, at that point finally in line with the share of the Southern population they made up.<sup>155</sup> The total numbers of black voters also increased substantially despite the continued exodus of African Americans to other regions of the country. While 1.5 million Southern blacks had been registered in 1960, that number had risen to 3.4 million a decade later and stood at 5.6 million by 1984.<sup>156</sup>

Nationally, (non-Hispanic) whites are still more likely to be registered than African Americans, with the registration rates among the former around four percentage points higher today than those found among the latter.<sup>157</sup> In line with

151 Cf. Black, Black 2008: *Divided America: The Ferocious Power Struggle in American Politics*, p. 75.

152 Cf. Perman 2009: *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the American South*, p. 301.

153 Cf. Black, Black 2008, pp. 76–77.

154 Cf. Edsall, Edsall 1992: *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* p. 84.

155 Cf. Shafer, Johnston 2001, p. 611.

156 Cf. Perman 2009, p. 302.

157 The registration rates in November of 2012 stood at 72.4 among non-Hispanic whites while 68.5 percent of African Americans (defined by the racial category “black alone”) were registered to vote. Cf. United States Census Bureau 2012a: *Table 4b. Reported Voting and Registration, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2012*.

the findings of Hood III and his colleagues who note that GOP growth has also fed black mobilization in the Deep South, black registration rates are particularly high in the conservative heartland of the region. In three of the Deep South's five states (those three states being Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina) black registration rates actually exceeded those of their non-Hispanic white counterparts according to 2012 data from the United States Census Bureau. Mississippi once again serves to stand out as a remarkable 90.2 percent of eligible African Americans were registered to vote in the state.<sup>158</sup> In the peripheral Southern states on the other hand, the share of registered African Americans was higher than that of non-Hispanic whites only in North Carolina.<sup>159</sup> It most certainly warrants pointing out though that even in those rim states, black registration rates were for the most part roughly in line with those found within the non-Hispanic white community contrary to the data in many other non-Southern states, a testament to the momentous changes the region's political landscape has undergone over the past half a century.

#### The liberalizing effect of African Americans and the *darkening* of the Southern Democratic Party

Burgeoning political engagement within the black community along with a steady stream of white defectors towards Republicanism has made the Democratic Party in the South more African American than ever before. Even in 1991, 83 percent of all Democratic activists in the region were white while 14 percent were African Americans. Ten years later those shares had changed to 76 and 21 percent respectively.<sup>160</sup> These changes are even more evident when looking at elected officials and moving closer to the present day. By 2011, African Americans made up 35 percent or more of all Democratic state legislators in eight of the region's eleven states.<sup>161</sup> This mass influx of a unified voting bloc of African Americans into the Democratic Party of the South has not just lessened the party's appeal among racially conservative whites but also put the party at odds with a broader segment of the conservative electorate, a significant development that played a key role in the eventual demise of the last remnants of the Democratic *Solid South* at the congressional level and for the time being continues to limit the party's chances of regaining significant swathes of the local white

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158 Cf. *ibid.*

159 Cf. *ibid.*

160 Cf. Barth 2004: "The Continuing Role of Race in Southern Party Organizations" In: Clark, Prysby (eds.): *Southern Political Party Activists: Patterns of Conflict and Change, 1991–2001*, pp. 29–44, here p. 30.

161 Cf. Bosisis 2011, pp. 4–7.

electorate. In the wake of the civil rights revolution and the subsequent increase in black mobilization, many Southern Democrats were still able to retain power by fashioning a biracial coalition in which African Americans initially represented the junior partner. The effectiveness of this strategy meant that even during the 1980s, Republican gains were largely confined to districts with very low black populations (ranging from 0 to 14 percent), where Republicans won about half of all elections during that decade.<sup>162</sup> The ever increasing sway of African Americans made the continued existence of such biracial coalitions a rather precarious undertaking though due to the strong liberal lean of this group of voters which put Democratic candidates and elected officials increasingly at odds with the white part of the electoral alliance that had played such a vital role in keeping congressional Democrats in power even as the GOP was winning significant presidential majorities in the region.

African Americans are the most liberal major racial or ethnic group in the United States when it comes to economic matters, creating a “substantial ideological distance”<sup>163</sup> between southern whites and southern blacks on some of the most basic policy matters. Exit polling conducted during the 2000 presidential election showed that southern African Americans favored “more government” over “less government” by a margin of three-to-one. Two thirds of southern whites on the other hand preferred less government.<sup>164</sup> Similar polling for the following presidential election revealed that 72 percent of southern blacks believed that “government should do more to solve problems” while a mere 28 percent argued that “government is doing too many things,” a stance shared by 60 percent of southern whites on the other hand.<sup>165</sup> Even when controlling for levels of affluence among African Americans, black voters nonetheless remain far more in favor of government steps to mitigate social inequalities, a stance that can be traced back to past injustices and the belief within the racial group that African Americans continue to be subjected to discrimination.<sup>166</sup> As Donald Kinder and Nicholas Winter conclude, “differences between whites and blacks on social welfare programs are due, in small part, to social class and to audience, and in large part, to principle.”<sup>167</sup> The positions held by Democrats in the South according to the 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists (SGPA) shown in table

162 Cf. Black, Black 2002, p. 380.

163 Hayes, McKee 2008: “Toward a One-Party South?” *American Politics Research* 36(1), pp. 3–32, here p. 9.

164 Cf. Black, Black 2008, p. 77.

165 Cf. *ibid.*

166 On the basic racial resentment questions, significant majorities of African Americans unsurprisingly believe that that centuries of injustice have created disproportionately large difficulties for the black community. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 78.

167 Kinder, Winter 2001: “Exploring the Racial Divide: Blacks, Whites, and Opinion on National Policy.” *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2), pp. 439–453, here p. 450.

I.1.2.a also highlight the racial divide even among Democrats, an intraparty rift that is sometimes as large as the partisan cleavage found between white Democrats and their white Republican counterparts. 30 percent of African-American Democrats for example held a strongly liberal position on the question of the government guaranteeing a job and living standards, a stance shared by just 11 percent of white Southern Democrats.

**Table I.1.2.a:** *Position on issues for Democratic and Republican Party activists in the South, 2001 (selected issues). Entries are the percentage claiming “strong” agreement with more liberal stance:*<sup>168</sup>

Issue	White Democrats	African-American Democrats	White Republicans
Government aid for women	32	50	5
Government services/ spending	36	48	2
Government regulation of health care	29	32	3
Guaranteed job and living standard	11	30	1
Government aid to minor- ities	26	73	4

Differences like these are also mirrored in the ideological self-identification of Southern Democrats. While 59 percent of African-American Democrats in the region considered themselves as either “very” or “somewhat liberal” in the same SGPA survey that share stood at just 38 percent among white Democrats. As a matter of fact, a relatively similar share of 31 percent of those white Democrats regarded themselves as “very” or “somewhat conservative,” a far higher share than the 16 percent found among black Democrats.<sup>169</sup>

Data from the 1970s and early 1980s reveals the effect the rising tide of black voters and activists had on Democratic candidates in the South. Unsurprisingly, the incorporation of more liberal voters served to move the Southern Democratic Party’s “ideological center of gravity [...] dramatically toward moderation and a sprinkling of liberalism.”<sup>170</sup> According to ideological rankings of U.S. House candidates from a variety of CBS/New York Times surveys, this shift was particularly pronounced among Southern Democrats attempting to win open seat races. Throughout the 1970s, these candidates still sought to win non-incumbent House seats in the region by adopting a position that was to the right

168 Cf. Barth 2004, p. 36.

169 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 37.

170 Black, Black 2002, p. 378.

of their Democratic counterparts which ran in races involving either Democratic or Republican incumbents. Over time this course no longer became a path to success though with the 1982 elections representing “a major break from the past”<sup>171</sup> according to Joseph Aistrup. While Democratic candidates in Southern open seat races in 1974 possessed an ideological score of 6.4 on a scale from zero to ten (with the latter indicating a consistently conservative score), their position had shifted to a far more liberal 3.8 by 1982. These Democratic open-seat candidates that had been 0.6 points more conservative than Democratic incumbents running for re-election in 1974 were now 1.8 points to their left.<sup>172</sup> As Democratic incumbents retired, they were thus replaced with notably more liberal successors whose reliance on black voter turnout increased with each successive election, “placing the [Southern Democratic] party at a spatial disadvantage”<sup>173</sup> in the region as the steady stream of whites into the GOP could simply not be adequately compensated for by the sizeable yet nonetheless far smaller black community.<sup>174</sup>

#### The continued southern racial divide

Due to the developments and shifts just described, today’s ideological and partisan fault lines of the South quite frequently overlap with the racial ones, particularly in those parts of the South where African Americans represent the biggest threat to white electoral supremacy. As the following table (table I.1.2.b) shows, the share of African Americans in the five states of the Deep South (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina) still remains significantly higher than it does in the region’s periphery. The only peripheral Southern state with a black population share above 20 percent is North Carolina. In the Deep South on the other hand, no state has a black population share below 26 percent, with three of the five states having an African-American share of their population that exceeds 30 percent.

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171 Aistrup 1996: *The Southern Strategy Revisited: Republican Top-Down Advancement in the South*, p. 123.

172 Cf. *ibid.*

173 Hayes, McKee 2008, p. 9.

174 For the pace of the realignment shift of whites and the reasons behind it cf. *ibid.*, pp. 9–14.

**Table I.1.2.b:** *Share of the African-American population in the South, 1990 through 2010 (shaded states are part of Deep South):*

State	Black or African American population share 1990 <sup>175</sup>	Black or African American alone population share 2000 <sup>176</sup>	Black or African American alone population share 2010 <sup>177</sup>
UNITED STATES	12.1	12.3	12.6
<b>Alabama</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>26.2</b>
Arkansas	15.9	15.7	15.4
Florida	13.6	14.6	16.0
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>30.5</b>
<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>32.0</b>
<b>Mississippi</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>36.3</b>	<b>37.0</b>
North Carolina	22.0	21.6	21.5
<b>South Carolina</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>27.9</b>
Tennessee	16.0	16.4	16.7
Texas	11.9	11.5	11.8
Virginia	18.8	19.6	19.4

Over 65 years ago V.O. Key, Jr. observed that the Deep South was home to whites with “the deepest and most immediate concern about the maintenance of white supremacy.”<sup>178</sup> Charting the future path of Republican majorities twenty years later, Kevin Phillips noted in a similar vein that “[t]hese are the states” with “the most acutely Negrophobe politics,”<sup>179</sup> a fact that made them a ripe target for the party’s *Southern Strategy*. Today this region with the largest black concentration and mobilization indeed also has the most ardent white Republicans found anywhere in the former Confederacy, a finding that should fail to surprise those that know the history and current politics of the heart of Dixie – as Seth McKee rightfully insists, “[r]elative to the Peripheral South [...] race always was and *still remains* a greater issue to Deep South whites [emphasis added].”<sup>180</sup> Perhaps no state epitomizes the continued presence of a racial cleavage that transcends class more so than the state of Mississippi, home to the highest share of African Americans in the nation, standing at almost three times the national percentage

175 Cf. McKinnon 2001: “The Black Population 2000 – Census 2000 Brief.” *United States Census Bureau*, August, p. 4.

176 Cf. *ibid.*

177 Cf. Rastogi, Johnson, Hoefel, and Drewery, Jr. 2011: “The Black Population: 2010–2010 Census Briefs.” *United States Census Bureau*, September, p. 8.

178 Key, Jr. 1949, p. 5.

179 Phillips 2015 [1969], p. 205.

180 McKee 2010, p. 201.

while also being the poorest state of the union.<sup>181</sup> Despite the general absence of affluence even among white Mississippians, 89 percent of them cast their vote for Mitt Romney in the most recent presidential election.<sup>182</sup>

Additional electoral data from the two southern regions is consistent with the aforementioned findings of Hood III et al. who contend that the Deep South has become more Republican than the peripheral areas of Dixie due to a feedback loop between black mobilization and increases in GOP growth in the heart of the region. Within the Deep South, Republican candidates won 29 of the region's 38 U.S. House seats in the 2012 congressional election, a share of 76.3 percent compared to a Republican winning percentage of 69 percent in the remaining peripheral six states.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, eight of the nine Democrats from the Deep South after the elections were African Americans from districts with sizeable minority populations, indicating that it is today virtually impossible for a Democrat to win districts in the Deep South that are overwhelmingly white – a stark contrast to the situation found as late as 1988 when the Democratic Party had 26 representatives in the region, 24 of whom were white.<sup>184</sup> Other data also attests to the fact that whites in the most African-American areas of the South are today the most Republican. In 1996, the mean percentage of Republican identifiers in the Deep South stood at 35 percent while in the periphery it came in at 37.9 percent. Twelve years later, the Deep South had overtaken the Periphery in terms of Republican support, with Republican identification in the Deep South at 40.8 percent while it had decreased in the periphery to 34.4 percent.<sup>185</sup> By 2012, the gap between the two regions had widened even further: In the Deep South 43 percent identified as Republicans while a mere 33 percent did so in the Rim South.<sup>186</sup>

181 For data on the household income of Mississippi and the rest of the nation cf. United States Census Bureau 2011: *Median Household Income (In 2011 Inflation-adjusted Dollars) by State Ranked from Highest to Lowest Using 3-Year Average: 2009–2011*.

182 Cf. CNN 2012j: *Mississippi Presidential Race*, November 6.

183 Own calculations based on data from Wasserman 2012: “2012 National House Popular Vote Tracker.” *The Cook Political Report*.

184 Cf. McKee 2002: “Majority Black Districts, Republican Ascendancy, and Party Competition in the South, 1988–2000.” *American Review of Politics* 23(Summer), pp. 123–139, here p. 125.

185 Cf. Bullock III 2010: “Introduction: Southern Politics in the Twenty-first Century.” In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The New Politics of the Old South: An Introduction to Southern Politics*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 1–26, here p. 11.

186 Cf. Bullock III 2014: “Introduction: Politics in the South: Out of Step with the Nation Once Again.” In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The New Politics of the Old South: An Introduction to Southern Politics*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 1–26, here p. 12.

## Conclusion

In light of facts like the particularly strong growth of Republicanism among Southern whites in areas of high black context and/or mobilization there can be little doubt that a perceived *racial* or *group threat* has played a substantial role in the realignment of the region, a verdict that will also become more apparent over the coming pages as the central components of the *Southern Strategy* that focused on harnessing racial polarization and animus are addressed in more detail. Race remained and continues to be a potent force in the region's politics even long after the victory of the civil rights movement – the “norm of racial equality” may have made casual racism unacceptable in the public sphere but the divisive issue is never far away from Southern politics. A distinctive trait that Republicans recognized and eventually managed to exploit for partisan gain to perfection and moreover one which continues to define Southern partisanship today more so than many other variables.<sup>187</sup> The interesting fact that many Southern districts with the largest black population shares also saw continued Democratic strength even among the local white population should ultimately not be seen as a reason to dismiss the white backlash theory (regardless of whether one subscribes to black *concentration* or *mobilization* as the main cause behind any such backlash) as some scholars contend<sup>188</sup> – after all this environment was where the party of the *Solid South* and white supremacy possessed the biggest reservoir of power and whites had the strongest reservations about

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187 Looking at data from the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, M.V. Hood III for example found that the impact of race on partisan identification among Southerners was seven and a half times higher than that of income. Cf. Hood III 2016: “Race, Class, Religion and the Southern Party System: A Field Report from Dixie.” *The Forum* 14(1), pp. 83–96, here p. 91.

188 The fact that Democrats were able to hold onto power for such a significant period of time in these areas of high black concentration has been used as an explanation to demonstrate the lack of potency the *racial threat* theory supposedly possessed in the post-civil rights South. David Lublin for example states that “[i]f whites felt sufficiently threatened by the power of black votes, Republican candidates might actually have found it easier to achieve the racial polarization needed to win as the black population rises. However, the evidence for the white backlash theory is quite thin.” Lublin 2004, p. 170. Shafer and Johnston also make the case in their 2006 book *The End of Southern Exceptionalism: Class, Race, and Partisan Change in the Postwar South* that if racial concerns had been the primary driving force behind realignment, whites in high black context areas should have embraced the GOP far more quickly than those living in largely white areas which often was not the case though (p. 9). Data by Black, Black 2002 also highlights the problems Republicans continued to have after the 1960s in areas with large black concentrations (pp. 376–382). This was not necessarily due to the strength of black voters who compensated for Democratic losses among whites. As the Black brothers explain, “[v]eteran conservative Democrats could easily win Democratic primaries and general elections without making more than superficial gestures and concessions to newly mobilized black voters” (pp. 377–378).



voting Republican at the local level. Defining traits of the American party system, such as the advantages the role as an incumbent bestows upon officeholders when it comes to protecting politicians from shifting partisan sands should not be underestimated. Even today – as congressional approval ratings are at all-time lows – the re-election rate of incumbents still stands above 90 percent.<sup>189</sup> The strong position many Democrats found themselves in at the local and state levels even after the move to the left on civil rights by the national party also frequently dissuaded Republicans from competing for these seats due to the relatively small likelihood of coming out as the winner – factors that helped ensure Democratic control of congressional and state political offices until the early 2000s in some parts of the South.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, the formation of biracial coalitions allowed Democrats to retain power for a considerable period of time in these racially heterogeneous areas even as the tide of white realignment began to increase substantially.

In light of the continued Democratic strength among whites during the 1960s through '80s even in high black context settings, it appears that *black mobilization* and political clout within the Democratic Party rather than simple *black concentration* ultimately appear to be a better and more sensible predictor of a possible white backlash.<sup>191</sup> As African Americans became an ever increasingly

189 In the 2012 House races, around 93 percent of all incumbents who were on the general ballot won re-election. Cf. Ballotpedia 2012a: *United States Congressional elections results, 2012*.

190 Cf. McKee 2010, pp. 4–6. As McKee (p. 6) argues, “incumbency was a key factor in prolonging Democratic hegemony because these members used their incumbency status to ward off quality challengers and to cultivate political support across party lines.” Incumbency advantage meant that Republicans had to wait a number of decades before they could make substantial inroads into the congressional South. As data by the Black brothers shows, during the 1960s and '70s a remarkable two-thirds of all Southern U.S. House elections involved Democratic incumbents with success rates standing at a similarly remarkable 97 percent during those decades. Such a vast reservoir of incumbents made it fairly easy for local Democratic state parties to remain in power. Cf. Black, Black 2002, pp. 155–156.

191 There is also evidence to indicate that seeing race through a zero-sum lens (which of course is a central component of the white backlash hypothesis) is a broader phenomenon not necessarily limited to areas of black concentration. Michael Norton and Samuel Sommers for example found that for whites the matter of racial bias can also be perceived in a zero-sum manner: As bias against blacks has decreased in recent decades it has correlated with a perceived rise in bias against whites. As the authors point out though, their work does not show that whites saw one as the cause of the other; the findings are “correlational in nature.” Nonetheless these findings do appear to indicate that increases in the political and societal clout of African Americans appear to have had a negative impact on the standing of whites in the eyes of whites themselves, lending support for the argument that *black mobilization* plays a more significant role than *concentration* (although it of course warrants pointing out that the study does not say anything about where whites who perceived the largest increases in anti-white bias hail from). Norton, Summers 2011: “Whites See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game That They Are Now Losing.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6(3), pp. 215–218.

important part of the bi-racial Democratic coalition of the South while also increasingly representing the official face of the party in electoral contests, whites began to desert their former home, a self-accelerating process that finally reached a tipping point in the early 1990s and has left the regional Democratic Party in an ever more African-American state, as vividly illustrated by the demise of the once powerful breed of *white Deep Southern Democrats* in the U.S. House that had been reduced to a single specimen in the wake of the 2010 House elections before finally becoming extinct in 2014. Long before this landmark event though, Republicans understood how to best use to their advantage the uneasiness felt by Southern whites about the increasing prominence of African Americans in Southern politics along with the white community's high levels of racial resentment.

### **I.1.3 At the confluence of *racial resentment* and the *white backlash* – The GOP's *Southern Strategy***

The sense of betrayal at the hands of the Democratic Party felt by Southern whites during the upheaval caused by the civil rights struggle provided a vital opening to Republicans. Keen observers, such as Barry Goldwater, saw an opportunity of fashioning a conservative national majority on the backs of this vast expanse of white voters that had hitherto despised the party of Lincoln and *Radical Reconstruction*. Republican strategist Kevin Phillips concluded that “white Democrats will desert their party in droves the minute it becomes a black party,”<sup>192</sup> recognizing that in the South in particular, race trumped all other cleavages. The vehicle for Republican realignment efforts in the region was to be a *Southern Strategy* that therefore sought to incorporate both racial resentment and the white backlash hypothesis to the GOP's advantage, an approach that Barry Goldwater was quite forthright about during his 1964 run for the presidency when he proclaimed that “we're not going to get the Negro vote as a bloc in 1964 and 1968, so we ought to go hunting where the ducks are.”<sup>193</sup> Goldwater – one of just six Senate Republicans to vote against the 1964 civil rights act<sup>194</sup> – felt that one of the key lessons of the 1960 presidential contest, which Richard Nixon had so narrowly lost to John F. Kennedy, was the simple fact that racial moderation was not a winning message for a conservative party, particularly if it

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192 Quoted in: Kabaservice 2012a, p. 274.

193 Quoted in: Hillygus, Shields 2008b, p. 117.

194 The Arizona senator was also one of the six Republicans who joined their largely Southern Democratic counterparts in their opposition to ending the filibuster against the civil rights act. Cf. Kabaservice 2012a, p. 98.

tried to make inroads into the South. In the eyes of Barry Goldwater, Nixon's moderate position on the topic (which the Californian would later alter, as we will see over the coming pages) was if anything to blame for the one tenth of a percentage point defeat against JFK rather than making it such a close contest to begin with.<sup>195</sup> As other conservative agitators such as George Wallace had already done to great success before them, Republican candidates like the Arizona senator now began to incorporate race into the everyday political discourse, framing the broader issue of "race" as a competition for limited resources in which both groups were fighting with each over places in the best schools, for jobs as well as housing. In the eyes of racially conservative politicians – or at least those seeking to win the vote of racially resentful whites – measures to help blacks had not infrequently given African Americans the upper hand in this competition, heightening the sense among whites that they more than ever needed politicians to stand up for their interests.<sup>196</sup> In a white South that saw a tide of recently enfranchised and empowered African Americans approaching, such an approach unsurprisingly fell on particularly fertile ground. The Southern Strategy is by no means a relic of the past either. As will be illustrated in chapter II.3 of this book when the Tea Party is described in more detail, this outlook of the tables between the races having been turned continues to form a central pillar of the ideological attitudes of contemporary racially conservative whites as well. The Southern Strategy and its legacy therefore remain a key component of American politics to this very day, precisely because it put the GOP on a trajectory that has allowed a racially conservative and anti-statist movement like the Tea Party to emerge and carry significant weight within the party.

Despite its name, the Republican Southern Strategy is somewhat of a misnomer, with its core electoral concerns and strategies extending well beyond the borders of the former Confederacy.<sup>197</sup> In Kevin Phillips' seminal 1969 work on "The Emerging Republican Majority," only 125 of the around 520 pages devoted to the different regions of the United States actually addressed the future of the South. The strategy's central focus on anti-statist tenets infused with racially charged rhetoric that portrayed the (liberal) federal government as an actor primarily working on behalf of minorities was always going to yield the highest dividends in the South though – Phillips himself after all recognized that "the

195 Cf. Teles 2011: "Compassionate Conservatism: Domestic Policy, and the Politics of Ideational Change." In: Aberbach, Peele (eds.): *Crisis of Conservatism?: The Republican Party, the Conservative Movement and American Politics After Bush*, pp. 178–211, here p. 184.

196 Cf. Edsall, Edsall 1992, pp. 77–78.

197 Cf. Haney López 2014: *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*, pp. 27–28 for additional reasons on why the strategy is a national one.

South is shaping up as the pillar of a national conservative party.”<sup>198</sup> A number of reasons lay behind these immense payoffs. First of all, when the earliest incarnation of this strategy was first employed in the 1964 presidential elections, the share of Democrats among conservative whites was still at its highest in the South, meaning that the reservoir of potential gains was at its most sizeable south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Secondly, a racially resentful electoral strategy was naturally going to play well in a region where politics had always centered around questions pertaining to race and racial equality with candidates winning elections based on their level of opposition to the latter. Racially conservative voters that had felt betrayed by the Democrats’ shift on race were nonetheless found in the rest of the country as well. In a sense paving the way for subsequent Republican politicians was the late Alabama governor George Wallace. Moving away from a rabid overtly racially charged rhetoric that had played well in his native home towards what would become the governor’s staple anti-statist populism, Wallace sought to broaden his appeal during his presidential runs of the 1960s through incorporating whites of all regional backgrounds into his assembly of persecuted Caucasians.<sup>199</sup> White supremacy had of course been at its most institutionalized in the South, meaning that the local white population there stood to lose the most. The governor recognized though that the “native sons and daughters of old New England’s rock-ribbed patriotism,” the “sturdy natives of the great Midwest” and the “descendants of the Far West Flaming spirit of pioneer freedom,” were “Southerners too and brothers with us in our fight.”<sup>200</sup> Even though these non-Southerners were not faced with a black electorate that was now going to represent around a quarter of the voting age population, they also fought against a federal government that was perceived as disregarding traditional values and tipping the scales in favor of anyone but whites.

Wallace’s expansionist zeal and his subsequent strong showings outside the region during his 1968 presidential candidacy<sup>201</sup> did not go unnoticed among Republican strategists. It demonstrated that *white ethnics* (white descendants of

198 The second pillar would be the “heartland” of the American Midwest. Phillips 2015 [1969], p. 204.

199 Cf. Lowndes 2008, pp. 77–105 for an overview of Wallace’s altered electoral strategy and his appeals to whites outside the South.

200 Comments made during Wallace’s 1963 inaugural address. Wallace 1963a: “Alabama Governor George Wallace Promises His State: ‘Segregation Now! Segregation Tomorrow! Segregation Forever!’” In: Torricelli, Carroll (eds.) 1999: *In Our Own Words: Extraordinary Speeches of the American Century*, pp. 228–232, here p. 229.

201 The Alabama governor won over ten percent in populous northern states such as Indiana (11.4 percent) and Michigan (10.0 percent) while also doing well in blue collar northeastern states such as New Jersey (9.1 percent) and Pennsylvania (8.0 percent). In Maryland, a state bordering the South, he also won 14.5 percent of the popular vote. For data cf. Leip 2014: *Dave Leip’s Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*.

central, southern and eastern European immigrant groups) in many areas of the country had some of the same grievances as their conservative white (usually Anglo-Saxon) cousins south of the Mason-Dixon Line – namely the sense that African Americans received unjust support while their immigrant ancestors had to work their way up in a discriminatory environment without any help.<sup>202</sup> As already mentioned earlier, Kevin Phillips therefore concluded that that the primary cleavage of American politics separating different parts of the electorate was of a racial variety instead of one based on regional peculiarities or economic wellbeing; the party's strategy for future elections was thus to be drawn up accordingly.<sup>203</sup> This path to power was undoubtedly going to pass through the South. Phillips himself rhetorically asked “[w]ho needs Manhattan when we can get the electoral votes of eleven Southern States?” adding though that “those together with the Farm Belt and Rocky Mountains, and we don't need the big cities. We don't even want them.”<sup>204</sup> The second sentence highlights Phillips' understanding that any Southern Strategy that exclusively focused on the South and disgruntled racial conservatives in the region was going to have a relatively limited chance of success, findings that were as true in the 1960s as they are today.

### The Southern Strategy in action

A central tenet of the Southern Strategy, owed to the fact that racial equality had become the norm, was the incorporation of race into the public discourse without ever explicitly mentioning race, an approach whose features and rules are explained in more detail in the next chapter. When Goldwater wanted to appeal to white Southerners he never explicitly attacked African Americans or sought to portray them as being part of a sub-white caste. As Richard Rovere noted in his 1965 account of the campaign, Goldwater “covered the South and never, in any public gatherings, mentioned ‘race’ or ‘Negroes’ or ‘whites’ or ‘segregation’ or ‘civil rights’.”<sup>205</sup> The senator from the desert state of Arizona instead used an “Aesopian [...] language, a kind of code that few in his audiences had any trouble deciphering.”<sup>206</sup> Goldwater thus argued that his vote against the 1964 civil rights act did not represent an opposition to racial equality but had merely been an effort on his part to stand up for “states' rights” (which Rovere

202 Cf. Sugrue, Skrentny 2008, pp. 178–179.

203 Cf. Kabaservice 2012a, p. 274.

204 Quoted in: Tanenhaus 2013: “Original Sin: Why the GOP is and will continue to be the party of white people.” *The New Republic*, February 10.

205 Rovere 1965: *The Goldwater Capers*, p. 143.

206 *Ibid.*

rightfully contends stood as code for “opposition to civil rights”<sup>207</sup>) and the American public’s right to “freedom of association,” which Goldwater described as the freedom to decide whom to allow onto one’s property but in the South largely meant that business owners could refuse services to African Americans.<sup>208</sup> For Goldwater though, freedom of association “applie[d] to both parties who want to associate with each other,” adding that “the freedom to associate means the same thing as the freedom not to associate.”<sup>209</sup> Speaking on the Senate floor ahead of the vote on the 1964 civil rights act, Goldwater elaborated on his disapproval of that particular act and its incursions into the right of Americans “not to associate” by voicing his opposition to specific provisions in the act that banned discrimination in public accommodations and employment. The staunch libertarian considered “the attempted usurpation of such power to be a grave threat to the very essence of our basic system of government.”<sup>210</sup> Individual freedom from (federal) government interference appeared to supersede the right of minorities to be protected from the abuse rooted in the usage of that individual freedom against them in the eyes of the senator, a stance that was music to the ears of racially conservative white Southerners. On the campaign trail Goldwater employed a language that also fused broader anti-government conservatism with its racial brethren, laying the foundations for an approach that subsequent Republican leaders would both build and improve upon. In a speech delivered three weeks ahead of the 1964 presidential election, the Arizona Senator made the case that the nation’s “aim [...] is neither to establish a segregated society nor to establish an integrated society. It is to preserve a *free* society.”<sup>211</sup> On the specific issue of the integration of schools, Goldwater added that “it [was] just as wrong to compel children to attend certain schools for the sake of so-called integration as for the sake of segregation.”<sup>212</sup> Comments like these that sought to emphasize non-racial libertarian values while connecting them to issues that stood at the center of racial conservatism were indicators that just “[l]ike Wallace, Goldwater had learned how to talk about blacks without ever mentioning race.”<sup>213</sup> And just like Wallace, Goldwater managed to portray his own position as profoundly *American* and standing in the tradition of the Founding Fathers while those that sought to use federal power against the states constituted the aforementioned “grave threat” to the system of government that

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207 Ibid.

208 Cf. Haney López 2014, pp. 19–20.

209 Quoted in: Smith 2010, p. 131.

210 Quoted in: Ibid., p. 130.

211 Quoted in: Perlstein 2001: *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus*, p. 461.

212 Quoted in: Ibid.

213 Haney López 2014, p. 20.

had been established by the very same Founders.<sup>214</sup> This manner of framing positions on the right has of course been seamlessly integrated into contemporary political discourse by twenty-first century conservative incarnations that see themselves as standing in the tradition of Goldwater but on actual policy questions have far more in common with Wallace (see the chapters on the Tea Party [II.3])

In the immediate aftermath of the 1964 presidential election, the Arizona senator's legacy might have been considered non-existent due to the massive rejection his message received by the wider electorate. Winning a mere six states, Goldwater was defeated in a manner that no Republican has had to endure since. A closer look reveals the first buds of the GOP's Southernization though. Goldwater won all five states of the Deep South (with the exception of Louisiana<sup>215</sup> the first time any of them had voted for a Republican presidential candidate since the 1870s), leaving his home state of Arizona as the only state the senator carried outside of the most racially conservative region of the country. Out of the 60 congressional districts Goldwater carried, a mere 16 were located outside the South.<sup>216</sup> Overall, the senator won 55 percent of the southern white vote, then the best result a Republican candidate had ever obtained.<sup>217</sup> While the congressional contests of that year proved equally disastrous for the GOP, some remarkable gains were achieved in areas which were particularly predisposed to Goldwater's rhetoric and policy proposals. In Alabama for example, Democrats lost five of their eight seats in the U.S. House in the 1964 congressional elections.<sup>218</sup> Even the most ardent Goldwater supporters could nonetheless not get around the fact that their candidate's strategy had only made inroads into areas of the country that were home to the most zealous racial conservatives.<sup>219</sup> As Richard Nixon observed, the Arizona senator had simply "won the wrong states" in the region, something owed to the fact that Goldwater had contested the election "as a racist candidate."<sup>220</sup> Four years later, Richard Nixon was committed to not making the same mistake again, as he and his strategists devised a

214 For the portrayal of his own views as fundamentally patriotic and quintessentially American, see Wallace's 1964 speech on the civil rights act. Wallace 1964: *The Civil Rights Movement: Fraud, Sham, and Hoax*. July 4.

215 Which voted for Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956.

216 Cf. Thurber 2007: "Goldwaterism Triumphant? Race and the Republican Party, 1965–1968." *The Journal of the Historical Society* 7(3), pp. 349–384, here p. 352.

217 Cf. Black, Black 2002, p. 209.

218 Cf. Thurber 2007, p. 353.

219 Richard Rovere's account of Goldwater's time on the campaign trail bluntly reached the conclusion that "the Goldwater movement [...] appears to be a racist movement and almost nothing else." Rovere 1964: "The Campaign: Goldwater." *The New Yorker*, October 3.

220 Quoted in: Carter 2000: *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 326.

campaign that would seek to alter and improve the Southern Strategy so that white supremacists could be kept in the Republican camp without scaring off the “white middle-class urban and suburban areas of the Outer South”<sup>221</sup> – setting the stage for a Republican domination at the presidential level that would last into the early 1990s.

Nixon himself had been somewhat of a convert to a racially conservative message on civil rights, with his changing position serving to reflect the wider changes that transpired within the Republican Party during the 1960s. As Eisenhower’s vice president, Nixon took charge of the administration’s moderate civil rights policy, forging a somewhat friendly relationship with Martin Luther King Jr. in the process and on one occasion during his 1960 run for the presidency moving his entire campaign staff out of a hotel that refused to host black reporters.<sup>222</sup> On the campaign trail that same year, Richard Nixon still argued that the civil rights question was not just a Southern matter but a problem for the entire nation that thus required federal action.<sup>223</sup> The stance he espoused eight years later (desegregation but not integration)<sup>224</sup> was not a complete disavowal of his earlier positions but instead represented a refinement of Goldwater’s approach that had become necessary as – similar to the establishment of the “norm of racial equality” – the debate surrounding civil rights legislation was by 1968 “about how far civil rights regulations should go, not whether or not to have them.”<sup>225</sup> Moving away from a specific focus on states’ rights and issues that were central to hardened racial conservatives of the South, Nixon instead mixed his message of conservatism with tough talk on crime (an issue that was ultimately directly linked to those “damn Negroes”<sup>226</sup> according to Nixon) and a broader anti-welfare message (also inherently tied to those very same “Negroes” that “live[d] like a bunch of dogs”<sup>227</sup> in the words of the president) – a slight but important shift in tone and focus that nonetheless sought to use racial resentment to its advantage, albeit in a more subtle and implicit manner than Goldwater had done.<sup>228</sup> As Nixon’s White House Counsel John Ehrlichman observed

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221 As Kevin Phillips notes, these were the areas in the region (along with certain traditional Republican strongholds in the South) that Nixon sought to focus on in 1968. Phillips 2015 [1969], p. 227.

222 E. Thomas 2015: *Being Nixon: A Man Divided*, p. 116.

223 Cf. Hillygus, Shields 2008b, p. 107.

224 Cf. Spitzer 2012: “Nixon’s New Deal: Welfare Reform for the Silent Majority.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42(3), pp. 455–481, here p. 466.

225 Skrentny 2014: “Zigs and Zags: Richard Nixon and the New Politics of Race.” In: Osgood, White (eds.): *Winning While Losing: Civil Rights, The Conservative Movement and the Presidency from Nixon to Obama*, pp. 26–54, here p. 29.

226 Quoted in: Mendelberg 2001, p. 97.

227 Quoted in: Courtwright 2010, p. 73.

228 Cf. Black, Black 2002, pp. 210–211 and Mendelberg 2001, pp. 95–98.



quite candidly, “subliminal appeal to the anti-black voter was always present in Nixon’s statements and speeches.”<sup>229</sup> The environment Richard Nixon found himself in also represented quite a fertile ground for those subliminal appeals. As will be addressed in the next chapter on *coded appeals* as well, riots in black urban areas towards the tail end of the decade as well as the rise of a radicalized *Black Power* movement provided the perfect opening for conservative politicians to conflate race and crime with one another – to such an extent that by the time of the 1968 presidential election *law and order* had already “become a surrogate expression for concern over the increasing power of the civil rights movement.”<sup>230</sup> The 1968 contest also served to once again illustrate the enormous and enduring potential that a more ferocious racial conservatism and a strategy intended to harness these sentiments could have to both Richard Nixon and his party. Throwing a wrench into Nixon’s plans to build on Goldwater’s success in the Deep South and win the entirety of the region with a more subdued appeal to racially resentful Southerners was the candidacy of George Wallace.<sup>231</sup> Running on the ticket of the American Independent Party, Wallace managed to capture 13.5 percent of the national popular vote and five Southern states as Nixon barely beat his Democratic opponent Hubert Humphrey in the popular vote. Nixon’s toned down Southern Strategy on the other hand netted him four of the peripheral Southern states along with one *Deep Southern* conquest (South Carolina). This combined showing along with the fact that Democrat Hubert Humphrey therefore only carried a single state in his party’s former stronghold ultimately demonstrated to everyone that “1968 signaled the end of an era.”<sup>232</sup> The white South had turned its back on the Democrats – but not yet wholly embraced Republicanism.

Once in office, Richard Nixon set about winning over the remaining holdouts. The conclusions the freshly elected president drew from Wallace’s success and the eventual revelation of their erroneous nature would prove to have far-reaching consequences for the GOP beyond the Nixon administration. Shortly

229 Quoted in: Haney López 2014, p. 24. Wallace biographer Dan T. Carter also notes that “almost every issue in the [1968] campaign was tightly interwoven with issues of race.” Cf. Carter 1996a: *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counter-revolution, 1963–1994*, p. 28.

230 Haney López 2010: “Post-Racial Racism: Racial Stratification and Mass Incarceration in the Age of Obama.” *California Law Review* 98(3), pp. 1023–1074, here p. 1033.

231 Nixon was sure that without Wallace, he could have carried the entire former Confederacy even with a message that was more moderate on race than Goldwater’s. Faced with a stark choice between the party (and possibly the man) that had delivered civil rights to black Southerners or the GOP, Nixon assumed that even whites in the Deep South would have voted Republican. Wallace’s candidacy put an end to those plans though. Cf. Carter 2000, pp. 326–328.

232 Phillips 2015 [1969], p. 228.

after entering the White House and influenced by his liberal advisor Daniel P. Moynihan, proposals were drawn up by the administration to provide poor families with additional government benefits through the *Family Assistance Plan* (FAP), “arguably one of the most progressive welfare reform proposals the country has seen”<sup>233</sup> and a measure indented to specifically appeal to the rather sizeable segment of less affluent Southern whites that had supported the Alabama governor.<sup>234</sup> As illustrated by his previous stance on civil rights, supporting certain liberal policies was by no means unusual for Nixon – after all “Tory men and liberal policies,” Nixon noted after reading a biography of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, “are what have changed the world.”<sup>235</sup> The key problem facing the Nixon administration was that by this point welfare had already become heavily racialized, both in the minds of white voters and their elites. Nixon himself privately confessed to his aides that “the *whole* problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to. Problem with the overall welfare plan is that it forces poor whites into the same position as blacks;”<sup>236</sup> a position that moreover no white person in the South wanted to find themselves in. Although he was keenly aware of the prevalent prejudice in the region, Nixon nonetheless underestimated the extent to which it drove the policy preferences of Southern whites. Despite standing to profit, the administration’s FAP fell on deaf ears south of the Mason–Dixon Line both among white legislators and voters because African Americans were seen to be significant beneficiaries,<sup>237</sup> causing an about-face by the President on the

233 Mellow 2008: *The State of Disunion: Regional Sources of Modern American Partisanship*, p. 129. Arthur Paulson agrees with this assessment, making the point that Nixon’s FAP “was a distinctly more liberal proposal than the welfare reform that passed Congress a quarter century later.” Paulson 2007: *Electoral Realignment and the Outlook for American Democracy*, p. 157.

234 Through the administration’s *Family Assistance Plan*, poor families were set to receive additional federal allowances and benefits. A family of four for example with an income of up to \$720 would have been eligible for a maximum payout of \$1,600. At an income of \$3,920, government assistance would have dropped to zero. Cf. Lampman 1969: “Nixon’s Family Assistance Plan.” *Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin (Madison)*, p. 19.

235 Quoted in: Passell, Ross 1973: “Daniel Moynihan and President-elect Nixon: How charity didn’t begin at home.” *New York Times*, January 14.

236 Quoted in: Lowndes 2008, p. 122.

237 For an overview of white Southern opposition to FAP, cf. Mellow 2008, pp. 107–112. The implementation of Nixon’s federal welfare reform would have dramatically increased the income of African Americans in the South in particular, thereby also severely reducing the incentive for blacks to migrate north and settle in states that had hitherto provided more extensive state benefits. An OLS analysis of state support for FAP in 1970 by Mellow shows that, controlling for other variables, a one percent increase in African-American population led to a two percent decrease in a state’s support for FAP (cf. *ibid.*, p. 112). The out-migration of African Americans was actively encouraged by white supremacists across the

matter that represented one of the central “turning points in Nixon’s heretofore moderate approach toward issues of race, welfare, and economics.”<sup>238</sup> Welfare was from the fall of 1970 on primarily employed by the president as a wedge issue to win the votes of members of the white working class across the country who felt entitlement programs were often primarily run in the interest of African Americans, with “the veiled racial backlash embodied in Nixon’s antiwelfare rhetoric” representing “a powerful component of subsequent efforts to draw together a new Republican majority coalition.”<sup>239</sup> It was a lesson that was indeed learned and taken to heart by his party – gone were moderate proposals pertaining to welfare reform, sacrificed on the altar of the *Southern Strategy*. In the days since Nixon’s U-turn on FAP, prominent Republicans from Ronald Reagan to Newt Gingrich and more recently Mitt Romney<sup>240</sup> have time and again also gone on to use, or at least tried to use, a racialized version of welfare to their own advantage in attempts to win segments of the electorate that would sometimes even stand to gain from an expansion of the welfare state but nonetheless reject any such measures at least in part on the grounds of their racial conservatism.

Welfare most certainly was not the only area in which Nixon ultimately accrued a record that made him an enticing choice for racially resentful whites. While the 37<sup>th</sup> president never openly argued in favor of segregation he did feel that federal action to desegregate schools had “[gone] too far [...] and in many cases [...] should be rescinded.”<sup>241</sup> On the campaign trail and in office, Nixon elaborated on this position by voicing his vehement disapproval of “forced busing,” the integration of schools by transporting children to hitherto largely segregated places of education, an issue that Jeremy Mayer argues “served as an effective litmus test for both sides of the racial divide.”<sup>242</sup> In the eyes of white racial conservatives “opposition to busing meant sympathy with their worldview, while for racial progressives, support of busing would separate the true

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region. On the campaign trail in Mississippi in 1963, Paul B. Johnson, Jr. (Democratic candidate for the state’s governorship) stated that he approved of the exodus of “good-for-nothing lazy Negroes,” adding that it would be sensible to introduce an education program which would “teach some of our Negroes that they are wasting their time staying in Mississippi.” Quoted in: Crespino 2007: *In Search of another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution*, p. 116.

238 Carter 2000, p. 399. Cf. also Spitzer 2012, pp. 474–475 and Carter 1996a, pp. 45–46.

239 Spitzer 2012, p. 477. For the response of the administration to the failure of FAP cf. *ibid.*, pp. 473–477.

240 See the usage by the Romney camp of President Obama’s supposed dismantling of the mid-1990s welfare reform act and the manner in which it was presented to the public in advertisements. Cf. Moorhead 2012: “Mitt Romney says Barack Obama’s plan for welfare reform: ‘They just send you your check.’” *Tampa Bay Times*, August 7.

241 Quoted in: Hillygus, Shields 2008b, p. 107.

242 Mayer 2002: *Running on Race: Racial Politics in Presidential Campaigns, 1960–2000*, pp. 115–116.

civil rights advocates from the Johnny-come-latelies.”<sup>243</sup> Focusing on a topic like “busing” also allowed conservative candidates to retain the all-important deniability of playing the race card. If attacked for employing racial appeals, Republicans could respond by arguing that their opposition was simply rooted in an objection to the government making decisions that were best left in the hands of parents.<sup>244</sup> Nixon’s positions and actions left little though doubt about which side of the “racial divide” he stood on. “I think that busing the child [...] into a strange community – I think you destroy that child,”<sup>245</sup> is how candidate Nixon put it to a group of Southern delegates for the Republican National Convention in 1968. As president he assured Southern leaders that “no lawyers [would be] sent to the South for the purposes of coercion”<sup>246</sup> when it came to actively enforcing desegregation. Members of the administration who strayed from this path were quickly righted. After Nixon’s new secretary for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare revealed his support for federal busing measures, the president reprimanded him and told the department to “[d]o what the law requires and not *one bit more*.”<sup>247</sup> Recognizing that his own abilities to help white Southerners in their cause were limited by judicial oversight, the president also sought to inject a heavy dosage of Southern conservatism into the Supreme Court. When Hugo Black left the court in September of 1971, Nixon responded that “[w]e now do have to have a southerner. I really think it would be a slap to the South not to try for a southerner. So I’d say that our first requirement is have a southerner.”<sup>248</sup> Nixon’s list would not stop there though. The second requirement was that the nominee had to be a “conservative southerner” – someone who would therefore meet the president’s third requirement of being “against busing, and against forced housing integration.”<sup>249</sup> “Beyond that,” the president confided to attorney general John Mitchell, “he can do what he pleases.”<sup>250</sup> This approach of focusing on central Southern concerns most certainly paid off handsomely in the region. In the 1972 presidential election, Nixon won roughly 79 to 82 percent of the Southern white vote depending on the source (a support level not even matched by Ronald Reagan and of course also aided by

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243 Ibid., p. 115.

244 Cf. Omi, Winant 2015: *Racial Formation in the United States*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., p. 192.

245 Quoted in: Skrentny 2014, p. 31.

246 Quoted in: Spitzer 2012, p. 467.

247 Quoted in: Kruse 2005: *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, p. 255.

248 Quoted in: Dean 2001: *The Rehnquist Choice: The Untold Story of the Nixon Appointment That Redefined the Supreme Court*, pp. 46–47.

249 Quoted in: Ibid., p. 47.

250 Quoted in: Ibid.

the absence of George Wallace)<sup>251</sup> while the president's six strongest states were all located in the South or within its periphery (Oklahoma).<sup>252</sup> Overall, all eleven former Confederate states could be found among the 17 strongest Nixon states.<sup>253</sup> A mere eight years after the passage of the landmark 1964 civil rights act, the South had already become arguably the most solidly Republican region in presidential contests.

At the same time, it does warrant mentioning that Richard Nixon did take some steps during his time in office that were hardly popular among white racial conservatives. The first affirmative action program, the so called "Philadelphia Plan," complete with minority quotas for contractors on government-funded building sites was for example introduced during his presidency in 1969, subsequently expanded a year later to be applied to all hiring and contracting decisions made by the federal government.<sup>254</sup> His administration also rescinded tax exemptions for private schools with racially discriminatory policies, an issue that we will see in subsequent chapters played a key role in the establishment of the Christian Right and was central to Reagan's attempts at wooing both Evangelicals and racial conservatives. The numbers on the desegregation of Southern schools also point towards a president whose policies could hardly be described as racist: While 68 percent of black children in the South still attended all-black schools in 1968, this share dropped to a mere eight percent by the end of Nixon's first term in office.<sup>255</sup> Timothy Thurber thus arrives at the conclusion that Nixon left "an ambiguous, contradictory racial legacy" that was "ultimately closer to liberal Republicanism than Goldwaterism,"<sup>256</sup> while Nixon biographer Evan Thomas notes that when it came to the integration of Southern schools, "Nixon had achieved a milestone in race relations"<sup>257</sup> through his shrewd ap-

251 Cf. Phillips 2006: *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century*, p. 178.

252 Nixon's largest shares of the popular vote came in Mississippi (78.2 percent), Georgia (75 percent), Oklahoma (73.7 percent), Alabama (72.4 percent), Florida (71.9 percent), and South Carolina (70.6 percent). His weakest Southern showing came in Louisiana, where he nonetheless won over 65 percent of the vote. Cf. Leip 2014 for data.

253 Cf. *ibid.* for data.

254 Cf. Isserman, Kazin 2000: *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, p. 273. For a broader overview on Richard Nixon and affirmative action policies cf. Kotlowski 1998: "Richard Nixon and the Origins of Affirmative Action." *The Historian* 60(3), pp. 523–541. Rick Perlstein argues that Nixon embraced the "Philadelphia Plan" of quotas on building sites not because of any racially progressive sentiments but rather because it created tensions within the Democratic Party between two key pillars of the party: (white) members of labor unions and African Americans. Cf. Perlstein 2008a: *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, p. 515.

255 Cf. E. Thomas 2015, p. 260.

256 Thurber 2007, p. 374.

257 E. Thomas 2015, p. 261.

proach of selling the administration's desegregation policies to both blacks and whites from the South. The 37<sup>th</sup> president nonetheless reflected the wider changes the GOP had undergone during the 1960s in the party's quest to win the South, with the president's administration paying little attention to black concerns in an attempt to court the white racial conservative vote both inside and outside the South, thereby taking Kevin Phillips' key strategic principle to heart that gains among racially resentful whites would more than compensate for the complete Republican implosion among blacks.<sup>258</sup> Nixon's true legacy ultimately was his refinement of the Southern Strategy that allowed Republicans to offer an appealing message to not just the most rabid racial conservatives of the South but also to other disaffected whites across the country who felt an acute and increasing sense of status loss as African Americans were empowered by civil rights legislations.<sup>259</sup> This alliance and its galvanization through a rhetoric and policies that play on white racial fears without ever explicitly mentioning race have been a central component of the Republican Party ever since.

### The Southern Strategy and its legacy

The re-emergence of race in the wake of President Obama's election that has been noted and lamented by journalists and analysts alike should not have come as a surprise to an attentive student of twentieth-century American politics, knowing full well about the role race has played in the most significant realignment of American postwar politics. This continued salience of race in the public discourse is not tied to the first black president nor is it likely to disappear anytime soon if one takes the deep roots the Southern Strategy possesses within the GOP into account. Race and attempts to link non-racial policy matters to it have been and continue to be a central tenet of Republican electoral strategies and the party's broader ideological foundations, as has been highlighted in this chapter and will be further demonstrated in the next one. The specific goals and assumptions behind the Southern Strategy also show that the enduring prom-

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258 Jeremy Mayer sums up Nixon's shift on civil rights quite appropriately when he concludes that the president's and the wider Republican Party's "attitude toward civil rights and blacks [...] could be summarized as 'the hell with them'," by early 1968. Mayer 2002, p. 75.

259 See also Tali Mendelberg's conclusion regarding the 1968 presidential campaign: "This was also the very first election in the long history of racial campaigns that seemed to have netted a presidential victory. The apparent success would help to make the strategy popular in all manner of electoral contests. But campaigns that used it took note of the twist Nixon had put on it – they were careful to play the race card with deniability." Mendelberg 2001, p. 98. Regarding Nixon's legacy beyond his party's electoral strategy, Geoffrey Kabaservice concludes that "Nixon did succeed in making populist conservatism the default condition of Republican politics." Kabaservice 2012a, p. 321.

inence of race is not simply, as some defenders of the GOP might claim, a side effect of a wider Republican strategy that initially focused on an extensive, non-racial conservative message and has instead been racialized by its liberal detractors. Racial conservatives are most definitely not misinterpreting Republican cues, nor has their influx been the primary driver behind the Republican move to the right on the divisive matter of race. The impetus for this change came from within, long before racial conservatives joined the ranks of the party in droves. As Ian Haney López notes, “[t]he rise of a racially-identified GOP is *not* a tale of latent bigotry in that party. It is instead a story centered on the strategic decision to use racism to become ‘the White Man’s Party.’”<sup>260</sup> The broader legacy of the strategy is of course best revealed by today’s *southernized* Republican Party, a contemporary state of the GOP that will be addressed in a detailed manner in chapter II.1. Ultimately, the Republican choice to use race as a central tool in winning the South and disaffected whites across the rest of the nation has had repercussions that extend beyond the composition of congressional caucuses though. By completely abandoning the black electorate, Republicans have cemented a racial cleavage in American politics that has shown signs of increasingly overlapping with its partisan kin. The Southern Strategy has also had the intended effect of turning the GOP into the party of the white electorate, a precarious position to be in considering the demographic changes that have transpired in the US in recent years and are set to continue.

### 1.1.4 The art of coded appeals, the spillover of race, and their effects on the GOP

In December of 2002, three sentences would bring down the leader of the Republican Party in the U.S. Senate. Speaking at an event celebrating Strom Thurmond’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott remembered the centenarian’s presidential run in 1948, when Thurmond broke ranks with the Democratic Party to run as a staunch segregationist. On the campaign trail that year the late South Carolina senator made his fair share of controversial remarks, perhaps none more infamous than comments he delivered to an audience in Birmingham, Alabama in July of 1948. “But I want to tell you,” he told the crowd, “that there’s not enough troops in the army to force the southern people to break down segregation and admit the nigger race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into our homes, and into our churches.”<sup>261</sup> Perhaps forgetting that part of the campaign, Lott wondered what might have happened had Thurmond

260 Haney López 2014, p. 18.

261 Quoted in: Crespino 2012: *Strom Thurmond’s America*, p. 71.

not just carried four Southern states, among which one could find Lott's home state of Mississippi. The Senate Minority Leader did little to hide his admiration for Thurmond, telling those gathered at the birthday celebrations that "[w]hen Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it."<sup>262</sup> Lott did not stop there though: "[I]f the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either."<sup>263</sup> A mere two weeks later, Lott had to resign from his post in the senate. The fate suffered by the Mississippi senator highlights the fine line politicians and public figures have to walk in an environment in which racial equality is the norm and virtually all explicit infringements against it, such as lauding a campaign centered on keeping the "nigger" out of white schools, carry serious repercussions.

Coded appeals to prime racial resentment without ever explicitly mentioning race have been a staple of Southern politics in particular ever since Mendelberg's "norm of racial equality" took effect in the 1960s.<sup>264</sup> This rhetoric and strategy of linking race to a variety of other policy questions and matters has provided conservative politicians not just in the South with the perfect means of exploiting both *racial resentment* and a perceived *racial threat* without the person intending to trigger this response appearing overtly racist. George Wallace perfected this art of appealing to racial conservatives through implicit appeals, a requirement for any chances of a broader, national success during the governor's 1968 presidential campaign. By this point, race "had to exceed its own boundaries and come to stand for a number of issues."<sup>265</sup> The fusion of anti-statism with racial resentment devised by the Alabama governor proved to be an ingenious strategy that would have a lasting impact on conservative politicians across the country while providing Southern Republicans in particular with a blueprint for winning over disaffected whites in the region. Wallace's outwardly non-racial anti-government populism was "saturated" by race while the governor's racist agenda was simultaneously "masked"<sup>266</sup> by the supposedly non-racial fig leaf Wallace's populist ideology provided.<sup>267</sup> Attacking the 1964 civil

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262 Quoted in: Micklethwait, Wooldridge 2004: *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*, p. 249.

263 Quoted in: *Ibid.*, pp. 249–250.

264 Cf. also Omi, Winant 2015, p. 192. As the authors note, "[t]he racial upheavals of the 1960s ruled out any attempt to return to legally enforced segregation. [...] Since the political gains of anti-racist movements could not be easily reversed, they had to be *rearticulated*. The key device used by the new right to challenge these gains was the innovative use of 'code words' in its political messaging." Racial progress was thus attacked not on the grounds of race but rather by portraying government action as an erroneous approach to solving these problems.

265 Lowndes 2008, p. 81.

266 Both: *Ibid.*

267 Cf. *ibid.* Or, to use the words of Wallace biographer Dan T. Carter, the Alabama governor



rights act during a speech delivered on Independence Day of the same year, the Alabama governor was careful to never explicitly refer to African Americans in his jeremiad against the federal government. Instead he presented the legislation as violating age old American tenets of individualism and the free market, denouncing the act for “destroy[ing] our free enterprise system, [...] destroy[ing] neighborhood schools, [...] destroy[ing] the rights of private property,”<sup>268</sup> while sounding the dire warning that the piece of legislation posed a grave threat to “our freedom of speech, of assembly, or association, and makes the exercise of these freedoms a federal crime under certain conditions.”<sup>269</sup> When hundreds of thousands of people – the vast majority of whom were black – marched on Washington, D.C. in August of 1963 to demand the passage of civil rights legislation, Wallace bluntly dismissed them as “communists and sex perverts”<sup>270</sup> instead of focusing on the racial composition of the protesters. His infamous “stand in the schoolhouse door” two months earlier at the University of Alabama to prevent the institution’s desegregation was presented as a defense of his state’s rights against “the might of the Central Government” whose integrationist policies “offer[ed] frightful example of the oppression of the rights, privileges, and sovereignty of this State by officers of the Federal Government.”<sup>271</sup> Wallace was not casting himself as a defender of segregation but rather someone who objected to and fought the “illegal usurpation of power”<sup>272</sup> at the hands of the federal government in Washington, D.C.

The governor’s target audience could quite easily recognize his cues though. As an Alabama senator and contemporary of Wallace observed, “[h]e can use all the other issues – law and order, running your own schools, protecting property rights – and never mention race. But people will know he’s telling them, ‘A nigger’s trying to get your job, trying to move into your neighborhood.’”<sup>273</sup> In a similar vein Wallace biographer Dan T. Carter concluded that while the governor “may have singled out ‘elitist’ bureaucrats as symbols of some malevolent abstraction called ‘Washington’ [...] everyone knew that his real enemies were the

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was able to “have the best of both worlds. He could reap the benefits of some of the most reprehensible attitudes in our culture while innocently proclaiming the purest of motives.” Carter 1996b: “Legacy of Rage: George Wallace and the Transformation of American Politics.” *The Journal of Southern History* 62(1), pp. 3–26, here p. 26.

268 Wallace 1964.

269 Ibid.

270 Quoted in: Woods 2006: *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition*, p. 528.

271 Wallace 1963b: “Governor George C. Wallace’s School House Door Speech.” June 11. In: *Alabama Department of Archives and History*.

272 Ibid.

273 Quoted in: Mendelberg 2001, pp. 96–97.

constituencies those federal officials represented:<sup>274</sup> minorities who benefited from the welfare state.

More quickly than many other conservative politicians of the era, Wallace was able to sense and exploit the growing disaffection many whites were beginning to feel for the federal government in the 1960s. Heading into the 1968 election, Wallace for example predicted that *law and order* was going to play a substantial role in the decision making process of whites, a policy that indeed took center stage in the Nixon campaign's efforts of winning white voters. The reasons for this newfound centrality of crime could be found in the upheavals of the decade. Urban riots and a radicalization of the civil rights movements during the mid to late-1960s symbolized by the emergence of the *Black Panthers* had driven home the point that many African Americans were still not satisfied with the progress that had been made in the earlier part of that decade. Determined to play on the fear this black uprising evoked among not just the most zealous racially conservative whites, Wallace lambasted the Johnson administration in particular and the broader and more abstract concept of *Washington, D.C.* in general for their handling of these developments, claiming that voters were going "to be fed up with the sissy attitude of Lyndon Johnson and all the intellectual morons and theoreticians he has around him" when it came to the matter of "crime in the streets."<sup>275</sup> Richard Nixon took a page out of Wallace's book and promised a similar crackdown on crime with his Democratic opponent Hubert Humphrey accusing the Californian of using "law and order" as coded rhetoric for the planned repression of African Americans in response to the rioting that was taking place in their communities.<sup>276</sup> Wallace's keen eye for the fears and worries of the white community would prove to have lasting repercussions as crime has become one of the most racialized topics in public policy discussions. One particular recent study for example showed white respondents to be more supportive of capital punishment when the racial appeal that "some people say that the death penalty is unfair because most of the people who are executed are

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274 Carter 2000, p. 473.

275 Quoted in: Micklethwait, Wooldridge 2004, p. 66.

276 Cf. Mendelberg 2001 p. 98. The issue of law and order was indeed widely recognized to be anything but non-racial by the late 1960s. Joseph Crespino for example contends that when Strom Thurmond asked in 1968 "[w]ho can oppose law and order," "millions of Americans [still] [...] felt queasy over hearing the issue of law and order so baldly put in Strom Thurmond's southern accent. The old Dixiecrat seemed to be ventriloquizing ancient southern fearmongering about lawless black men." (Crespino 2012, p. 221) The concurrent riots taking place across a number of urban centers in the U.S. at the same time illustrated to some of those very same Americans though that Thurmond might have had a point after all, ultimately resulting in the fact that "a significant number of white Americans wound up empathizing with fears and resentments that Thurmond had been channeling for more than two decades." (Ibid., p. 222)

African Americans” is placed ahead of the general survey question.<sup>277</sup> A non-racial appeal informing respondents that some argue “the death penalty is unfair because too many innocent people are being executed” had no discernible influence on support among whites on the other hand while substantially decreasing support for the death penalty among African Americans.<sup>278</sup> The cue that a disproportionate share of death row inmates is black thus appears to trigger an increased desire for strong punishment among certain segments of the white population. That “opinions about crime have become tightly linked to attitudes about blacks”<sup>279</sup> in American society today and that for a non-inconsequential share of the white public their opinion on this matter is influenced if not shaped by their racial animus is in no small part a legacy directly attributable to political figures like Wallace and Nixon.

The aforementioned examples of Wallace, Goldwater, and Nixon demonstrate that contemporary coded appeals look back on a long history of prominent use at the highest political levels that is not limited to the immediate civil rights era. One of the more notable (crime-related) examples in recent history was George H. W. Bush’s 1988 “Willie Horton ad,” used in the campaign against Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis – an ad that civil rights historian David Chappell contends “represents the abiding power of racism in post-1960s politics.”<sup>280</sup> Two years earlier, convicted Massachusetts felon Willie Horton (an African American) had raped a woman and assaulted her fiancé after escaping from a weekend furlough program. The ad itself sought to contrast then Vice President Bush’s tough stance on crime (“supports the death penalty for first degree murderers”) with that of his Democratic opponent (“allowed first degree murderers to have weekend passes from prison”), showing images of Horton such as his mug shot and revealing the gory details of his crimes (“murdered a boy in a robbery, stabbing him 19 times”) to a wider audience.<sup>281</sup> An experiment conducted by Tali Mendelberg which showed a set of non-Hispanic white students either a news segment about Willie Horton (which included part of the ad) or a completely unrelated non-racial news story and then proceeded to ask them questions about racial equality revealed the impact this broader story had on

277 “Here is a question about the death penalty. Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, somewhat favor, or strongly favor the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?”

278 Cf. Peffley, Hurwitz 2010: *Justice in America: The Separate Realities of Blacks and Whites*, pp. 156–157.

279 Valentino, Sears 2005, p. 673.

280 Comment made at a panel on “Ronald Reagan’s Neshoba County Speech in National Memory” at the 102<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians on April 10, 2010. Cf. C-SPAN 2010: *Ronald Reagan’s Neshoba County Speech*. April 10 (includes transcript as well).

281 The entire ad can be seen at: Museum of the Moving Image 2012: *The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952–2012. 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis*.

policy preferences and prejudice. Without being exposed to the Horton ad, racially prejudiced individuals were 25 percentage points more likely than unprejudiced individuals to oppose measures intended to facilitate racial equality; prejudiced individuals who saw the ad on the other hand were 40 percentage points more likely to be opposed to such policies than unprejudiced individuals. When it came to non-racial matters on the other hand (such as foreign relations questions), prejudice was not activated or inflated.<sup>282</sup> Perhaps most significantly was the impact the Horton message had on views of whites towards welfare. Willie Horton's story had the effect of activating (dormant) or increasing racial prejudice towards welfare recipients, with the Horton message "[inclining] prejudiced whites to reject the legitimacy of welfare programs and to endorse the idea that African Americans can do without them."<sup>283</sup> Interestingly enough, it did not however increase the salience of crime in the minds of respondents. The result of this ad that outwardly appeared to create a clear distinction between the two candidates on *crime* was that "it mobilized whites' racial prejudice, not their worries about crime," instead facilitating "greater resistance to government efforts to address racial inequality [...] and greater resistance to policies perceived as illegitimately benefitting African Americans."<sup>284</sup> The genius of the ad, in the eyes of Mendelberg, was the fact that it injected race and primed the powerful sentiment of racial resentment in a presidential campaign that "had, on its face, little to do with race."<sup>285</sup> The ad had thus provided the GOP with a way of exploiting racial conservatism across a broad policy spectrum while keeping the deniability of playing the race card. An equally infamous and more straightforward example of Southern Republicans using a similar approach came two years later when Senator Jesse Helms – referred to as "the last prominent unabashed white racist politician in this country"<sup>286</sup> by the Washington Post's David Broder upon Helms' retirement in 2001 – sought to win reelection in North Carolina against his African-American Democratic opponent Harvey Gantt. Helms' ad in question quite clearly sought to employ and evoke the zero-sum *racial threat* specter by driving the point home that quotas to help black employment would inevitably come at the cost of white jobs. The ad itself showed a white man opening a letter as the narrator's voice empathetically stated "[y]ou needed that job, and you were the best-qualified, but they had to give it to a minority because of a racial quota," ominously asking the viewer "is that really

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282 Mendelberg 1997: "Executing Hortons: Racial Crime in the 1988 Presidential Campaign." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61(1), pp. 134–157, here pp. 145–146.

283 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

284 *Ibid.*, p. 151.

285 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

286 Broder 2001: "Jesse Helms, White Racist." *Washington Post*, August 29.

fair?”<sup>287</sup> The advertisement, which came to be known as the *white hands ad*, then proceeded to inform the viewer that Harvey Gantt felt this was indeed fair while Jesse Helms unsurprisingly did not. As the white hands crumpled the letter in disgust, the narrator provided viewers with a stark choice: “For racial quotas, Harvey Gantt. Against racial quotas, Jesse Helms.”<sup>288</sup> Gantt, who had been running neck and neck with Helms when the ad first aired, eventually lost by five points, winning just 35 percent of the white vote.<sup>289</sup> Helms, just like Wallace, had thus succeeded in portraying life in the South, in this case the competition for jobs, as a contest between the two dominant races in which just one could come out on top.

“‘Nigger’ – that hurts you. Backfires.”

Scholarly analysis helps us understand the extent to which and how racial resentment can be primed to a politician’s advantage – and the appeals one has to avoid. As Trent Lott’s aforementioned fate demonstrates, the basic tenet to be perfected in order to use coded appeals to one’s advantage is that the target audience has to remain unaware their racially conservative views are being triggered, in other words the appeals have remain implicit in nature. As Mendelberg notes, “[a] message is at its most powerful when it contains racial content but is not consciously recognized as racial,” with such a message “[backfiring] among the very constituency it targets when it contains racial content that triggers the realization that it is in fact a racial appeal.”<sup>290</sup> This is backed by findings of Ismail White who notes that only “oblique” and coded racial cues triggered racial resentment as “an important factor in shaping [white] level of support for increased [food stamp] spending,”<sup>291</sup> in his experiment. White and his colleagues Nicholas Valentino and Vincent Hutchings elaborate upon the central component of coded appeals in a different analysis of theirs in which they argue against a simple dichotomous separation between *implicit* and *explicit* appeals that Mendelberg prefers when she contends that “candidates can win by playing the race card only through implicit racial ap-

287 Helms 1990: *Jesse Helms “Hands” ad*.

288 Ibid.

289 Cf. Christensen, Fler 1999: “North Carolina: Between Helms and Hunt No Majority Emerges.” In: Lamis (ed.): *Southern Politics in the 1990s*, pp. 81–106, here p. 99.

290 Mendelberg 2001, p. 229.

291 I. White 2007: “When Race Matters and When It Doesn’t: Racial Group Differences in Response to Racial Cues.” *American Political Science Review* 101(2), pp. 339–354, here p. 347.

peals.”<sup>292</sup> Instead they prefer to describe racial salience as existing in a continuous dimension. In this dimension, the effect of eliciting racially resentful responses increases in step with increases in the salience of a racial message until a certain threshold is reached. At this point the respondent recognizes that an attempt is made to prime racial resentment and actively begins to suppress their own racial views as a criterion.<sup>293</sup> Regardless of whether one subscribes to a theoretical approach regarding racial priming that prefers a strict division between explicit and implicit racial appeals or one with more vague distinctions, it appears to be clear that racial appeals have to come in a package with other policy matters as too big a focus on race will lead to a backlash even among the more racially conservative segments of society.

A politician therefore has to tread carefully if he or she wishes to take full advantage of the phenomenon of racial resentment, with the language used to prime it having become more abstract over the decades since the passage of the 1964 civil rights act. The late Republican strategist Lee Atwater summed up the changes that those wishing to exploit racial conservatism have had to contend with like this:

*“You start out in 1954 by saying, ‘Nigger, nigger, nigger.’ By 1968 you can’t say ‘nigger’ – that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states’ rights and all that stuff. You’re getting so abstract now [that] you’re talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you’re talking about are totally economic things and a by-product of them is [that] blacks get hurt worse than whites. And subconsciously maybe that is part of it. I’m not saying that. But I’m saying that if it is getting that abstract, and that coded, that we are doing away with the racial problem one way or the other. You follow me – because obviously sitting around saying, ‘we want to cut this,’ is much more abstract than even the busing thing and a hell of a lot more abstract than ‘Nigger, nigger.’”*<sup>294</sup>

In a similar manner Patrick Buchanan’s account of his time as an advisor to Richard Nixon offers revealing insights into how the former felt coded appeals were to be employed to shore up his employer’s standing among racial conservatives as Nixon was fighting Ronald Reagan for the Republican 1968 presidential nomination. Advising Nixon on how to handle the matter of “open housing” – federal measures to outlaw discrimination related to the renting or buying of homes, a topic that Buchanan refers to as “the last great civil rights issue of the civil rights decade”<sup>295</sup> – Buchanan related to the then candidate Nixon in a memo that “the thing to do is to oppose it in *sophisticated terminology*

292 Mendelberg 2001, p. 4.

293 Cf. Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002, pp. 87–88.

294 Quoted in: Lamis 1999: “The Two-Party South: From the 1960s to the 1990s.” In Lamis (ed.): *Southern Politics in the 1990s*, pp. 1–49, here p. 8.

295 Buchanan 2014: *The Greatest Comeback: How Richard Nixon Rose from Defeat to Create the New Majority*, p. 140.

[emphasis added], using GOP principles, and talk of the right [of the] individual to buy and sell homes.”<sup>296</sup>

If used appropriately, the windfall of using racially charged abstract “sophisticated terminology” can be substantial as the racial conservative anger elicited by racially resentful appeals is not just directed towards the minority underclass but also at liberal administrations that are seen to be “showering blacks with advantages.”<sup>297</sup> The usage of the most basic charge levied by racially resentful whites towards African Americans, namely that they simply do not share the Protestant work ethic that is so quintessentially American and widespread among whites is also the most powerful tool at the disposal of a conservative anti-statist politician. The mindset that the African-American underclass has no one to blame but themselves for the economic state they find themselves in plays a particularly central role in the racial conservative’s objection to certain kinds of welfare spending, even among the less affluent parts of white society which makes the racialization of government programs such an ingenious path to take for a party commonly considered to do the bidding of the upper class. When policies are framed in such a racial manner, welfare measures are portrayed and perceived as a waste of money as long as the people at the receiving end have a lackluster work ethic. Entitlement programs are thus not infrequently characterized as tools in the hands of those unwilling to work, used as a permanent means of covering one’s expenses instead of merely representing a bridge to get someone from one job to the next. As long as these cultural traits – in the eyes of racially resentful whites commonly found among African Americans in particular – are in place, no amount of government aid will ever yield the desired results of lifting the recipients out of poverty. Paul Ryan, perhaps somewhat unwittingly, perfectly described this conservative and racially resentful approach in early 2014 when the 2012 Republican vice-presidential candidate lamented that “[w]e have got this tailspin of culture, in our inner cities in particular, of men not working and just generations of men not even thinking about working or learning the value and the culture of work,” adding “there is a real culture problem here that has to be dealt with.”<sup>298</sup> Attacks like these on urban areas while contrasting *inner city* values with those of what the right considers to be the *real America* are a tried and tested approach among conservative politicians. Speaking about his own (largely white) constituents of Cobb County, Georgia in 1994, Newt Gingrich applauded them for their “strong work ethic” and “strong commitment to family and community.”<sup>299</sup> This was in stark con-

296 Ibid., pp. 140–141.

297 Kinder, Dale-Riddle 2012, p. 52.

298 Quoted in: Volsky 2014: “Paul Ryan Blames Poverty On Lazy ‘Inner City’ Men.” *Think-Progress*, March 12.

299 Quoted in: Applebome 1996: *Dixie Rising*, p. 45.

trast to the “welfare state” values the later speaker of the U.S. House found just to the east of his district in Atlanta, a city with a majority African-American population.<sup>300</sup>

A variety of scholarly work has shown that cues and code words for African Americans such as “inner city” can have a potent effect on policy preferences of whites, allowing candidates to manipulate or at least guide their electorate towards a certain position that the candidates themselves favor as a solution to a given problem (e.g. how to best tackle crime). Here it once again warrants looking at attitudes pertaining to *law and order* propositions. A study conducted by Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley for example gauged respondents’ views towards dealing with criminals, in the process demonstrating how those views can be altered when coming into contact with certain racial cues. When questioned about their policy preferences regarding “violent *inner-city* criminals,” the study revealed the preferences of whites to be shaped much more strongly by their racial attitudes than they were when respondents were simply asked about “violent criminals” (in which case other determinants such as partisanship or gender shaped responses). More specifically, white respondents who both approved of negative racial stereotypes and considered the justice system to be racially fair were far more likely to support punitive policies (such as building prisons) instead of preventative ones (such as antipoverty programs) when they received a racially coded “inner city” question.<sup>301</sup> The authors thus concluded that when messages are framed in a manner that strengthens the relationship between a given policy and a particular group, “it becomes far more likely that individuals will evaluate the policy on the basis of their evaluations of the group.”<sup>302</sup> Coded appeals can also have a particularly potent effect when combined with an existing racial threat. David Jacobs and Daniel Tope’s extensive study of state legislatures after the civil rights era demonstrates that increases in African-American presence as well as violent crime are associated with significant increases in Republican representation in these legislative bodies as Republican candidates have frequently linked minorities to increases in crime.<sup>303</sup> For Jacobs and Tope, the finding that a combination of the two variables led to particularly strong Republican showings illustrates that race and not just con-

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300 Quote and broader context in: *Ibid.*, p. 44.

301 The questions asked were whether respondents supported spending money on prisons instead of antipoverty programs to lock up either “violent criminals” or “violent *inner city* criminals.” Cf. Hurwitz, Peffley 2005: “Playing the Race Card in the Post–Willie Horton Era: The Impact of Racialized Code Words on Support for Punitive Crime Policy.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(1), pp. 99–112, here p. 107.

302 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

303 Cf. Jacobs, Tope 2008: “Race, crime, and Republican strength: Minority politics in the post-civil rights era.” *Social Science Research* 37(4), pp. 1116–1129, here pp. 1124–1128.



cerns about crime plays a key role in the decision making process of voters and that the results ultimately are “consistent with claims that Republicans transformed the mass hostility against what the public sees as the predatory acts of the minority underclass into increased support for their candidates.”<sup>304</sup>

The impact of this spillover effect of race into other issue areas in no small part thanks to the incessant usage of coded cues is not just limited to a matter like crime that has been remarkably racialized for close to half a century now. As work by Michael Tesler demonstrates, the landmark legislation of the Obama administration – the Affordable Care Act – is also perceived through a highly racialized lens, far more so than a similar proposal backed by President Clinton almost two decades earlier. While the difference in support for Bill Clinton’s health care plan between whites and blacks ranged from 20 to 30 percentage points in the period of 1993 and 1994, it increased to a range of 40 to 52 percentage points during the debate around Obamacare. On average, the gap between both races stood at 26 points in 1993–94 and 45 points in 2009–10, a change due to the diverging preferences of both whites *and* blacks.<sup>305</sup> The strong support for health care reform among African Americans and the fact that the public face of the act and its strongest advocate was a black president (which Tesler refers to as a “source cue” that influences public opinion regarding the policy in question<sup>306</sup>) also had an impact on the relationship between racial resentment and health care. Michael Henderson and D. Sunshine Hillygus note a substantial rise in negative opinion towards health care reform among racial conservatives in the period between 2008 and 2010. By 2010, high racial resentment scores for example were a far stronger predictor of high levels of

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304 *Ibid.*, p. 1126.

305 Cf. Tesler 2012a: “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3), pp. 690–704, here pp. 700–701. A survey conducted by Eric Knowles, Brian Lowery, and Rebecca Schaumberg also demonstrates the extent to which racially resentful individuals are apparently guided by President Obama’s racial background in their evaluation of his health care reform plan. The authors’ work showed that high levels of implicit prejudice were associated with increased opposition to President Obama’s health care plan, a relationship not in place when the health care reform legislation was attributed to Bill Clinton. Among respondents with low implicit prejudice on the other hand, evaluations remained virtually unchanged regardless of the figure the reform plan was associated with. Cf. Knowles, Lowery, and Schaumberg 2010: “Racial prejudice predicts opposition to Obama and his health care reform plan.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46(2), pp. 420–423.

306 The electorate recognizes the characteristics advocates of certain policies possess (e.g. ethnic or racial affiliations, gender, or religious beliefs) and react accordingly. George W. Bush’s overt born-again Christian beliefs are seen to have for example contributed to the continued support he received among white Evangelicals for policies of his that had little to do with religious matters, such as the war in Iraq. Cf. Tesler 2012a, p. 691.

opposition to universal health care than they had been two years earlier.<sup>307</sup> According to Tesler's analysis, racial resentment had twice the influence on evaluations of President Obama's health care reform proposals in September of 2009 than it had exerted in 1994 after President Clinton had unveiled his own plan.<sup>308</sup> That conservative politicians have sought to portray the *Affordable Care Act* as foreign and "un-American" for providing supposedly "free" health care is therefore rather unsurprising considering how this manner of framing the debate can serve to galvanize racial conservatives – who might even stand to gain from these reforms – into action.<sup>309</sup>

### Coded appeals, their effect on the Southern realignment, and general legacy

George Wallace knew how to win voters who despised African Americans while also attracting a significant share of whites who felt uneasy about certain

307 Cf. Henderson, Hillygus 2011: "The Dynamics of Health Care Opinion, 2008–2010: Partisanship, Self-Interest, and Racial Resentment." *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 36(6), pp. 945–960, here pp. 952–953 and 956–957. Between 2008 and 2010, those with the highest levels of racial resentment were 29 percentage points more likely to change their opinion on health care in the negative direction while those with low scores on the racial resentment scale showed little change in opinion.

308 Cf. Tesler 2012a, p. 695. Moving from the minimum to the maximum racial resentment score decreased white support for government health insurance by 20 percent in September of 2009. A separate set of interviews revealed that shortly before President Obama's election (December 2007), moving from the least to the most racially resentful score increased the predicted proportion of whites saying that government health care should best be left to individuals by 30 percentage points (while controlling for partisanship, ideology, and tax policy preferences). Around two years later (November 2009), this move along the racial resentment scale was associated with an increase in opposition to government provided health care by 60 percentage points (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 695–696).

309 Recent work on the topic by Benjamin Knoll and Jordan Shewmaker has shown that this approach of using coded appeals appears to have had the desired effect of turning nativists (who one could argue are closely related to racial conservatives) into one of the most vehemently opposed groups to Obamacare. Their analysis of data from 2010 and 2011 revealed that nativism had by that point become "an independent and significant predictor of opposition to health care reform," and "that opposition to health care reform is at least partially attributable to the perception that it is somehow 'foreign' and outside the boundaries of American political culture." Knoll, Shewmaker 2012: "It's Not Just Immigration Anymore: Nativism and Support for Health Care Reform." *Paper prepared for presentation at the annual conference for the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA, August 30 – September 2, 2012*, pp. 1 and 14. Daniel Lanford and Jill Quadagno's analysis of the expansion of Medicaid (a key feature of the ACA) also found that in states with high racial resentment scores, opposition to said expansion was particularly high. Cf. Lanford, Quadagno 2015: "Implementing ObamaCare: The Politics of Medicaid Expansion under the Affordable Care Act of 2010." *Sociological Perspectives*, published online before print July 14, 2015.

measures to implement racial equality but nonetheless did not see themselves as racially conservative. He achieved this by establishing an anti-statist populist ideology that was saturated with racial appeals but nonetheless never explicitly attacked African Americans by name. Replicating the Alabama governor's rhetoric allowed conservative politicians in the South to reap the benefits of priming racial resentment without appearing outwardly racist in the traditional sense. Coded language therefore provided Southern Republicans with the perfect vehicle of appealing to whites within the region who increasingly disapproved of the direction their former political home was heading in, as the Democratic Party both within and outside of the South became increasingly black in terms of voters and policy preferences. Messages that conflated race and economics also created the perfect platform for a region that was (and is) not just home to a disproportionately high share of white racial conservatives but has also seen tremendous economic growth over the last half a century. When it came to economic and racial conservatism and their usage by the GOP in its attempts to realign the South after the upheaval of the 1960s civil rights battles, "[t]he two streams of protest could not be easily separated in the political arena, and the Republican candidates, who recognized that they were beneficiaries of both prongs of reaction, rarely made the effort,"<sup>310</sup> is the verdict Alexander Lamis arrives at. As we will see in chapters I.3.2 and I.3.3, Ronald Reagan in particular proved to be the perfect heir to George Wallace and his rhetoric as the 40<sup>th</sup> President "domesticate[d]"<sup>311</sup> Wallace's message in his efforts to win the South in 1980 by mixing the perfect cocktail of racial and economic conservatism.

This rhetoric is by now a staple of Republican campaigning and framing of political issues, a development whose historical undercurrents are charted in vivid detail by Thomas and Mary Edsall in their landmark work "Chain Reaction." As we have seen throughout this and the previous chapter, conservative politicians were able to inject race into a number of key policy areas which meant that by the 1980s, a substantial share of white voters perceived the policies in question "though a racial filter."<sup>312</sup> Achieving "fairness" was no longer seen by many whites as a worthy endeavor of providing all citizens with the same opportunities but rather as "federal action to tilt the playing field in favor of minorities."<sup>313</sup> By the 1980s taxes had also "become, in the new coded language of politics, a forced levy," intended to fund "enlarged rights to those members of society who excited the most negative feelings in the minds of other, often angry

310 Lamis 1999, p. 7.

311 This is the view put forth by Wallace biographer Dan T. Carter. Quoted in: J. Thomas 1996: "Invisible Legacy." *Emory Magazine* 72(1).

312 Edsall, Edsall 1992, p. 213.

313 *Ibid.*

voters.”<sup>314</sup> Judging by the political battles that have transpired in the nation’s capital over the past few years, those conclusions are as valid today as they were over two decades ago when the Edsalls penned them. Within the context of this book, it is particularly important to remember the dual – positive and negative – consequences of this approach. Fueling this visceral anger by employing a rhetoric centered on coded appeals that inextricably linked welfare (and by extension taxes to fund these programs) to race while framing a variety of policy questions as zero-sum contests between whites and minorities allowed the party of the affluent to conquer the disproportionately poor white South *and* the region’s burgeoning middle class. Beyond the South, the conflation of race and numerous policy matters through coded appeals has led to racial resentment feeding an increasingly rabid and uncompromising anti-statism that has, as will be illustrated in chapter II.3, culminated in the emergence of the Tea Party, a movement whose attitudes towards taxes and the federal programs funded by them are perfectly described by the Edsalls above (despite the fact that their work predates the movement by almost two decades). At the same time though, this movement also makes it far more difficult for Republicans to appeal to both moderates and minorities that find little they like about the Tea Party precisely because of its Southern-influenced values.

As we will see time and again when the Tea Party itself is addressed in more detail later on, Republican officials are tempted to continue using this coded rhetoric because its base responds to these cues in a manner which belies the argument that we have entered a post-racial era. The spillover that has been nurtured by numerous politicians has furthermore made it possible to frame virtually any issue in a racial context, allowing these politicians to reap the rewards of triggering racial resentment and anxiety without suffering the backlash that Trent Lott did. Health care reform is not judged by its costs but instead portrayed as a policy alien to traditional American values, a scheme that provides the freeloaders and undeserving poor<sup>315</sup> with free health care at the expense of the (white) tax payer. Democratic politicians are accused of fostering an entitlement culture that keeps people dependent on handouts – and Democratic voters continue to be presented in this narrative as a willingly dependent and lazy underclass that keeps its hands open, eagerly awaiting welfare dollars to rain down upon them. Mitt Romney’s infamous comments about the “47 percent [...] who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe

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314 Ibid., p. 214.

315 “Undeserving” in the sense that they do not deserve to be lent a helping hand, *not* that they do not deserve to be poor.

that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it"<sup>316</sup> showcases just how deeply embedded this attitude is within the modern day Republican Party. This pandering to the racially conservative base by attacking "inner city" values and questioning the work ethic of non-whites (among many other things) that ultimately has its roots in the South is doing severe damage to the GOP brand among the growing segment of minorities though.

There most certainly is an upside to this strategy though. Coded appeals in connection with racial resentment have undoubtedly provided conservative candidates with a remarkable windfall in the South. While the biggest dividends from such a strategy can still be obtained in the South as the next chapter will demonstrate, this strategy and its potential benefits for Republican politicians and a conservative agenda extend well beyond the borders of the South today. As has already been explained, anger and racial resentment enjoy a close relationship.<sup>317</sup> Since "race has come to dominate the public's thinking about the poor"<sup>318</sup> according to scholar Martin Gilens, conservative candidates are able to harness this emotional response through the usage of coded rhetoric in issue areas that might to the outside observer appear non-racial, such as a variety of government programs. In light of the fact that this conflation of race, racial prejudice, and an activist government has been a central component of a number of national Republican campaigns in recent decades, it is no surprise then that today's white middle-class indeed sees the redistribution of their hard earned tax dollars to the "lazy underclass in highly racialized terms,"<sup>319</sup> as journalist Jonathan Chait contends. Through carefully linking liberal administrations and their policies to race, racially resentful sentiments are thus not just directed towards what are regarded as the black profiteers of the welfare state but also extended to the liberal government and its policies that are perceived as treating minorities in general and African Americans in particular in a preferential manner. Linking race and outwardly unrelated issues therefore provides Republican candidates with a twofold advantage: A deeply emotional response such as anger towards the undeserving poor and their preferential treatment by liberals makes it easier to galvanize potential voters and get them to the polls on election day. Moreover, the establishment of a relationship between race on one side and welfare, taxes and the broader question of the size of government on the

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316 Quoted in: Corn 2012: "Romney Tells Millionaire Donors What He REALLY Thinks of Obama Voters." *Mother Jones*, September 17.

317 As Banks and Valentino state, "[p]ublic anger surrounding contemporary movements like the Tea Party may [...] stem in part from, and trigger, racial prejudice." Banks, Valentino 2012, p. 296.

318 Gilens 1999: *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*, p. 102.

319 Chait 2012: "Class War and Romney's Welfare Counterattack." *New York*, August 7.

other has increased the salience of America's racial cleavage at the expense of its class counterpart, in the process helping economically conservative candidates gain support from segments of the racially conservative but also less affluent white electorate that might otherwise be indifferent or even supportive of the measures that the candidates in question intend to cut. For a substantial period, the dividends this strategy yielded were immense. The Edsalls for example concluded in the early 1990s that "race has become a powerful wedge, breaking up what had been the majoritarian economic interests of the poor, working, and lower-middle classes in the traditional liberal coalition,"<sup>320</sup> adding that "[t]he overlapping issues of race and taxes have permitted the Republican party to adapt the principles of conservatism to break the underlying class basis of the Roosevelt-Democratic coalition,"<sup>321</sup> a shift that allowed Republican candidates to win five of the six presidential elections between 1968 and 1988. As the presidential data from 1992 through 2012 on the other hand shows, it appears that that the *Southern Strategy* and its coded appeals have lost some of their potency outside the South (see chapter II.1.3 for more on this). Despite recent Republican success in congressional midterms, the future for this strategy does not appear particularly bright either.

### 1.1.5 The continued ubiquity of race in the South

As the preceding chapters have shown, race and the exploitation of racial resentment played a substantial and frequently central role in the realignment efforts of the Republican Party. The racial conservatism of whites in the region offered a vital opening for Republican candidates that were at a severe disadvantage when it came to a variety of factors – factors primarily related to the remarkable reservoir of power Democrats enjoyed in the South due to the region's partisan heritage and the advantages this entailed for Democratic incumbents and candidates. What about the twenty-first century South though? Have decades of changes such as the remarkable economic growth of the region and in-migration of Americans from the rest of the nation brought about a different outlook towards race among white Southerners as well? In light of the *Southernization* the Republican Party has undergone as illustrated in chapter II.1, the views pertaining to race in the region are of central importance – after all with each congressional gain in the South (and not infrequently losses in many other parts of the country), these views gain more weight and clout within the party. Widespread racial conservatism and the negative views towards minor-

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320 Edsall, Edsall 1992, p. 4.

321 Ibid., p. 3.

ities that form such a central component of this ideology present the GOP with a substantial challenge as the country is becoming less white with each passing day. Any party that has a core composed of white racial conservatives will therefore in the not too distant future face severe problems when it comes to fashioning national majorities.

The question of Southern exceptionalism on race has indeed come to the fore quite recently. During deliberations in 2013 surrounding the constitutionality of a formula within the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA) that determined which (primarily Southern) states were required get pre-clearance from the Justice Department before implementing any changes to their election laws, Chief Justice John Roberts asked lawyers arguing on behalf of the government if it was “the government’s submission that the citizens of the South are more racist than the citizens of the North.”<sup>322</sup> Past evidence most certainly pointed in this direction but the detractors of the VRA’s provisions claimed these rules were based on an outdated view of the South, stuck in a bygone era that had been consigned to the scrap heap of history by decades of economic growth, immigration and general moderation on racial matters.<sup>323</sup> Fact of the matter is though that Chief Justice Roberts’ question can be answered with a rather simple “yes.”

As already demonstrated, the Republican Southern Strategy based on exploiting racial fears and animosities was always going to yield the biggest results in the South, particularly in those parts of the region that V.O. Key, Jr. already saw as the most racially conservative ones which have since become the most Republican areas of Dixie. This does not mean however that the particular traits of the South of the 1960s, ’70s, and ’80s are today no longer present or have been diluted to such an extent that it is impossible to tell Southern whites apart from their non-Southern counterparts. Joe Feagin, sociologist professor at Texas A&M with a particular focus on racial matters, feels that to this day “structural racism is much stronger in the South”<sup>324</sup> which he attributes to the simple fact that the South continues to be home to around half of the nation’s African-

322 Quoted in: Ch. Thompson 2013: “Is Racism Worse in the South?” *The New Republic*, March 5.

323 The Supreme Court justices who eventually struck down the preclearance provisions for example argued that even though half a century after the passage of the provisions “things have changed dramatically” in the states covered by the 1965 VRA, the “extraordinary and unprecedented features have been reauthorized as if nothing has changed, and they have grown even stronger.” The majority opinion of the court moreover criticized that the formula used to determine which states fell under the preclearance provisions was “based on 40-year-old facts having no logical relation to the present day.” Supreme Court of the United States 2013: *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder Attorney General, et al.*, 570 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2013) (*Syllabus*), June 25, pp. 3 and 4.

324 Quoted in: Ch. Thompson 2013.

American population (in other words, he makes the case of a continued impact of the racial threat hypothesis).<sup>325</sup> Feagin's assessment is supported by a large sample of scholarly analysis. Data pooled from a number of different American National Election Studies (ANES) by Nicholas Valentino and David Sears revealed that even in the 1990s, 55 percent of whites in the Deep South were in the top third of the national distribution on a symbolic racism/racial resentment scale, compared to 39 percent in the peripheral South and just 32 percent in the North and West of the country.<sup>326</sup> Despite momentous changes in the region and across the nation, the gap in racial conservatism between Southern and non-Southern whites has thus actually not narrowed since the 1960s. Instead the authors reach the conclusion that "Southern whites remain more racially conservative than whites elsewhere on every measure of racial attitudes ordinarily used in national surveys."<sup>327</sup> Such findings are supported by other scholars as well<sup>328</sup> who not infrequently find a "persistence of distinctive Southern intolerance."<sup>329</sup> Divisions can also be found within the Republican camp: Data from the 2012 ANES revealed that 42 percent of self-identified white Southern Republicans obtained racial resentment scores between 0.8125 and 1 while 31 percent of white non-Southern Republicans exhibited the same level of racial resentment.<sup>330</sup>

There is some evidence to support the assertion that this high level of racial

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325 Cf. *ibid.*

326 Cf. Valentino, Sears 2005, p. 679.

327 *Ibid.*, p. 685.

328 Cf. for example Glaser 1996, pp. 18–19. Using pooled data from ANES surveys conducted during the 1980s, Glaser shows that according to the classic racial resentment propositions, Southern whites are to the right of their northern counterparts. While 53 percent of northern whites for example agreed that slavery and discrimination had made it harder for blacks to work their way out of the lower class, only 45 percent of southern whites felt the same way. 69 percent of the latter on the other hand agreed that blacks could be just as well off as whites if only they tried harder – 56 percent of northern whites on their part backed this assertion. Particular gaps could be seen when it came to the question of government aid for minorities, indicative that racial resentment is at its strongest in the white South when it is linked to supposedly unjustified government programs. 62 percent of southern whites argued blacks should help themselves instead of receiving government aid. 49 percent of northern whites shared this position. 76 percent of southern whites also supported the claim that "[m]ost blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried." Among northern whites, that share stood substantially lower at 54 percent.

329 Taylor 1998: "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count." *American Sociological Review* 63(4), pp. 512–535, here p. 532. This intolerance is sometimes extended to non-black minorities. Taylor for example found that anti-Latino and anti-Asian American prejudice was more widespread among Southern whites than non-Southern whites (pp. 528–529).

330 Cf. Hetherington, Engelhardt 2016: "Donald Trump's Surprising Success with Southern Evangelicals." *The Cook Political Report*, February 26.



conservatism is by no means an artifact of broader “small government” conservative preferences. A study by James Kuklinski, Michael Cobb, and Martin Gilens from the mid-1990s showcased results similar to those of Valentino and Sears as it also found substantial differences in racial attitudes towards African Americans between whites from the South and non-South without this rift being evident when it came to the broader approach towards the government.<sup>331</sup> 42 percent of white Southerners for example expressed anger at the thought of a black family moving in next door – a share four times as high as that found among whites in the rest of the nation. Almost all of the Southern white respondents (98 percent) moreover expressed anger towards black leaders that called for more affirmative action. In the rest of the nation that share stood at 42 percent.<sup>332</sup> When the same people were asked about their general attitudes towards the government though, only a negligible difference could be found between whites from the South and non-South.<sup>333</sup> For the authors this only left the conclusion that even decades after the end of segregation and institutionalized racism in the South, latent racial prejudice (such as the belief that blacks are not trying hard enough to work their way out of poverty) can come to the fore and be triggered much more easily in a region that has seen a large degree of historical racial strife and in which the usage of negative cues related to minorities is relatively common.<sup>334</sup>

### Race and elections

One particularly good example to illustrate how such high levels of racial resentment can play a role in the electoral arena comes in the form of a 2000 referendum in Wallace’s home state of Alabama. That year the state’s citizens were asked about repealing the nation’s last ban on interracial marriage which had been part of Alabama’s constitution since 1901. Although the 1967 Supreme Court ruling on *Loving v. Virginia* had made bans such as Alabama’s unenforceable it had nonetheless remained on the books in Governor Wallace’s

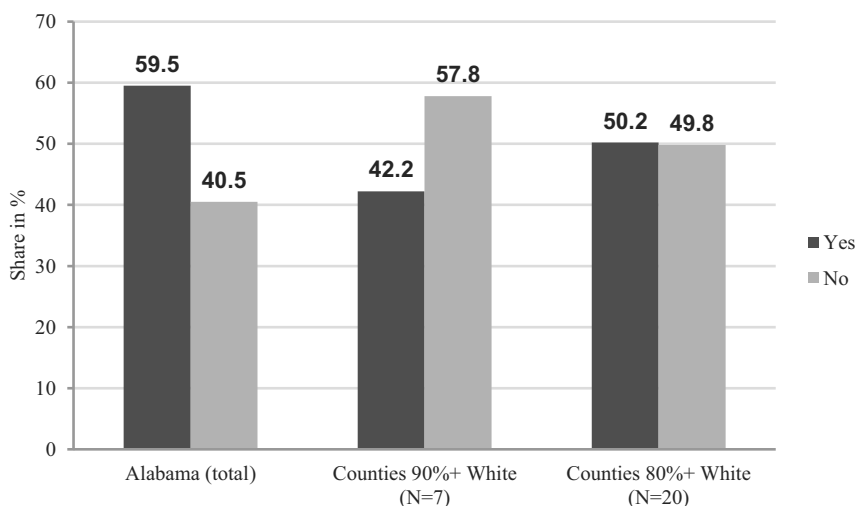
331 Cf. also Glaser 1994, pp. 29–31. As his analysis illustrates, high levels of racial conservatism among whites living in counties with significant black population centers did not correlate with similarly high levels of general conservatism among these very same whites.

332 Cf. Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997: “Racial Attitudes and the ‘New South.’” *The Journal of Politics* 59(2), pp. 323–349, here p. 330.

333 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 331–332. In order to gauge these sentiments, respondents were asked on an eleven-point scale how they felt towards the government. Secondly, they were presented with the question whether they thought “the government in Washington is trying to do too much.” And third, respondents expressed their level of anger towards “government officials interfering and trying to tell us what we can and can’t do with our own lives.”

334 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 332–333.

home state until 60 percent of the state's voters finally decided to remove it in 2000.<sup>335</sup> That 40 percent of the state objected to striking the anti-miscegenation law from the constitution appears shocking enough. Once we delve deeper into the county by county results, the continued racial conservatism among whites becomes even more obvious though (see figure I.1.5). In Alabama counties with a population 90 percent or more non-Hispanic white,<sup>336</sup> almost 58 percent objected to changing the constitution. If expanded to include all counties with a population 80 percent or more non-Hispanic white, we see an almost even split with 50.2 percent voting in favor of repealing the interracial marriage ban while 49.8 percent voted in favor of keeping it.<sup>337</sup> It warrants mentioning though that if the least white and simultaneously largest county (Shelby) is removed from the latter tally, the result shifts substantially into the no camp, with 53 percent of the remaining counties (19 in total) voting to keep the ban in place.



**Figure I.1.5:** 2000 Referendum to remove interracial marriage ban from Alabama constitution.

On such a vote it is virtually impossible to find any sort of mitigating circumstances that might give white Southerners the benefit of the doubt and explain the vote in terms of something other than a depiction of continued and strong racial conservatism. Fiscal and to a lesser extent social conservatism do not

335 Cf. New York Times 1999: *Interracial Marriage Ban Up for Vote in Alabama*. June 3. For results cf. Leip 2007: *2000 Referendum General Election Results – Alabama*. February 12.

336 Data from 2010.

337 Own work based on data from Leip 2007. For data on population cf. Index Mundi 2010a: *Alabama White, not Hispanic Population Percentage by County*.

explain why a white voter would cast his ballot against removing this outdated ban. In certain circumstances views pertaining to the heritage of the region may sometimes provide a fig leaf to racial conservatives. Many whites who for example objected a year later to replacing Mississippi's state flag – which had incorporated the Confederacy's battle flag – argued in a pre-referendum poll that the symbols depicted on it, despite standing for a nation that had fought to uphold slavery, simply represented “a part of the state's proud history and traditions” and should therefore remain in place.<sup>338</sup> It would be quite a stretch to apply the same logic to an interracial marriage ban though.

### Broader conclusion

As we have just seen, Southern whites continue to stand out for their racial conservatism even in the early twenty-first century – a finding that appears particularly applicable to those whites who hail from states or regions in which blacks represent a threat to the white dominance over politics. As the GOP sought to conquer Dixie, its Southern Strategy intended to use this widespread *racial resentment* and a perceived *racial or group threat* to its advantage, because race was and to a significant extent still is the predominant cleavage of the South, frequently trumping class and all other ones as a predictor of partisan affiliation.<sup>339</sup> The vehicle to exploit those defining traits of Southern white conservatism were coded appeals that have injected the thorny and divisive matter of race into a variety of policy areas, most notably crime and welfare, with the latter now frequently encompassing broader questions surrounding the size of government. Whether it was Goldwater's fight for states' rights, Nixon's promise to end “forced busing” and crack down on (black) crime, Helm's “white hands” ad that preyed on Southern white fears towards the empowerment of blacks or

338 Around 76 percent of whites chose this option in the poll. Referendum options and data from the *Clarion Ledger* (newspaper from Jackson, Mississippi) quoted in: Orey 2004: “White Racial Attitudes and Support for the Mississippi State Flag,” *American Politics Research* 32(1), pp. 102–116, here p. 104. It should most certainly be noted that Orey's analysis shows that racially conservative positions (both of the old-fashioned and modern, i. e. racial resentment, variety) were by far the strongest predictor for support of Mississippi's old flag in his survey and analysis among Mississippi college students (cf. *ibid.*, p. 111). Hence the supposed preservation of the South's distinctive heritage that is often cited when it comes to defending symbols of the region's history (such as flags incorporating Confederate imagery) appears to be a claim that is quite frequently nothing but the aforementioned fig leaf for racist sentiments.

339 The Black brothers for example conclude that in the South “[r]ace clearly trump[s] economic class in separating core Republicans from core Democrats” to this very day. Black, Black 2002, p. 373. For more recent data which arrives at a similar conclusion cf. Hood III 2016.

Reagan's railing against welfare queens (as we will see in chapter I.3.2), they all played a substantial role in both turning the South Republican and in the process *southernizing* the GOP. This historic realignment has come at a national cost though as will be made evident throughout the second part of this book. Today's Republican Party is the party of white conservatives, more specifically white *racial* conservatives due to the GOP's *Southernization* – a process that has accelerated with remarkable speed over the past two and a half decades. Race can and is still being used by Republican candidates and elected officials across the country to win votes; the rise of the Tea Party with its *Wallaceist* racially charged anti-statist foundation has made the usage of coded rhetoric an even more vital part of Republican campaigns (see chapter II.3, in particular II.3.1.1). As the wider country is undergoing momentous demographic changes though, the Republican brand of fostering resentment towards minorities in general and African Americans in particular is becoming an increasing impediment to its chances of success among non-whites and racially moderate Caucasians. The inability of Republicans to square the circle of adapting to a changing country while keeping their own disproportionately Southern base happy lies at the center of how the party has lost the (rest of the) nation by winning the South.



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## I.2 The integral role of Christian conservatism in the Southern realignment

It is difficult to overstate the role *evangelical Protestantism* has played in shaping the South and its distinct culture. This role and centrality is not limited to the distant past though, quite the opposite. To this very day, Dixie is home to some of the most religious Americans and some of the most conservative Christian denominations, a factor that is increasingly presenting the Republican Party with a major problem as the wider country in general and young adults in particular are becoming more secular, as we will see in more detail in chapter II.4.6. Moreover, conservative evangelical beliefs also played a central role in the Republican realignment of the South. Along with the racial factors we have discussed over the preceding chapters, the Christian Right with its various members, its organizational network, and its deep roots within the region represented one of the keys that unlocked the South for the GOP. Through the Christian Right and its intricate ties to white Southern conservatives, Republicans were able to build a strong base in this formerly hostile region that extended beyond racial conservatives, playing a key role in the eventual conquest of white voters that had remained Democratic in non-presidential elections even until the late 1980s. Through the GOP on the other hand, evangelical concerns gained a nationwide prominence that would have been unthinkable a mere decade before the movement's emergence in the mid-1970s while evangelical politicians and organizations obtained a vehicle for furthering Christian conservative causes. As we will see in chapter II.2.2 on the Christian Right's influence on Republican state parties, this impact has been particularly pronounced at the state level where recent years have seen a steep rise in anti-abortion legislation in a number of regions where the Christian Right has managed to obtain a particularly prominent role within GOP state parties over the past few decades. These deep seated ties between the South and evangelical Protestantism – with the two not infrequently representing two sides of the same coin – along with the important role religious conservatism played in turning the South red are also the reason why in the second part of this book the theme of the

*Southernization* of the Republican Party is further expanded upon and sometimes synonymous with the party's *Evangelicalization*.

In a region so defined by race, it comes as no surprise that the other societal pillar of religion itself was and to a lesser extent still is heavily intertwined with the issue of race, evidenced for example by the simple fact that evangelical white Southern Republicans have substantially higher racial resentment scores than their non-evangelical white partisan compatriots in the region.<sup>340</sup> In this realm of the intersection of race and religion, religious racial conservatism was by no means a mere side-effect of the established order of the South as Christian leaders instead actually played a key and active role in maintaining the racial divisions and rules of the region. The “[r]eligious institutions and practices in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century South,” Paul Harvey concludes, “reflected and reinforced the racism of the region’s social life.”<sup>341</sup> Quite possibly the earliest historical point and root of the conflation between evangelical Protestantism, race, and the South can be dated back to the struggle over the divisive issue of slavery. With northern Evangelicals attacking the morality of slavery, their Southern counterparts turned the tables on them and argued that the Bible actually provided the very foundations for this institution. Slavery was not just right; it was biblically and divinely ordained.<sup>342</sup> As Southern Evangelicals spread the word of a racially conservative God to congregations across the region, they “created the first institutions of a southern civil religion that asserted a God-ordained regional identity based on white supremacy,”<sup>343</sup> in the process establishing a sort of *culture-religion* in which the Southern brand of evangelical Protestantism became synonymous with Southern white identity and the customs and values forming its basic underlying foundation.<sup>344</sup> This link between

340 Around 20 percent of evangelical white Southern Republicans for example could be found in the highest racial resentment category in the 2012 American National Election Study, compared to a share of slightly below 15 percent among non-evangelical Southern Republicans. Cf. Hetherington, Engelhardt 2016.

341 Harvey 2005b: “Religion, Race, and the Right in the South, 1945–1990.” In: Feldman (ed.): *Politics and Religion in the White South*, pp. 101–124, here p. 103.

342 Cf. Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and den Dulk 2014: *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 12.

343 Silk, Walsh 2008: *One Nation, Divisible: How Regional Religious Differences Shape American Politics*, p. 65.

344 This traditionally strong overlap between Southern evangelical Protestantism and the region’s society and values has been attempted to be explained through the thesis of the “cultural captivity” Southern religion has historically found itself in. According to this theoretical approach, Southern religious leaders (being faced with a choice between Christian non-segregationist values and the deeply racist culture of the South) elected to support the dominant racist tenets and culture of the region, standing shoulder to shoulder with the most hardened political proponents of segregation and providing them with religious justifications for their policies instead of questioning if such policies were even reconcilable with traditional Christian principles of neighborly love. This course of action

religion and race was to come to the fore again during the twentieth century struggle of Southern blacks for equality, as divine scripture was now used to defend segregation instead of slavery. “The plan of God,” O.W. Taylor, editor of the *Baptist and Reflector*, explained to his readers, “is for diversity of races to continue through earthly time and into eternity.”<sup>345</sup> Anyone who sought “to break down or obliterate racial distinctions and bring in a mongrel race or mongrel races go[es] contrary to this plan of God.”<sup>346</sup> Northerners that forced integration and racial equality onto the South were thus denounced as “a bunch of infidels, dying from the neck up.”<sup>347</sup> Specific measures such as the integration of schools would have the effect of “foster[ing] miscegenation,” lamented a resolution drawn up by a Baptist South Carolina congregation, “thereby changing God’s plan and destroying His handiwork.”<sup>348</sup> In light of these prevailing attitudes it is not surprising to see that the mass and elite ranks of the Ku Klux Klan were filled with a disproportionate number of white Evangelicals and clergy members as the organization frequently presented its outwardly racist actions as nothing more than a fight for the protection and preservation of Christian views and values.<sup>349</sup> The struggle against the empowerment of African Americans was therefore more than just a battle based on economic concerns or a strictly racist ideology – it represented a religious war for the soul of Southern identity as well.<sup>350</sup> As we will see over the coming pages in this chapter and even more so when Ronald Reagan’s role in the realignment of the South is discussed,

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left their parishioners in a position where being a good Christian was synonymous with being a racially conservative Southerner. Cf. Harvey 2005b, p. 103 as well as (for a more detailed description of the ties between religion and culture in the South) Wilson 1980: “The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865–1920.” *The Journal of Southern History* 46(2), pp. 219–238.

345 Quoted in: Newman 2001: *Getting Right With God: Southern Baptists and Desegregation, 1945–1995*, p. 50.

346 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

347 W.A. Criswell, pastor of the largest white Protestant congregation in the mid-1950s, speaking to the South Carolina state legislature in 1955. Quoted in: Harvey 2005a: *Freedom’s Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era*, p. 245.

348 Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 233.

349 Cf. Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011: *Religion and Politics in the United States*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 203. The Klan’s message was saturated with religious imagery. At its meetings, members prayed and sang hymns. After visiting a lecture on the Klan in a Los Angeles auditorium in 1924, one woman told her Baptist minister that “a speaker upon the platform, talking for the Klan, turned me back to God. If you want to know why I am joining the church, I want to tell you. It’s because I found Christ through the Ku Klux Klan.” Quoted in: Wade 1987: *The Fieri Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, p. 185. For more on the incorporation of religion into the Klan’s ideology and message cf. *ibid.*, pp. 167–185.

350 Assessing the Southern anti-civil rights struggle, journalist Robert Sherrill noted that Southerners were “not just waging a political and economic war against change, but a religious war.” Quoted in: Silk, Walsh 2008, p. 67.



the separation of race and religion in the South therefore is an endeavor fraught with difficulties. In light of the fact that racial matters have already been discussed in chapters I.1 through I.5 and will be assessed once again as the 40<sup>th</sup> president's usage of it is detailed in chapter I.3.2, the following pages will focus on the religious background of the South which is going to illustrate why a Republican strategy of emphasizing social and religious conservative values was always going to yield the biggest dividends south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Furthermore, the region's innate, enduring, and important ties to the Christian Right will be assessed along with revealing the rationale behind the decision made by the Republican Party to exploit these ties and the distinctive religiosity of the South to the party's advantage in their attempts to make inroads into the former Confederacy.

### 1.2.1 America's preacher and its culture warriors – The intricate ties between the South and the Christian Right

“If the United States is ‘a nation with the soul of a church,’” D. Jason Berggren and Nicol Rae explain, “the South provides the preacher and the choir.”<sup>351</sup> Other observers have noted the same defining traits yet voiced them in a less complimentary manner. H.L. Mencken described the region as the “bung-hole of the United States, a cesspool of Baptists, a miasma of Methodism [...] and syphilitic evangelists.”<sup>352</sup> There is ample evidence to demonstrate that to this very day *evangelical* Protestantism – distinct from its *mainline* Protestant counterpart by its adherents' “high view of scripture and a born-again experience”<sup>353</sup> – and the strong religiosity associated with it are far more widespread in the South than in the rest of the nation. According to an extensive Pew survey from 2008, 26.3 percent of all Americans belonged to an evangelical Protestant church.<sup>354</sup> The shares found across the South are, bar Florida, higher though (see table I.2.1.a). What this ultimately means is that the South is home to roughly 45 percent of all

351 Berggren, Rae 2006: “The American South: The ‘Bible Belt’ of America (and the Western World?).” *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA, January 5–7, 2006*, p. 7.

352 Quoted in: Reed 1986: *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society*, p. 57.

353 Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 57. As Fowler and his colleagues point out, “[f]or all evangelicals, the Bible is at a minimum the inspired word of God; for some, it is the literal word of God.” Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and den Dulk 2014, p. 33.

354 The survey differentiates between “evangelical Protestant churches” as well as “historically black churches.” In other words the vast majority of these evangelical Protestants are indeed white. Cf. Pew Research Center 2008a: *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey / Affiliations*, June 23.

white evangelical Protestants in the nation even though only around 29 to 33 percent of the country's non-Hispanic white population is found in the region.<sup>355</sup>

**Table I.2.1.a:** “Evangelical Protestant Tradition” shares within the Southern states:<sup>356</sup>

Arkansas	53 %
Tennessee	51 %
Alabama	49 %
Mississippi	47 %
South Carolina	45 %
North Carolina	41 %
Georgia	38 %
Texas	34 %
Louisiana	31 %
Virginia	31 %
Florida	25 %

Similarly remarkable to the high degree of Protestantism is the homogeneity within Southern Protestant denominations, with (conservative) Baptism by far the dominant denominational force in the region.<sup>357</sup> The continued strength of evangelical Protestantism in general and Baptism in particular in the former Confederacy is also reflected in surveys that attempt to gauge religiosity across the United States. While 92 percent of Americans expressed the position that they believed in God, 96 percent did so in the South in a recent survey – establishing a ten-point gap between it and the northeast<sup>358</sup> of the country where the GOP has seen a severe drop in electoral fortunes in recent decades as the party has become both *southernized* and *evangelized*.<sup>359</sup> Gauging the level of

355 For data on white Evangelicals cf. Newport, Carroll 2005: “Another Look at Evangelicals in America Today.” *Gallup*, December 2. Gallup’s definition of the South includes Kentucky and Oklahoma as well. For data on overall U.S. population cf. Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011: “Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010–2010 Census Briefs.” *United States Census Bureau*, March, p. 18. The eleven states of the Old Confederacy contained 28.8 percent of the nation’s non-Hispanic white population according to the 2010 U.S. census. If the extended South (Oklahoma, Kentucky, West Virginia) is included, that share goes up to 32.9 percent while the share of the entire U.S. Census Southern region stood at 34.9 percent in 2010.

356 Cf. Pew Research Center 2008b: *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey / Maps*, June 23.

357 Cf. Reed 1986, p. 59. Although the data is relatively dated it reveals that in the mid-1960s almost half of all Southern Protestants belonged to a Baptist congregation compared to just 13 percent in the rest of the nation.

358 Gallup’s definition of the “east” (in this instance more appropriately described as “north-east”) includes the states of New England along with Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., and West Virginia.

359 Once again note that Gallup does not use the stricter definition of the South (eleven states) but also includes Kentucky and Oklahoma. Cf. Newport 2011a: “More Than 9 in 10 Ame-

belief also reveals significant regional differences. According to 2005 data from Gallup, 78 percent of Americans were “convinced that God exists” without any sort of doubt. In this instance, the differences between the South and the rest of the nation were even more notable as 88 percent of Southerners voiced such a strong conviction with the next closest region (Midwest) trailing them by eleven percentage points. In the northeast of the country this share stood at just 70 percent.<sup>360</sup> With statistical facts like these, it does not come as a surprise that 2012 data (also from Gallup) revealed that eight of the ten most religious states in the U.S. could be found in the South, a ranking established by determining the share of a state’s “very religious” population indicated by those who “[say] religion is an important part of their daily life and that they attend religious services every week or almost every week.”<sup>361</sup> A closer look beyond the state level paints an even more remarkable picture of the region’s religiosity. More in-depth data from Gallup for example showed 21 of the country’s 25 most religious metropolitan areas to be located in the South, with two areas in Utah, and one area each in both Michigan and Pennsylvania as the sole non-Southern entities in the top 25.<sup>362</sup>

Strong religious convictions extend into opinions pertaining to the broader ability of religion to solve current problems as well. What ought to cause some concern among Republicans when looking at the data showcased in table I.2.1.b is not just the centrality of religion in the South but the increasingly secular values found among today’s young adults (elaborated upon in chapter II.4.6). Among all Americans, the gap between those who believed in 2014 that religion had the capacity to answer today’s problems and the share who expressed the belief that religion was out of date stood at 27 percentage points. This gap expands to 47 points among Southerners but shrinks to just nine points among 18–29 year olds. Among 18–29 year olds the share who believes religion is “old fashioned and out of date” is on the other hand also almost twice as high as that found among Southerners.

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icans Continue to Believe in God.” *Gallup*, June 3. For the Republican demise in the Northeast of the nation cf. Stanley, Niemi 2013, p. 12.

360 Same Gallup definition of the South used here. Cf. Winseman 2005: “Americans Have Little Doubt God Exists.” *Gallup*, December 13.

361 Cf. Newport 2013a: “Mississippi Maintains Hold as Most Religious U.S. State.” *Gallup*, February 13.

362 Cf. Newport 2013b: “Provo-Orem, Utah, Is Most Religious U.S. Metro Area.” *Gallup*, March 29.

**Table I.2.1.b:** *Americans' belief in ability of religion to answer today's problems, by demographic (in percent):*<sup>363</sup>

	Can answer problems	Old fashioned and out of date	Other/No Opinion
All adults	57	30	13
18–29	48	39	13
East	47	33	20
Midwest	56	34	10
South	68	21	11
West	51	37	12

In the context of this book, the impact of religion on political choices is obviously of the utmost importance as well. Data from a 2003 Pew Research Center study showed that 46 percent of Southerners<sup>364</sup> were occasionally (17 percent) or frequently (29 percent) guided by religion concerning their choices at the ballot box, significantly above the national share of 38 percent.<sup>365</sup> These strong ties are also particularly pronounced among white evangelical Protestants where 48 percent alone responded that their vote choices were “frequently” guided by religion (with another 20 percent occasionally guided).<sup>366</sup>

As is illustrated by the significant amount of data we have just seen, the South provided quite fertile soil for any organizational network acting on behalf of devout Christians that sought to inject a heavy dose of religiosity into politics. The bond that would be established between this network – the Christian Right – and the GOP ultimately provided the latter with remarkable dividends, seeing as white evangelical Protestants have from the very beginning been the “principal target audience”<sup>367</sup> of the Christian Right (although it of course warrants pointing out that they are by no means the movement’s only constituent part). Receiving the blessing of leading figures associated with the Christian Right movement and becoming the party associated with Christian conservatism thus allowed Republicans to finally make significant inroads into the Southern white evangelical electorate who – as noted above – were and continue to be disproportionately influenced by their religious beliefs.<sup>368</sup>

363 Same Gallup definition of the South used here. Cf. Newport 2014a: “Majority Still Says Religion Can Answer Today’s Problems.” *Gallup*, June 27.

364 The Pew Research Center uses the U.S. Census definition of the South which includes the eleven states of the former Confederacy as well as Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

365 Cf. Pew Research Center 2003: *Religion and Politics: Contention and Consensus*, July 24, p. 10.

366 Cf. *ibid.*

367 Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 55.

368 This will be elaborated upon in more detail in chapter I.2.2.

## The Christian Right

The distinct lack of interest in engaging in the world of politics found among Christian conservatives up until the 1970s can be traced back to a particularly harmful experience in 1925. That year the now infamous Scopes Trial pitted modernist and secular America against Christian conservatism, bringing to the fore divisions that would remain to this very day. In the years preceding the trial, fundamentalist Christians were engaged in political feuds in a manner not dissimilar to contemporary politics, battling science in general and Darwin in particular, a fight that culminated in bans on the teaching of evolution in schools in five states – four of which were located in the South.<sup>369</sup> John Thomas Scopes had violated one of those bans in Tennessee and was thus duly put on trial. While Scopes was indeed fined for his disregard of the law, modernists appeared to win the larger fight for the hearts and minds of the public against their religious fundamentalist counterparts. With their values and views subject to much ridicule from the press and the public during the deliberations, Christian conservatives responded by retreating and largely removing themselves from the political sphere in the trial's aftermath.<sup>370</sup> The late 1920s thus marked the beginning of an inward looking era among evangelical Protestants as former activists for the most part stayed out of politics for almost half a century and political engagement was frequently portrayed as biblically inappropriate.<sup>371</sup> Scratching beneath the surface of this defeat reveals evidence though that the aftermath of Scopes would ultimately prove to be beneficial to both what was to become the *New Christian Right* as well as its Republican ally. Christian conservatives set up bible schools and colleges, publishing houses, and a variety of other organizations that created a remarkable network which allowed Evangelicals in particular to protect themselves against the secular society outside of their religious realm while fashioning a state within the state that could eventually be exploited for political gain by conservative politicians wishing to galvanize a significant segment of the electorate.<sup>372</sup> Getting evangelical Christians

369 The four states were Tennessee, Florida, Mississippi, and Arkansas with the fifth one (Oklahoma) being a culturally Southern state. Cf. Rozell, Smith 2012: "Religious Conservatives and the Transformation of Southern Politics." In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*, pp. 133–152, here p. 136.

370 For the broader overview of these historical developments cf. Wilcox, Robinson 2011, pp. 31–40.

371 Cf. Perlstein 2006: "Thunder on the Right: The Roots of Conservative Victory in the 1960s." *OAH Magazine of History* 20(5), pp. 24–27, here p. 27. Even during the late 1960s this opposition to political engagement was quite widespread among conservative Christians, as illustrated by Jerry Falwell's comments in the paragraph.

372 Cf. Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 40 and Lambert 2008: *Religion in American Politics: A Short History*, p. 190.

back into politics nonetheless remained a rather difficult task during the 1960s and early 1970s. The business of politics was still considered to be a “worldly” matter with some of the most ardent fighters against the moral depredation of the country instead found in the Roman-Catholic church while a fair degree of criticism towards abortion emanated from members of the Democratic Party during this era.<sup>373</sup> Even Jerry Falwell, one of the primary architects behind the eventual alliance between the Republican Party and Christian conservatives, called for a strict separation between the world of politics and the realm of religion in 1965, arguing that “[p]reachers are not called upon to be politicians but to be soul winners.”<sup>374</sup>

The re-awakening of Christian activism and volte-face of Evangelical preachers like Jerry Falwell can ultimately be traced back to two Supreme Court rulings in particular<sup>375</sup> and the actions in their wake by GOP activists that saw the gains to be made on the back of this new political force, a development addressed in more detail in the next chapter. In 1962, the Supreme Court deemed public school prayers composed by state officials to be unconstitutional in *Engel v. Vitale*. Eleven years later came a ruling that would prove to have profound repercussions to this day. In *Roe v. Wade* the U.S. Supreme Court overturned state bans on abortion while granting women the right to an abortion until the fetus reaches viability.<sup>376</sup> Talking about this ruling in his autobiography, Jerry Falwell specifically singled it out as the moment he decided that the time had come for him to become politically engaged<sup>377</sup> – it had now dawned on the Virginia minister “that preaching would not be enough” and that even outside abortion “there were other crises facing the nation that required immediate political action from men and women of Christian faith.”<sup>378</sup> What is particularly interesting about the Supreme Court decision is that, contrary to what one might expect by looking at today’s Southern positions on the matter, some Southern congregations actually advocated a pro-choice position at the time of the ruling. W.A. Criswell, two-term president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

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373 Cf. Perlstein 2006, p. 27.

374 Quoted in: Dionne, Jr. 2006: “Polarized by God? American Politics and the Religious Divide.” In: Nivola, Brady (eds.): *Red and Blue Nation? Volume One: Characteristics and Causes of America’s Polarized Politics*, pp. 175–205, here p. 176.

375 Although as Daniel Williams demonstrates in his book “God’s Own Party” (2010a), the roots of the *New Christian Right* precede those two decisions, dating back into the 1940s. However, the events that unfolded during the 1960s ultimately represented the foundations of the movement’s surge in the subsequent decade(s).

376 As Franklin Foer explains, the exact point at which a fetus does become viable has been the subject of heated discussions in the decades following the Supreme Court’s decision. Cf. Foer 1997: “Fetal Viability.” *Slate*, May 25.

377 Cf. Dionne, Jr. 2006, p. 176.

378 Quoted in: Diamond 1998: *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right*, p. 64.

whom we met earlier on when he denounced integrationists as a “bunch of infidels,” explained in 1973 that in his opinion “it was only after a child was born and had a life separate from its mother that it became an individual person,” adding that regarding abortion legislation this position “seemed to me what is best for the mother and for the future should be allowed.”<sup>379</sup> This is of course in stark contrast to the expansion of personhood to include humans from the moment of conception that has become a favorite cause to be championed for many on the Christian Right in recent years.

As we will see in more detail in chapter I.2.2 on the alliance between the Christian Right and the GOP, Republican strategists and politicians quickly recognized the enormous political gains to be made through facilitating the political engagement of Christian conservatives in general and white evangelical Protestants in particular after these groups had first tasted blood thanks to the judicial decisions of the 1960s and ’70s. Campaigns by Christian activists for traditionalist values in the face of a perceived secular-liberal onslaught in the early 1970s were aided and abetted by Republican strategists and advisors who not infrequently cared little about the matters that were close to the heart of Christian conservatives but nonetheless saw both the institutional network the Christian Right possessed and its largely untapped well of voters as a key ingredient for the establishment of a conservative majority.<sup>380</sup>

### The ties between the South and the Christian Right

Despite W.A. Criswell’s initial misgivings about combatting abortion, the ties between the South and the Christian Right were evident from the very beginning and have endured into the twenty-first century. “There is something distinctively southern about the Christian Right,”<sup>381</sup> explain Mark Rozell and Mark Caleb Smith, adding that Virginia was “the birthplace of the modern Christian Right;”<sup>382</sup> a view shared by Mark Silk and Andrew Walsh who refer to the Old Dominion as the movement’s “cradle.”<sup>383</sup> Virginia was where firebrand preacher

379 Quoted in: Holmes 2012: *The Faiths of the Postwar Presidents: From Truman to Obama*, p. 164. In 1971 for example, the Southern Baptist Convention still passed a resolution that called on its members “to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother.” Southern Baptist Convention 1971: *Resolution on Abortion*.

380 Cf. Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, pp. 206–212 for more information on the early battles of Christian activists and the support they received from secular Republicans in those years.

381 Rozell, Smith 2012, p. 135.

382 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

383 Silk, Walsh 2008, p. 75.

Jerry Falwell established Lynchburg Baptist College (whose name would later on be changed to “Liberty University”) in 1971, an Evangelical place of education that has since become the largest university in the state and the largest private, nonprofit university in the United States.<sup>384</sup> Virginia also was the home of Falwell’s *Moral Majority*, an organization that provided “the means by which southern evangelicals [...] eased their way into involvement in local and state issues [...] as well as nationwide struggles over abortion and gay rights.”<sup>385</sup> Another prominent Southern Baptist minister from Virginia who would play a key role in not just forging the alliance between the GOP and Christian conservatives but also in turning the Christian Right into a viable force that could elect its own officials was Pat Robertson. His surprisingly successful 1988 campaign for the Republican presidential nomination – during which he won four states while capturing roughly 10 percent of the overall vote<sup>386</sup> – showed even the most ardent sceptics within the Republican Party at the time that Christian conservatism and the right-wing movement doing its bidding were “a viable force and not the ghost or phantom some people have imagined.”<sup>387</sup> A year later Robertson would go on to found the *Christian Coalition*, arguably the most influential of all the organizations affiliated with the Christian Right and a group that would in subsequent years “[exercise] an unprecedented degree of influence in the [Republican] party”<sup>388</sup> while also “dominating southern Republican Party chapters.”<sup>389</sup>

The South would prove to be not only the cradle but also the crèche, school, and university of the Christian Right as the broader region provided Christian conservatives with the perfect environment to enter the world of politics and move into positions of considerable power and influence in a relatively short period of time. With Southern GOP state parties still in a nascent state when the first Christian Right politicians began to seek out positions of power and the South home to such a sizeable potential base, the South was the natural home of a politically engaged Christian conservative movement.<sup>390</sup> Data from the early to

384 Cf. Anderson 2013: “Virginia’s Liberty transforms into evangelical mega-university.” *Washington Post*, March 4.

385 Silk, Walsh 2008, p. 75.

386 For an overview of Robertson’s strongest showings cf. Oldfield 1996: *The Right and the Righteous: The Christian Right Confronts the Republican Party*, p. 174.

387 Edward Rollins, national campaign director for the 1984 Reagan-Bush ticket, quoted after Robertson did surprisingly well in an early delegate-selection process in Michigan in 1986. Quoted in: Gailey 1986: “Evangelist’s Draw Stings G.O.P. Rivals.” *New York Times*, May 29.

388 Williams 2010a, p. 230.

389 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

390 Cf. Wilcox 2009: “Of Movements and Metaphors: The Coevolution of the Christian Right and the GOP.” In: Brint, Reith Schroedel (eds.): *Evangelicals and Democracy in America, Volume 2: Religion and Politics*, pp. 331–356, here p. 335.



mid-1990s used to draw up a five-point “index of Christian Right influence” by John Green, James Guth, and Clyde Wilcox reveals the extent to which the Christian Right was able to absorb and annex Southern Republican parties. The authors’ data showed that the Christian Right possessed the highest level of influence – “great influence” – within Republican state parties in seven of the eleven Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North and South Carolina as well as Texas). In both Arkansas and Mississippi it wielded “strong influence” while exerting “contested influence” in Virginia and “weak influence” in Tennessee.<sup>391</sup> Outside of the South, the movement was able to maintain “great influence” only in Oklahoma (i. e. a state part of the “extended” South) while “strong” levels of influence extended only into Kansas, Nebraska, and Utah.<sup>392</sup> In light of findings like these it does not come as a surprise that scholars like Jonathan Knuckey have come to the conclusion that the Christian Right became the “core base”<sup>393</sup> of the GOP at the state and local levels in many parts across the South while John Green and his colleagues still consider “high-commitment” white Evangelicals to be the “unquestioned leaders of the Republican coalition”<sup>394</sup> in the former Confederacy. As we will see in chapter II.2.2, the Christian Right’s contemporary power base among GOP state parties continues to remain in the South from which it has been able to enact a fair amount of socially conservative legislation in recent years. The significant overlap is also apparent outside the political realm. Former and current leading figures of the Christian Right often hail from the former Confederacy while the movement’s primary places of education (most notably Bob Jones University in South Carolina and Falwell’s aforementioned Liberty University in Virginia) can primarily be found in the South as well.<sup>395</sup>

Keeping in mind what has been said about Southern history in the preceding chapters, it appears obvious that the South was the perfect breeding ground for the message of the Christian Right, a message that sought to fuse traditionalist social conservatism with an anti-statist theme centered on the federal government that ultimately managed to win over a broad swath of the region’s conservative voters who were deeply distrustful of an activist government both in

391 Green, Guth, and Wilcox combined two different accounts of Christian Right influence in state parties to create this five-point “index of Christian Right influence.” Cf. Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998: “Less than Conquerors: The Christian Right in State Republican Parties.” In: Costain and McFarland (eds.): *Social Movements and American Political Institutions*, pp. 117–135, here pp. 118–119.

392 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 119.

393 Knuckey 2006, p. 60.

394 Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2010: “The Soul of the South: Religion and Southern Politics in the New Millennium.” In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The New Politics of the Old South: An Introduction to Southern Politics*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 283–304, here p. 299.

395 Cf. Berggren, Rae 2006, p. 6.

the social realm (where liberals used their position at the levers of power to impose modernist progressive values) as well as on economic matters (where liberals used taxes to fund entitlement programs for non-whites).<sup>396</sup> Mark Rozell and Mark Caleb Smith see this combination of a shared “inherent distrust of concentrated political power”<sup>397</sup> and “the desire to preserve an imagined culture under external assault”<sup>398</sup> that both the South and the Christian Right have traditionally subscribed to as the fundamental reasons for the deep seated ties between both. Moreover, they contend that two other key traits and developments related to the South can be cited when attempting to explain the innate links between the two as well as the eventual successful spread of Southern concerns on morality beyond the region’s borders. First of all, there is the traditional overlap between religion and politics in the South which we already encountered earlier on when discussing Southern evangelical positions pertaining to slavery and segregation. The establishment of a political movement rooted in religious convictions therefore came naturally to many in the South. Secondly, the shift away from outright and overt racism in the South and its pulpits and pews also provided a key catalyst “for the institutional formation and national influence of the [Christian Right] movement.”<sup>399</sup> No longer shackled by an association to vile racist sentiments, Southern religious concerns about a variety of issues could be embraced by conservatives across the rest of the nation with a lessened likelihood of being accused of associating and cooperating with zealous racists. To a certain extent then, the losses sustained by racial conservatives in the South during the civil rights struggle proved to be a blessing in disguise as it cleared a path for outwardly de-racialized Southern ideological views to gain adherents in other regions of the country, ultimately establishing a key ingredient for what would become the Southern takeover of the Republican Party.

Despite this expansion and the inclusion of significant numbers of non-Southerners into the movement, the Christian Right will from a historical perspective always at its heart remain a Southern organization that to this very day

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396 In general we can note that the Christian Right’s broader ideology was a catch-all message that managed to also appeal to those Evangelicals whose primary concerns were of an economic and not social nature. Daniel Williams for example points out that the evangelical economic message of individualism and self-reliance provided the perfect means of capturing voters in a region that saw immense economic growth after World War II. Not only did those voters frequently dislike liberal social policies but they also – and sometimes even more importantly – despised the fact that their taxes were being used to fund them. Cf. Williams 2010b: “Jerry Falwell’s Sunbelt Politics: The Regional Origins of the Moral Majority.” *The Journal of Policy History* 22(2), pp. 125–147, here p. 127.

397 Rozell, Smith 2012, p. 135.

398 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

399 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

continues to be a force to be reckoned within Dixie more so than in any other region of the country because of the unique religious composition of the South. Precisely because of the long standing ties between the Christian Right and the South and the fact that the latter provided the perfect soil for the former to blossom in, Republican officials and strategists recognized the potential role the Christian Right and organizations associated with it could play in the party's ambition to conquer the South beyond the presidential level.

## 1.2.2 The alliance between the Christian Right and the GOP

Both Christian conservatives and Republicans saw relatively quickly that advantages were to be had by establishing an alliance between the two. On their part, Republican politicians recognized that the deep religiosity of the South lent itself to being exploited by using a socially conservative message that would buttress and sometimes be conflated with the racial conservatism at the center of the *Southern Strategy*. The budding relationship between the national party and the first political players of what was to become the Christian Right began under the aegis of Richard Nixon who saw the group as a means to an end rather than sharing a genuine interest in fighting on behalf of their religious concerns. Christian conservatives first and foremost offered votes, particularly in a part of the nation that was intended to be at the center of the GOP's newly fashioned conservative majority. Recovering from a poor showing in the 1970 midterms, the President noted in a memo to White House aide H.R. Haldeman that evangelical Southern Baptist minister Billy Graham "was enormously helpful to us in the Border South in '68 and will continue to be in '72," adding "that our primary source of support will be among the fundamentalist Protestants"<sup>400</sup> in that year's election. Once in office, the primary objective concerning Christian conservatives was to bind evangelical and fundamentalist voters to the party without simultaneously losing support among the more secular conservative elements of society. After having been elected to the presidency in 1968 in no small part thanks to winning five Southern states, Nixon thus set about establishing the first of many ties between the GOP and what would become the Christian Right a decade later, implementing relatively innocuous measures such as the introduction of Sunday morning White House church services and actively courting influential ministers through for example providing them with tours of the White House.<sup>401</sup> Despite a lack of policy advancements, Southern evangelical denominations nonetheless returned the favor as Nixon became the

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400 Quoted in: Williams 2010a, p. 98.

401 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 94–98. Cf. also Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and den Dulk 2014, p. 160.

first president to receive an invitation to speak at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in 1972.<sup>402</sup> The aforementioned Graham served to perfectly symbolize the role Nixon and his strategists had envisioned for Evangelicals within the Republican fold. In the evangelical congregations of the nation, Graham's task was to sell Nixon's policies – such as closer ties with communist China – to a wide audience of conservative Christians in an effort to ensure their continued support for the GOP.<sup>403</sup> Aside from the aforementioned largely symbolic offerings, neither Graham nor the Christian Right ever received any tangible policy victories during Nixon's presidency though (similar to what would transpire during the Reagan presidency as we will see later on), leading historian Daniel Williams to ultimately conclude that the minister was used “merely as a political tool”<sup>404</sup> by a president who, when it came to Christianity, primarily cared about the political windfalls it offered. Other Republican strategists and leading politicians like Ronald Reagan also saw the potential this sizeable group of hitherto largely non-political Christian voters (described as “the greatest tract of virgin timber on the political landscape”<sup>405</sup> by GOP activist Morton Blackwell) represented to a party wishing to establish a conservative majority under its banner; an objective that appeared rather unlikely after Jimmy Carter's successful 1976 presidential bid.

When the Georgia governor entered the White House in January of 1977, he worked in a capital that was fully controlled by his fellow Democrats. Possessing just 38 seats in the Senate and fewer than 150 in the House, Republicans on their part knew that their electoral math had to change if they wished to return to the levers of power in Washington, D.C. – or as one Republican Senator put it, “[w]hen you're as distinct a minority as we are, you welcome anything short of the National Order of Child Molesters.”<sup>406</sup> The politicization and mobilization of Christian conservatives now presented Republicans with the opportunity to change those unfavorable electoral dynamics. Before the late 1970s, any strategy that had sought to appeal to hardline religious values voters constituted an approach whose potential downsides tended to usually outweigh the benefits as one ran the risk of alienating moderates without bringing a sufficient and compensating amount of Evangelicals to the ballot boxes. Now that the latter group had entered the realm of politics though, this “tract of virgin timber” could form the basis of a Republican resurgence across the land in general and

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402 Cf. Williams 2011b: “Voting for God and the GOP: The Role of Evangelical Religion in the Emergence of the Republican South.” In: Feldman (ed.): *Painting Dixie Red: When, Where, Why, and How the South Became Republican*, pp. 21–37, here p. 27.

403 Cf. Williams 2010a, pp. 94–96.

404 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

405 Quoted in: Wilcox 2009, p. 336.

406 Quoted in: Williams 2010a, p. 189.

the conquest of the South in particular.<sup>407</sup> Recognizing the central role moralist-traditionalist voters could play in fashioning an enduring conservative majority, Republican strategists and activists (frequently secular ones) accordingly set about helping their religious counterparts in their attempts at establishing national organizations (such as Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority) that could help appeal to Christian conservative voters and get them politically engaged both on matters related to classic religious concerns like abortion as well as broader key conservative policy issues such as gun rights, taxes, or defense spending,<sup>408</sup> a strategy perfected by the Reagan camp in subsequent years that has since allowed the Republican Party to harness the Christian Right's considerable electoral muscle on a variety of key policy debates.<sup>409</sup> Christian conservatives returned the favor by not infrequently turning their evangelical churches into something akin to Republican campaign centers, thereby heeding Jerry Falwell's call to "[g]et them saved, baptized, and registered."<sup>410</sup> One irritated Democrat

407 Cf. Nesmith 1994, pp. 4–7.

408 Cf. Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 209. The strategy first drawn up by the secular Republican strategists of fusing different issues together to create a coherent conservative ideology that could appeal to the broadest possible base has most certainly proved to have an enduring effect on the GOP and its manner of galvanizing sizeable segments of conservative voters, a development that will be assessed in the more detail in chapter II.2.3 which will highlight how the uncompromising stance many Republican "values voters" possess and live by on traditionally important matters such as abortion or homosexuality has seeped over into other areas such as gun rights and the economy. To this very day, the best method of replenishing the alliance and establishing a common cause and bond between both groups of (secular) economic and socio-cultural or religious conservatives continues to be when issues are being framed in a manner of upstanding and morally resolute Americans being pitted against a Washington Leviathan that is attempting to stifle individualism in the economic sphere as well as imposing its liberal-progressive views on a moral majority. White Evangelicals became the perfect target audience for such a message because they were (and are) receptive to both parts of this ideological worldview while the more libertarian inclined fiscal conservatives did not necessarily always feel comfortable with a government seeking to legislate morality. As we will see in more detail in chapter II.2.4 on the economic conservatism of white Evangelicals, the economic part of this anti-government message was indeed by no means wasted on Christian conservatives who in the 1970s not only already abhorred liberal legislators for loosening the restrictions on abortion and removing God from the public sphere but also frequently considered the free market to be a divinely ordained integral tenet of American exceptionalism and thus vehemently opposed activist liberal policies in this sphere as well. It is precisely because Christian conservatives in general and white evangelical Protestants in particular more than any other conservative group embraced and embodied this broad and two-fold conservative ideology in their day-to-day lives that they have become the active core of today's Republican Party.

409 See chapter I.3.1 on how Reagan galvanized and some would argue exploited Christian conservatives without ever delivering tangible legislation on the movement's "classic" concerns.

410 Quoted in: Domke, Coe 2010, p. 17. The American Coalition for Traditional Values, a Christian Right umbrella organization founded by Tim LaHaye, played a central role in

described the pressure put on her to author Mark Silk, painting a picture of how leading members of her congregation “regularly encourage[d] others in the church to attend the Christian Coalition meetings and rallies” while “also ask[ing] for volunteers to help them in the election campaigns of Republican candidates.”<sup>411</sup> With the Democratic Party seen as “the work of the devil,” the GOP was on the other hand “commonly accepted [as] the Christian political party.”<sup>412</sup> Accordingly, pastors regularly invited Republican candidates to speak to the congregation, an offer unsurprisingly not extended to their Democratic counterparts.<sup>413</sup>

Support for the alliance that was to put the GOP on a path to becoming a party associated with evangelical Protestantism was by no means universal among Republicans though. Neil Bush, one of George H. W. Bush’s six children, described Pat Robertson’s supporters as “cockroaches issuing out from underneath the baseboard of the South.”<sup>414</sup> Barry Goldwater was also less than enthused about the ever increasing overlap between the GOP and the Christian Right, proclaiming towards the tail-end of his political career that the religious right “scares the hell out of me,” while moreover contending that “they should have no place in politics.”<sup>415</sup> Even in the South, criticism did sometimes make it to the surface. Georgia’s Republican Party state chairman described the attitudes and views of the Christian Right activists that had taken over his party in the 1980s as akin to those “that brought you the burning of Joan of Arc, the Salem Witch trials, and the Ayatollah Khomeini.”<sup>416</sup> In 2000, John McCain even went as far as to attack two of the most prominent figures of the Christian Right, the aforementioned Virginians Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, for their “political intolerance,” arguing that the “political tactics of division and slander” that had been employed by them among many others “are not our [America’s] values.”<sup>417</sup> McCain considered such preachers to be “corrupting influences on religion and

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getting white Evangelicals throughout the South registered to vote during the early 1980s. Across the South, three million white voters were registered between 1980 and 1984 as “one registrar [was put] in each church” according to Christian Right activist Lamarr Mooneyham. Quote and data from Nesmith 1994, p. 100. By 1980, Jerry Falwell’s *Moral Majority* also claimed to have registered four million new voters although the actual number was probably closer to two million. Cf. Diamond 1998, p. 67.

411 Quoted in: Silk, Walsh 2008, p. 76.

412 Quoted in: Ibid., p. 77.

413 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 76.

414 Quoted in: Williams 2010a, p. 213.

415 Comment made in the documentary *Mr. Conservative: Goldwater on Goldwater* (2006; directed by Julie Anderson). For footage of Goldwater’s comments see video excerpt cited in bibliography at 3:29 minutes.

416 Quoted in: Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011. p. 231.

417 Quoted in: CNN 2000: *Sen. John McCain Attacks Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Republican Establishment as Harming GOP Ideals*. February 28.

politics,” furthermore making the case that “those who practice [the political tactics of division and slander] in the name of religion or in the name of the Republican Party or in the name of America shame our faith, our party, and our country.”<sup>418</sup>

Regardless of the doubters, Republican attempts to win over the Christian Right – illustrated particularly well by the shifts in Republican platforms showcased later on in this chapter – went ahead, paying off in a remarkable manner. When born-again Christians began to re-enter the realm of politics in the early 1970s, their partisan preferences were still relatively evenly divided. Despite the fact that the Democrats had been on the path towards becoming the party of “acid, amnesty, and abortion,”<sup>419</sup> one of President Carter’s advisers considered Southern Evangelicals to be the president’s “most bedrock constituency.”<sup>420</sup> A year ahead of the election, the Southern Baptist Convention had even published the Georgia governor’s campaign biography.<sup>421</sup> The ties between Southern Evangelicalism and the Democrats were to be rather short lived though, in large part thanks to Ronald Reagan and his approach to winning over both Southerners in particular and evangelical Protestants in general as we will see in chapter I.3.1 as well as Carter’s disregard of evangelical concerns regarding a number of socio-cultural issues from abortion to women’s rights that were addressed in a far more satisfactory manner by the GOP.<sup>422</sup> While Carter’s

418 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

419 This was how Democratic Senator Tom Eagleton described McGovern’s campaign in April of 1972. Eagleton would actually go on to be picked as McGovern’s vice presidential candidate before it was revealed to the wider public that Eagleton had been suffering from repeated bouts of depression. Following this revelation, McGovern asked Eagleton to withdraw his name from the ticket. Cf. Noah 2012: “*Acid, Amnesty, and Abortion*”: *The Unlikely Source of a Legendary Smear*.

420 That advisor being Peter Bourne. Quoted in: Hough 2006, p. 204. Ultimately, a fair degree of the support Carter did receive in the region (although he also failed to obtain a majority among white Southerners) was not necessarily based on the former Georgia governor running as an Evangelical but first and foremost as a *Southerner*. Gerald Rafshoon, then Assistant to the President for Communications, noted that when it came to Carter’s establishment of an electoral alliance, “[i]t was not so much his religion as his being a non-Washington politician, from the South [...]” Of course, evangelical Protestantism and Southern culture are deeply entwined so any appeals to what one could call a broader *Southernness* would also find some support among white Evangelicals in the region despite not being specifically targeted. For quote see Nesmith 1994, p. 61. For Carter’s strategy and his relationship with white Evangelicals cf. *ibid.*, pp. 59–71.

421 Cf. Phillips 2006, p. 185.

422 As Bruce Nesmith points out, Carter never explicitly appealed to Christian conservatives or sought to implement parts of their agenda once he was in the White House because of a personal opposition to key concerns of the religious right (such as an anti-abortion amendment) and because such appeals and policies “would endanger the electoral coalition he was trying to build” – a coalition that would have been driven apart by overly religious rhetoric. Nesmith 1994, p. 63.

broader re-election results in 1980 were a disappointment, his numbers among Evangelicals were particularly poor. After having won around half of all evangelical voters in 1976, that share would drop to just 34 percent four years later.<sup>423</sup>

Changes were particularly profound in the South of the nation where the most traditionalist white Evangelicals provided one of the keys to conquering the South. A racial *and* moral traditionalist message had, for obvious reasons in light of the facts mentioned in the preceding chapters, always provided candidates with the perfect electoral approach to conquering as many white Southerners as possible. George Wallace's racially charged 1968 presidential campaign for example already "showed extraordinary strength among southern whites belonging to theologically conservative denominations,"<sup>424</sup> as Kenneth Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown note. Evidence such as this and the aforementioned innate ties between the South and the Christian Right meant that an alliance with Southern white evangelical Protestants and the strong institutional network associated with it could provide a superb supplement to the racial message Republicans had come to embrace since the mid-1960s. The most significant consequence of this alliance extended beyond the presidential realm though. Goldwater, Nixon, and Reagan had already done well in the South in presidential elections throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s while local Republican candidates were still languishing in a Democratic *Solid South* that had survived beneath the national level. All of this was to change during the 1980s though, a period during which the GOP-Christian Right partnership blossomed into more than just a loose alliance (the reasons for which will once again become clearer when we explore the role of Ronald Reagan in the next chapter). "Until the religious conservative movement broke its behavioral Democratic patterns and started voting in large part in Republican primaries and for Republican candidates," South Carolina GOP party strategist Warren Tompkins explained, "we weren't winning elections in the South."<sup>425</sup> Data spanning the past few decades most certainly reveals a remarkable turnaround of Republican fortunes among Southern Evangelicals regarding their congressional voting habits, particularly towards the tail-end of the Reagan and Bush (41) presidencies. During this period, white Southern "high-commitment" Evangelicals, who had been some of the most loyal supporters of the Democratic Party even during the third party

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423 Cf. Swartz 2012: *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism*, p. 229.

424 Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 205.

425 Quoted in: Black, Black 2002, p. 215. Southern Evangelicals played a key role in the establishment of Republican state parties across the region. More than half of all white delegates to the 1980 South Carolina Republican convention for example belonged to a "fundamentalist" religious denomination. "[W]ithout much party organization of their own," Bruce Nesmith notes, "the Republican Party needed the white evangelicals in order to have any strength in the South." Quote and information: Nesmith 1994, p. 7.



candidacies of Strom Thurmond in 1948 and George Wallace twenty years later,<sup>426</sup> were to transform themselves into the backbone of the Southern Republican Party. In the 1960s, these high-commitment white Evangelicals had given just 24 percent of their two-party U.S. House of Representatives vote to Republican candidates – at a point in time when a majority of them had already cast their vote at the presidential level for the GOP. Improvements in this realm were rather sluggish, reaching a 38 percent Republican share during the 1980s only to take off during the following decade as the Republican House vote share within this demographic reached 61 percent. By 2008, high-commitment white Evangelicals had become the most solidly Republican electoral group in the former Confederacy, as GOP candidates received 83 percent of their two-party U.S. House vote.<sup>427</sup> The role and centrality of these traditionalist Evangelicals in both the realignment of the South as well as their continued reign over Southern Republican state parties has led scholars to the previously mentioned assessment that they are the “unquestioned leaders of the Republican coalition”<sup>428</sup> in the region, once again highlighting how the *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the GOP that will be discussed in part II of the book often are two sides of the same coin.

### National Republican shifts on Evangelical core concerns

The transformation of the Republican Party was of course not limited to a single region of the nation. At the national level, the Christian Right movement received a fair degree of rhetoric support within a short period of time, a basic shift in Republican rhetoric and tenets that is illustrated quite well by assessing changes in the party’s platforms. One of the earliest and quite possibly most remarkable alteration occurred on abortion, an issue area that would play a “pivotal role”<sup>429</sup> according to Daniel Williams in the eventual transformation of

426 For this claim and more on the role of *high-commitment white Evangelicals* within the old Democratic *Solid South* cf. Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2010, pp. 286–287.

427 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 291. Some of the incredibly low shares in the 1960s can most certainly also be attributed to the fact that a sizeable number of Democratic candidates in the region retained positions that were quite different from the views and values propagated by the national party. Moreover, Republicans failed to field a significant number of candidates in many parts of the South until the party became more competitive at the local level, a shift that, as Tompkins indicates, was to a substantial extent due to both the influx of white Evangelicals into the political realm as well as their increasing Republican allegiance.

428 *Ibid.*, p. 299. In a similar vein Rozell and Smith 2012 argue that conservative Evangelicals represent the “solid core” and most reliable faction of the GOP in the South (p. 149).

429 Williams 2011a: “The GOP’s Abortion Strategy: Why Pro-Choice Republicans Became Pro-Life in the 1970s.” *The Journal of Policy History* 23(4), pp. 513–539, here p. 514.

the GOP from a party of predominantly mainline Protestants into a political organization whose basic social tenets are now frequently drawn up by religiously conservative evangelical Protestants.<sup>430</sup> In 1972, the year before the landmark *Roe v. Wade* ruling, the Republican party platform did not have a single mention of abortion.<sup>431</sup> Four years later – when only around 40 percent of all delegates to the Republican National Convention were pro-life<sup>432</sup> – the party still recognized the divide that existed in American society and even within the party, calling for a “public dialogue”<sup>433</sup> on the issue while nonetheless simultaneously arguing for a constitutional amendment to protect “the right to life for unborn children,”<sup>434</sup> a so called “human life amendment” that has been a part of every subsequent Republican party platform since.<sup>435</sup> As revealed by the following passage of the 1976 platform, the GOP was facing a momentous internal battle for the future path of the party between those backing the Supreme Court and those who favored legislative action to overrule the justices. At least within the party’s upper echelons, most could still be found in the former camp. The then chair of the Republican National Committee, Mary Louise Smith, for example still expressed support for abortion rights while First Lady Betty Ford even considered *Roe v. Wade* to be a “great, great decision.”<sup>436</sup> The 1976 platform on its part still acknowledged that:

*The question of abortion is one of the most difficult and controversial of our time. It is undoubtedly a moral and personal issue but it also involves complex questions relating to medical science and criminal justice. There are those in our Party who favor complete support for the Supreme Court decision which permits abortion on demand. There are others who share sincere convictions that the Supreme Court’s decision must be changed by a constitutional amendment prohibiting all abortions. Others have yet to take a position, or they have assumed a stance somewhere in between polar positions.*<sup>437</sup>

A mere eight years later, the party had moved noticeably to the right on the matter though, removing any sort of doubt where the GOP stood on the divisive issue:

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430 For a broader overview on this transformation cf. *ibid.*

431 Cf. Republican Party 1972: “Republican Party Platform of 1972.” August 21. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*.

432 Cf. Williams 2011a, p. 513.

433 Republican Party 1976: “Republican Party Platform of 1976.” August 18. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*.

434 *Ibid.*

435 Cf. Nivola 2013: “This Too Shall Pass: Reflections on the Repositioning of Political Parties.” *Brookings Institution – Issues in Governance Studies, Number 61. September*, p. 20.

436 Quoted in: Williams 2011a, p. 513.

437 Republican Party 1976.

*The unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We therefore reaffirm our support for a human life amendment to the Constitution, and we endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children. We oppose the use of public revenues for abortion and will eliminate funding for organizations which advocate or support abortion. We commend the efforts of those individuals and religious and private organizations that are providing positive alternatives to abortion by meeting the physical, emotional, and financial needs of pregnant women and offering adoption services where needed.*<sup>438</sup>

Since the 1980s, the Republican stance on abortion as illustrated by the party's platform has been relatively straightforward: "the more emphasis on abortion, the better."<sup>439</sup> This remarkable change can be attributed to a combination of both elite level Republicans wishing to appeal to the moral-traditionalist electorate as well as the immense changes seen at the mass level of the party, revealed by the transformation of the attitude among GOP convention delegates towards abortion. While only around 20 percent of all Republican delegates at the 1972 convention took the most pro-life position (that abortion should *never* be permitted) that share had risen to roughly 70 percent by 1984 and 85 percent in 1992 – a shift that mirrored increases in the share of evangelical Protestants and other traditionalist religious denominations among GOP delegates during the same period.<sup>440</sup>

A similar transformation could be seen on another topic that riled up evangelical fervor in the 1970s unlike virtually any other matter (bar abortion): the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The amendment itself sought to outlaw sexual discrimination by the federal and state governments and was quickly passed by Congress in 1972 and by 22 state legislatures during the same year, reaching a total of 30 state approvals by the end of 1973. It was at this point that organizations affiliated with the Christian Right began to flex their newfound political muscle though. On the outside, the ERA appeared to be a relatively straightforward piece of legislation whose primary intent was to facilitate gender equality. For Christian conservatives it was about far more though, representing an enshrinement of the destruction of the traditional family concept within the most sacred worldly document known to them, the U.S. constitution. Arguments that had in previous years been used to justify both slavery and segregation – the supposed fact that God had created a particular role and place for the races –

438 Republican Party 1984: "Republican Party Platform of 1984." August 20. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*.

439 Domke, Coe 2010, p. 114. The authors arrived at this verdict by assessing the number of words pertaining to the topic of abortion in GOP platforms between 1980 and 2004.

440 Cf. Layman 1999: "'Culture Wars' in the American Party System: Religious and Cultural Change among Partisan Activists Since 1972." *American Politics Research* 27(1), pp. 89–121, here pp. 104–105.

were now, after the repudiation of racial inequality, seamlessly integrated into a new battle on gender issues.<sup>441</sup> Jerry Falwell depicted the amendment as a “satanic attempt to destroy the biblical concept of the Christian home.”<sup>442</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, one of the most vehement critics and founder of “Stop ERA”, quite possibly the most prominent organization that sought to stop the amendment’s ratification, claimed the ERA would “drive the wife out of the home” while creating a “unisex society” that would ultimately also force women “to be drafted and put in combat just like men.”<sup>443</sup> In a manner not dissimilar to the abortion debate, the amendment was portrayed in vivid and visceral terms as a ploy intended to destroy the very fabric of America instead of seeking to empower and liberate women, as liberals would have one believe. “What [women’s liberation] does to a woman,” Schlafly contended, “is much like a disease”<sup>444</sup> as liberal ideas about women without employment being an antiquated concept were spreading from family to family, a development that in Schlafly’s eyes was one of the root causes behind rising rates of divorce. For her, the ERA would thus primarily serve as a tool for “radical feminists” in their attempts to eradicate the Christian cultural foundations of the nation by doing away with “family, love, marriage, heterosex, and religion.”<sup>445</sup> Such a technique of framing virtually every issue through the eyes of religion while also making the case that liberal legislation and the moral fight against it represented a battle for the very heart and soul of the nation would go on to become a tried and tested strategy by the Christian Right that – as we will discuss in chapter II.2.3 on the “culture of non-compromise” – has itself become an integral part of how today’s Republican Party approaches contentious policy matters, regardless whether they are of a social or non-social nature.

Survey data pertaining to the ERA showed that high church attendance and membership in fundamentalist churches were indeed associated with high rates of opposition to the amendment.<sup>446</sup> Unsurprisingly, the South had done little to support the ratification process of the ERA. A mere two Southern states (Tennessee and Texas) had ratified the amendment as the Christian conservative storm began to gather pace, with Tennessee rescinding its ratification in April of 1974, almost exactly two years after it had first given its approval. As already

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441 Cf. Harvey 2005b, p. 119 and Silk, Walsh 2008, pp. 70–75.

442 Quoted in: Williams 2010b, p. 139.

443 Quoted in: Moody Monthly November 1978: “Interview with Phyllis Schlafly on the Equal Rights Amendment.” In: Sutton 2013: *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 115–118, here p. 115.

444 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

445 *Ibid.*, p. 117. The wording of the “family, love ...” sentence was used by the interviewer Gary Wall, editor of the Christian magazine *Moody Monthly*. Schlafly’s response to Wall’s question was that “[y]es. [The ERA] is the vehicle to achieve all their goals.”

446 Cf. Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 207.

mentioned, 30 states ratified the amendment within the two-year period of 1972 and '73. After that initial burst, ratification slowed to a trickle though thanks to the efforts of moral traditionalists: three states approved it in 1974, one in '75, and another one in '77.<sup>447</sup>

The about-face by the Republican Party on the Equal Rights Amendment was to a certain extent even more spectacular than the transformation of its platform stance on abortion because the GOP had been one of the if not the key proponent of an amendment to enshrine gender equality for a number of decades before the Christian Right began to pull the party to the right. In 1940, the GOP actually became the first major party to voice support for it,<sup>448</sup> stating in that year's platform that it "favor[ed] submission by Congress to the States of an amendment to the Constitution providing for equal rights for men and women."<sup>449</sup> Even more than 30 years later, the GOP's 1972 platform still devoted an entire sub-chapter to the matter of "equal rights for women," voicing support for "equal opportunities" and "equal responsibilities" so that women could achieve their full potential "outside the home"<sup>450</sup> as well. The platform also made sure to tout the Nixon administration's achievements in helping expand employment opportunities for women through for example providing federal assistance to child care facilities.<sup>451</sup> Even four years later, as the ERA's ratification process had slowed down to an almost complete standstill, the Republican platform copied passages from its 1972 platform and "fully endorse[d] the principle of equal rights, equal opportunities for women" while supporting the Equal Rights Amendment's "swift ratification."<sup>452</sup> In light of the rhetoric used by the Christian Right in general and figures in Schlafly in particular related to the ERA and the depiction of it as a ploy to tear women away from their homes and children while simultaneously destroying the fabric of the traditional family, the 1972 and '76 platforms thus most certainly provided a stark contrast to both the views espoused by Christian conservatives and the stance favored by the GOP in subsequent election years.

By 1980 though, support among the Republican base for the amendment appeared to have virtually completely disappeared as the party failed to back the ERA in its platform for the first time since 1940.<sup>453</sup> The platform now somberly acknowledged that ratification was in the hands of state legislatures. Adopting a

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447 Cf. Courtwright 2010, p. 126.

448 Cf. Williams 2011a, p. 514.

449 Republican Party 1940: "Republican Party Platform of 1940." June 24. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*.

450 Republican Party 1972.

451 Cf. *ibid.*

452 Republican Party 1976.

453 Cf. Williams 2010a, p. 189.

tone that undoubtedly appealed to Southerners and Christian Right advocates who despised federal intrusion into their affairs, the GOP's platform called for an end to any pressure levied by the federal government on states that had not yet ratified the amendment arguing – in a style reminiscent of classic states' rights rhetoric – that the states had “a constitutional right to accept or reject a constitutional amendment without federal interference of pressure.”<sup>454</sup> Evangelical concerns about the ERA destroying the constitution of the traditional family or Schlafly's claim that equal rights would lead to women being forced to serve in the armed forces were also recognized as the party voiced its opposition to “any move which would give the federal government more power over families” while expressing support for “equal opportunities for women, without taking away traditional rights of women such as exemption from the military draft.”<sup>455</sup>

It does not come as much of a surprise then that Jerry Falwell considered the 1980 Republican platform to be a “dream platform.”<sup>456</sup> With each successive election though, the party's platforms have moved even further to the right than the dream version Falwell had already come across in the early 1980s. As work by David Domke and Kevin Coe on the inclusion of “morality politics issues” within party platforms shows, the GOP's usage of rhetoric to appeal to the Christian Right increased substantially between 1976 and 2004, the last election cycle included in their assessment. While almost no text was devoted to these matters in the 1960s and just minor mentions were made in 1972 and '76, the GOP's 2004 platform included almost 1150 words specifically pertaining to the aforementioned “morality politics issues.”<sup>457</sup> A particular spike could be seen in 1996 which the authors attribute to the GOP's success in the 1994 elections on the back of an electoral message resting on moral issues and the subsequent strong Republican showing among religious voters. “Having found a message that worked,” Domke and Coe note, “the GOP ramped it up the next time it had the chance. The party did not look back again.”<sup>458</sup>

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454 Republican Party 1980: “Republican Party Platform of 1980.” July 15. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*.

455 Ibid.

456 Quoted in: Williams 2010a, p. 190.

457 Domke and Coe looked at five issues central to religious conservatives: school prayer, abortion, stem cell research, the ERA, and gay and lesbian issues. Cf. Domke, Coe 2010, p. 104.

458 Ibid., p. 105.

## Conclusion

Due to the distinctive traits of Southern whites pertaining to their religious and racial views, the South undoubtedly was the perfect target audience for the attempts of Christian conservatives such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson and their secular allies within the GOP to wed a blend of racial and social conservatism to an anti-statist message,<sup>459</sup> deeply distrustful of a federal government seen to be meddling in internal affairs on behalf of the poor, minorities (frequently one and the same), and promiscuous progressives. This fusion has by no means been a merger between equals though. Instead of being an alliance between secular fiscal conservatives and their religious Christian kin it has developed into something akin to a hostile takeover of the formerly primarily economic conservative GOP by social conservatives. In its attempts to conquer the South, the GOP recognized that it had to inevitably become a host to a severe strain of Christian conservatism. Initially hoping that it would be able to contain this virus, the Republican Party has – as will be show in chapter II.2 – ultimately succumbed to it though. Today's strength of social and religious conservatives in the Republican coalition can be traced back to the 1970s and '80s and the conscious decision of party strategists and leading officials to employ the Christian warriors of evangelical Protestantism in the Republican operation to win the South. This strategy has undoubtedly paid off if we limit our analytical gaze to the former Confederacy where Republican state parties – not infrequently run by officials and activists close to the Christian Right<sup>460</sup> – are stronger than ever before while Republicans also dominate national elections in Dixie.<sup>461</sup> Even at the wider national level, the Christian Right and its remarkable grassroots network have not infrequently been proven to be a valuable source for Republican candidates, as demonstrated by George W. Bush's electoral successes

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459 As David Courtwright observes, for many of the leading (Christian) conservative figures of the 1970s, the key to fashioning a broad majority on the right “was to marry Wallace to Goldwater” by establishing a brand of conservatism that fused racial conservatism (and its basic tenets such as an opposition to forced integration) and its social cousin (exemplified by the issue of abortion) with economic concerns and anxieties about an excessively activist government. For quote and broader context cf. Courtwright 2010, p. 134.

460 Or where, in the words of Mark Silk and Andrew Walsh, “a seamless connection between the party apparatus and conservative white evangelical churches” is quite often in place. In this instance, Silk and Walsh refer specifically to the state of Georgia where former Christian Coalition executive director Ralph Reed became chairman of the state's Republican Party in 2001. This “seamless connection” nonetheless can be found in a number of Southern states as was discussed earlier (cf. Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998). Cf. Silk, Walsh 2008, p. 76 for quotation and broader context.

461 See chapter II.1 on data for Republican success in congressional and presidential elections in the region.

in 2000 and 2004.<sup>462</sup> Some of the Republican concerns voiced in the 1970s and '80s appear to have been proven right though. The alliance with Christian conservatives put the Republican Party on the path towards its *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization*, leaving the contemporary national party in a precarious position as the country's population is becoming increasingly secular.<sup>463</sup> Appealing to Falwell, Robertson, and a variety of other deeply conservative preachers across the South played a key role in the Republican conquest of Dixie – but it also has played a similarly central role in the party's decreasing fortunes in nationwide elections.

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462 As will be discussed later on, George W. Bush's 2004 re-election may very well have been won by galvanizing social conservatives through an anti-gay marriage referendum in the state of Ohio. Cf. chapter II.2.6.

463 See chapter II.4.6.





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### I.3 Reagan – The final push for realignment

Tom Cotton is the kind of politician that excites the Republican base. Elected to the U.S. House on the night Barack Obama safely secured re-election, few other elected officials within the GOP do a better job of representing the change the party has undergone over the past half a century. Cotton hails from what was one of the last vestiges of the Democratic *Solid South*, Arkansas – a state where Democrats had remained in control of the state legislature without interruption from 1874 to the day Cotton won the state’s fourth congressional district and the GOP finally managed to conquer both legislative chambers for the first time since the end of Reconstruction.<sup>464</sup> A mere two years after his entry into the House, Cotton moved onto the Senate after easily beating his incumbent Democratic opponent, Senator Mark Pryor, giving the GOP control of both Senate seats from Arkansas for the first time since the late 1870s.<sup>465</sup> A military veteran of both the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, some have openly wondered if the Southerner Cotton represents the future of the party.<sup>466</sup> If he does indeed represent the future of Republicanism it is in no small part because of the rhetoric employed and actions undertaken by the 40<sup>th</sup> president, Ronald Reagan as he sought to forge a conservative majority that rested on the South and Christian conservatives both from within and without the region.

Despite the remarkable Republican gains in Arkansas and across the South, Cotton’s policy preferences and the ideology he stands for nonetheless reveal the negative side of Ronald Reagan’s legacy regarding the Republican Party as well.

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464 Cf. Sturgis 2012: “GOP’s takeover of Arkansas legislature boosts party’s control in the South.” *The Institute for Southern Studies*, November 7.

465 The last time before 2015 that the Republican Party controlled both Senate seats from Arkansas was in early 1877 before Democrat Augustus H. Garland replaced Republican Senator Powell Clayton. For data cf. United States Senate 2014a: *States in the Senate – Arkansas’s United States Senators*.

466 For an overview of Cotton’s résumé and the question if Cotton is indeed the future of the GOP cf. Cogan 2013: “Is This 36-Year-Old Veteran the Future of the GOP?” *National Journal*, December 6.

While the staunchly conservative Arkansan embodies the foundations of the twenty-first century Republican Party, it is precisely these traits – a strong brand of white, Southern moralist anti-government conservatism – that has led political commentators to refer to Cotton as “a befuddling relic of a fading slice of politics.”<sup>467</sup> In a country that is becoming less white with every passing day (see chapter II.4.1), where secularism is on the rise (chapter II.4.7), and where young people are more open to the concept of an activist, liberal government than their generational predecessors (II.4.5), Cotton and his ideological views and values are indeed dangerously representative of a bygone era. While Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and a variety of other Republican officials and strategists laid the foundations for the *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party, it was Ronald Reagan though who ultimately made the GOP the party of the white South with all the advantages and disadvantages this has entailed.

More so than any other Republican politician before or since, Ronald Reagan was able to weave together different strains of racial, social, and economic conservatism to create a Republican ideological foundation and brand that has remained in place to this very day as GOP candidates go to immense lengths to prove that they were “foot soldiers in the Reagan revolution,” to use John McCain’s words on the 2008 campaign trail.<sup>468</sup> In his attempts to win the South and establish the basis for a conservative majority, the 40<sup>th</sup> president made exemplary use of both religion and race,<sup>469</sup> employing coded rhetoric in a manner reminiscent of George Wallace. Evangelicals on their part felt one of their own was now residing in the White House. The relationship between Christian conservatives and the GOP may sometimes have been shaken by the lack of action on behalf of Evangelical concerns by the administration but the incorporation of the religious right into the Republican Party had become a fact of American political life by the end of Reagan’s two terms in office. Through his rhetoric and actions, Ronald Reagan would ultimately not only transform the partisanship of a region but the ideological make-up of his party as well.

467 VandeHei, Allen 2013: “The ‘hell no’ caucus.” *Politico*, January 8.

468 The point was made by the candidate on a number of occasions in 2008. Cf. Leonhardt 2008: “McCain’s Fiscal Mantra Becomes Less Is More.” *New York Times*, January 26.

469 Laurence Moreland and Robert Steed for example note that Reagan’s “efforts at wooing the white South were without peer.” Moreland, Steed 2012: “The South and Presidential Elections.” In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*, pp. 470–483, here p. 478.

### 1.3.1 Reagan and the Christian Right

Ronald Reagan was a seminal figure in American politics for a variety of reasons, leaving a lasting mark on the nation with perhaps none bigger than the contemporary fusion of politics and religion that was brought about by the 40<sup>th</sup> president who recognized the enormous electoral windfalls to be had by bringing evangelical Protestants to the voting booths. For a number of years before the 1980 presidential election, Reagan had already been sending signals to values voters that he was on their side, supporting a campaign to reintroduce school prayers in 1964 while proclaiming as Governor of California in 1967 that “trusting in God for guidance will be an integral part of my administration.”<sup>470</sup> By 1980, he had gained the support and trust of leading figures of the Christian Right through his continued support of evangelical concerns, for example by backing the teaching of creationism in public schools as the then governor argued evolution was a “theory only.”<sup>471</sup> Reagan’s language in a speech delivered to quite possibly his largest audience to date yet – the 1980 Republican national convention – also signaled to even the most doubtful Evangelical that here was someone on their side, willing to take on secular liberals and bring an end to the moral downfall of the nation. “I’ll confess that I’ve been a little afraid to suggest what I’m going to suggest. I’m more afraid not to,” Reagan told his audience in the convention hall and in front of the television screens as he closed out his acceptance speech, setting up a sentence that would define Republicanism to the present day: “Can we begin our crusade joined together in a moment of silent prayer?”<sup>472</sup> This was the “moment when” – David Domke and Kevin Coe conclude – “a new religious politics was born.”<sup>473</sup> Later on in the campaign, Reagan would go even a step further, telling a group of evangelical ministers in Dallas, “I know you can’t endorse me, but I want you to know that I endorse you and what you are doing.”<sup>474</sup> The theme would be present throughout the campaign and in later years during his presidency as well as Reagan frequently used phrases “that were indistinguishable from Falwell’s.”<sup>475</sup> On his part, Falwell called the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 “the greatest day for the cause of conservatism and morality in my adult life,”<sup>476</sup> while asserting two years later that the president “agree[d] with every position Moral Majority represents.”<sup>477</sup>

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470 For quote and data cf. Williams 2010a, p. 188.

471 For quote and additional information cf. *ibid.*, p. 191.

472 Quoted in: S. Miller 2014, p. 61.

473 Domke, Coe 2010, p. 3.

474 Quoted in: Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and den Dulk 2014, p. 33.

475 Williams 2010b, p. 142.

476 Quoted in: Williams 2010a, p. 188.

477 Quoted in: Williams 2010b, p. 142.

Once in office, Reagan would continue to lend support to the Christian Right, doing so mainly through rhetoric instead of tangible actions, an approach that unsurprisingly caused a fair degree of consternation among white evangelical Protestants. Data by Matthew C. Moen illustrates that these values voters might have been seen by Reagan and his strategists as first and foremost key components to get the president and his successor George H. W. Bush re-elected instead of genuinely caring about their concerns. Moen's assessment of the number of words dedicated to salient social issues<sup>478</sup> in Reagan's state of the union addresses reveals that the highest numbers came in speeches delivered in 1984 (508 words) and 1988 (464 words), two presidential election years. The highest total in non-presidential election years came in 1985, when a total of just 292 words were dedicated to social issues. On arguably the most salient social issue of all – abortion – 66 percent of all mentions of the topic came in the '84 and '88 state of the union addresses alone.<sup>479</sup> At the same time though, Moen does arrive at the conclusion that there may have been a degree of genuine support on the part of Reagan for the Christian Right and their concerns due to the fact that the average number of words dedicated to social issues rose during Reagan's second term (from an average of 231 words during the first three addresses to 276 words during the last four), even though Reagan no longer relied on their support when it came to his own election campaigns.<sup>480</sup> The argument can of course be made though that the president looked beyond his own personal electoral fortunes, recognizing that a lasting alliance and Republican gains in the South that were more thorough could only be forged if he did not drop the Christian Right and the issues it deeply cared about like a hot potato after his 1984 re-election.

One cannot assess Reagan, the Christian Right, the alliance forged between the two and its repercussions on the GOP without addressing the issue of abortion which is of paramount importance to the value voter community to this very day.<sup>481</sup> Reagan initially was by no means the perfect pro-life advocate. As Governor of California he had signed the "Therapeutic Abortion Act" in 1967, at the time the most liberal abortion law in the U.S.<sup>482</sup> The act's consequences would leave a lasting mark on him. According to Reagan biographer Edmund Morris, the rise in abortions in California after the act became law left Reagan "with an

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478 These "salient issues" were made up of abortion, school prayer, pornography, gay rights, the Equal Rights Amendment, busing, school textbooks, and tuition tax credits. Cf. Moen 1990: "Ronald Reagan and the Social Issues: Rhetorical Support for the Christian Right." *The Social Science Journal* 27(2), pp. 199–207, here p. 200.

479 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 201–202.

480 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 202–203.

481 See chapter II.2.2 for the notable rise in recent anti-abortion legislation passed by GOP state parties.

482 Cf. Williams 2010a, p. 188.

undefinable sense of guilt.”<sup>483</sup> As his actions in the following years would illustrate, being too moderate on abortion was a mistake Reagan would not make again. The president’s subsequent stance on abortion is probably best exemplified by his essay “Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation,” published in 1983 in the anti-abortion journal “The Human Life Review.”<sup>484</sup> It is particularly noteworthy because of the manner in which Reagan portrays the pro-life camp and its proponents, depicting them as standing in the tradition of other great and patriotic Americans while likening the battle against abortion to the American civil war and the broader struggle for the abolition of slavery – a somewhat dubious approach considering Reagan’s appeals to racial conservatives that will be illustrated over the coming pages. One such example of the supposed similarities can be found in the president’s contention that *Roe v. Wade* represented a modern counterpart to the mid-nineteenth century *Dred Scott* Supreme Court decision which ruled that African Americans were not protected by the U.S. constitution. Just as slavery was eventually abolished, the day of victory on abortion was in the eyes of the president surely coming for the conservative movement, for – as Reagan points out – the 1857 ruling “was not overturned in a day, or a year, or even a decade.” Instead “only a minority of Americans recognized and deplored the moral crisis brought about by denying the full humanity of our black brothers and sisters [at first]; but that minority persisted in their vision and finally prevailed.”<sup>485</sup>

Reagan’s essay is filled with evocations of the Founding Fathers as well as he seeks to forge a link between them and the (social) conservative movement and the causes the president was championing. “America was founded by men and women,” Reagan points out, “who shared a vision of the value of each and every individual.”<sup>486</sup> Quotations from arguably the greatest American president – Abraham Lincoln – are injected at various points as well because the president who freed the slaves of course also warned his fellow countrymen against attempting to define which men are created equal. In doing so, Reagan essentially implies that the founders of the nation and some of its greatest leaders subscribed to views that would have put them in the contemporary pro-life camp. On the other side, this also means anyone who does support abortion essentially subscribes to views that run counter to basic American tenets and values. Reagan ends his essay against abortion with the dire claim that just as Lincoln recognized that the United States “could not survive as a free land when some men could decide that others were not fit to be free and should therefore be slaves,”

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483 Morris 1999: *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan*, p. 352.

484 Cf. Reagan 1983a: “Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation.” *The Human Life Review* 11(2).

485 Ibid.

486 Ibid.

modern day America “cannot survive as a free nation when some men decide that others are not fit to live and should be abandoned to abortion or infanticide.”<sup>487</sup> It is a testament to Reagan’s continued legacy and lasting impact on the conservative movement that his manner of describing those who fail to subscribe to his views as essentially un-American has by the twenty-first century become a central pillar in how many on the (far) right frame policy debates, illustrated in particular by the Tea Party whose very name wishes to evoke the image of being the protectors of the Founding Fathers’ values.

Despite all the staunchly anti-abortion rhetoric, Reagan did little to translate his grandiose words into actions. Few Evangelicals were appointed to meaningful positions within his administration although this partly had to do with the simple fact that many lacked the necessary experience for high level appointments.<sup>488</sup> In the legislative realm any sort of anti-abortion amendment also stood little chance of success due to the continued Democratic control of the House of Representatives. Even at the judicial level though, Reagan sometimes paid surprisingly little attention to the views of his Christian conservative supporters. The Christian Right’s impotence in this area was particularly well exemplified by Reagan’s choice of Sandra Day O’Connor as his nominee to the Supreme Court in 1981. Choosing the Arizona judge without interviewing anybody else, Reagan’s pick was highly controversial among Christian conservatives due to their fear that O’Connor would not vote in favor of overturning *Roe v. Wade* – apprehensions eventually proven right as O’Connor would go on to support a woman’s right to choose with some restrictions during her time as a Supreme Court justice.<sup>489</sup>

Segregation academies, Bob Jones University, and Reagan – At the junction of race and religion

Reagan’s most infamous action on behalf of the Christian Right would come on an issue that perfectly serves to illustrate the deeply ingrained ties between religion and race in the South. While issues like abortion and school prayers most certainly galvanized many Christian conservatives, one issue had a particularly potent impact on the views of Southern white Evangelicals because of its conflation of race, religion, and Southern fears of an overbearing federal government that told religious places of education which students it had to accept. In

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487 Ibid.

488 Cf. Smith 2006: *Faith and the Presidency From George Washington to George W. Bush*, p. 339.

489 Cf. Bunch 2009: *Tear Down This Myth: The Right-Wing Distortion of the Reagan Legacy*, pp. 114–115.

the wake of the civil rights revolution and the forced integration of public schools, numerous private schools that refused to admit black students and were often founded and run by evangelical churches began to spring up in the South in particular as a means of circumventing federal laws;<sup>490</sup> schools that the Harvard Law Review in 1979 considered to be “a serious threat to the integration of the nation’s public schools.”<sup>491</sup> Under the Nixon administration the IRS began to implement a policy of denying these schools the tax exemptions they had previously enjoyed. During the subsequent Carter presidency, the IRS’s newly appointed commissioner Jerome Kurtz sought to take an even more far-reaching integrationist approach, proposing in 1978 that any private schools founded or expanded during the era of school desegregation had to – in order to keep their tax-exempt status – meet a quota of minority students<sup>492</sup> as a means of proving they were not established with the primary intention of circumventing anti-segregation laws, a change that would have shifted the burden of proof from the IRS onto the segregation academies.<sup>493</sup> Omitting Nixon’s role in this battle between the federal government and Evangelicals, the 1980 Republican platform nonetheless laid the blame squarely at the feet of President Carter and Commissioner Kurtz, promising to “halt the unconstitutional regulatory vendetta launched by Mr. Carter’s IRS commissioner against independent schools.”<sup>494</sup>

The substantial links between race and religion in the South and among its white evangelical population are revealed by the weight placed on this battle by leading Christian conservative figures of the day. For them the rules by which Christian conservative schools governed themselves, segregationist or not, were a matter of religious freedom. Religious freedom could also serve as a convenient fig leaf for racial conservatism though. Regardless of whether the objections to actions by the IRS were rooted primarily in religious or racial concerns, the image of a secular government imposing its worldviews on independent religious schools served to energize and galvanize the Christian Right like few other contemporary issues – in the eyes of some religious conservatives even more so than abortion and the general moral depredation of the country. These latter

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490 For an overview of this issue and the response to it by Christian conservatives in the state of Mississippi cf. Crespino 2007, pp. 237–252.

491 Harvard Law Review 1979: “The Judicial Role in Attacking Racial Discrimination in Tax-Exempt Private Schools.” 93(2), pp. 378–407, here p. 378.

492 The IRS guidelines specifically stated that tax-exempt schools with “an insignificant number of minority students” were to be reviewed. A “significant” share of minority students was defined as 20 percent of the percentage of the minority school-age population in the school’s community. In other words, if a school was located in a community in which 40 percent of the school-age population consisted of minorities, eight percent of the school’s students had to be minorities. Cf. Crespino 2007, pp. 255–254.

493 Cf. Diamond 1998, p. 65 and Balmer 2014: *Redeemer: The Life of Jimmy Carter*, pp. 104–105.

494 Republican Party 1980.



issues were to be fought to be sure but at least the government had stopped short of attacking Christians within the confines of their own institutions, a boundary crossed by the IRS and Kurtz who received more than 125,000 angry evangelical protest letters after the new racial quota proposals had been made public.<sup>495</sup> Religious conservatives across the country came to realize that shutting themselves off from the secular outside world would simply no longer be an option now that the intrusive federal government had decided to actively go on the attack against the very institutions conservative Christians had established precisely to protect themselves against government meddling.<sup>496</sup> For Paul Weyrich, a leading religious conservative activist and co-founder of both the *Heritage Foundation* and *Moral Majority*, the battle against the IRS was the moment “it dawned on [Christian conservatives] that they were not going to be able to be left alone to teach their children as they pleased.”<sup>497</sup> It was at this point “that conservatives made the linkage between their opposition to government interference and the interests of the evangelical movement, which now saw itself on the defensive and under attack by the government.”<sup>498</sup> The time for inaction was over with the fight against the IRS providing “the spark that united the religious right’s involvement in real politics.”<sup>499</sup>

Moreover, the dispute over IRS exemptions also once again serves to reflect the Christian Right’s strong Southern and racially conservative roots as these schools were primarily found in the former Confederacy. Around half of all church school organizers who testified in front of the IRS in the wake of Jerome Kurtz’s new guidelines came from the South.<sup>500</sup> Of the 111 private schools that the IRS eventually deemed to be ineligible for tax-exemptions due to their discriminatory policies, 37 hailed from Mississippi alone.<sup>501</sup> So strong was the overlap between Christian conservatism and its racially conservative cousin when it came to private schooling in the South that an education task force coordinator at the Southern Regional Council in 1973 explained that, “[t]hese days, Christian schools and segregation academies are almost synonymous.”<sup>502</sup> In a similar vein Joseph Crespino concludes that the anger over the new guidelines “was fueled as much by Christian conservatives as by southern segregationists, though distinguishing between the two was not always easy.”<sup>503</sup>

495 Cf. Balmer 2014, p. 105.

496 Cf. Crespino 2007, p. 255.

497 Quoted in: Horwitz 2013: *America’s Right: Anti-Establishment Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party*, p. 92.

498 Quoted in *ibid.*

499 Comment by conservative activist Richard Viguerie. Quoted in: Crespino 2007, p. 255.

500 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 254.

501 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 262.

502 Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 249.

503 *Ibid.*, p. 254.

If the Christian Right's primary intention really was to fuse Wallaceism and Goldwaterism<sup>504</sup> then there was no better partner than Ronald Reagan. The interplay between the South, race, religion, and Ronald Reagan is strikingly demonstrated by the entire anti-IRS endeavor that would transpire during the late 1970s. Based on the Nixon administration's new rules against granting tax exemptions to schools that continued to practice segregation, the IRS decided to revoke the tax-exempt status of the evangelist Bob Jones University (BJU) in 1970. The school – at home in South Carolina – itself had long subscribed to the Southern white Evangelical tenet that it was against God's will for interracial couples to date.<sup>505</sup> Even in the early 1980's, then president of the university Bob Jones III explained that “[t]here are three basic races – Oriental, Caucasian and Negroid. At BJU, everybody dates within those basic three races.”<sup>506</sup> Bob Jones University decided to appeal the IRS's decision, receiving a ruling in its favor by a district court before a court of appeals reversed the decision. Ultimately, the Supreme Court decided to take on the case.<sup>507</sup> Once in office, the Reagan administration made good on its promises to the evangelical community, reversing the stance first adopted by Nixon and reinstating the tax-exempt status for colleges like BJU. The ensuing “firestorm of criticism from the American public”<sup>508</sup> took members of the administration and the president by surprise. The New York Times scathingly attacked the president for his support of schools that still practiced segregation almost two decades after the passage of the civil and voting rights acts, accusing Reagan of “cling[ing] to [a] new racist policy.”<sup>509</sup> “However obfuscated, however perfumed,” granting tax exemptions to openly segregated private schools was “still tax-exempt hate.”<sup>510</sup> Around 100 of the 175 lawyers in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division signed a petition that denounced the Reagan administration's reinstatement of tax-exemptions as a violation of existing laws.<sup>511</sup> Taken aback by the popular outcry and opposition,

504 See David Courtwright's explanation behind the Christian conservative electoral strategy: “Their [Christian conservative activists] goal was to transform American conservatism from a narrow-based and high-toned movement of principled losers, personified by Bill Buckley, to a broad-based and openly populist movement of hardball winners. The trick was to *marry Wallace to Goldwater* [emphasis added], adding issues like busing and abortion to traditional worries about communism and federal economic interference.” Courtwright 2010, p. 134.

505 Cf. Mayer 2002, pp. 277–278.

506 Quoted in: Albrecht 1982: “Should a Discriminatory School Be Tax-Free? Reagan Says Yes, Then No; Bob Jones Cries Foul.” *People*, February 15.

507 For a broader overview of these developments cf. Crespino 2007, p. 259.

508 Haberman 2005: “Into the Wilderness: Ronald Reagan, Bob Jones University, and the Political Education of the Christian Right.” *Historian* 67(2), pp. 234–253, here p. 234.

509 New York Times 1982: *It's Still Tax-Exempt Hate*. January 19.

510 Ibid.

511 Cf. Crespino 2007, p. 262.

executive changes to IRS policies were taken off the table while the administration instead called on Congress to draw up legislation that would provide the IRS with specific guidelines. Regarding BJU, the Reagan administration also asked the Supreme Court to come up with a definitive ruling on the matter.<sup>512</sup> Because the Reagan administration's Justice Department was, for the moment, still officially siding with Bob Jones University, the Supreme Court would actually take the rather unusual step of appointing an outside attorney to make the federal government's case *against* the university. On May 24, 1983 eight of the Supreme Court's nine judges ruled in favor of the IRS, citing "[t]he Government's fundamental, overriding interest in eradicating racial discrimination in education" as the motivation for its verdict; an "overriding interest" which in the court's prevailing view "substantially outweigh[ed] whatever burden denial of tax benefits places on petitioners' exercise of their religious beliefs."<sup>513</sup> Just as the public repudiation of the Reagan administration's new IRS guidelines had seemingly come out of nowhere in the eyes of the president, Reagan's almost complete desertion of his Christian conservative backers in the face of popular opposition proved to be a similarly shocking and eye-opening experience for religious values voters – albeit with rather temporary repercussions for the Republican-Christian Right alliance. For the first but not the last time, members of the Christian Right felt betrayed by the president whom they had considered to be one of their own. Bob Jones III responded to Reagan's reversal by attacking the president as a "traitor to God's people" while calling on white Evangelicals to "stay away from the polls and let their [Republican] ship sink."<sup>514</sup>

Despite Reagan's eventual about-face on the BJU-IRS case, the president's initial support for an arch-segregationist university would prove to have devastating consequences for his, and by extension the Republican Party's, standing among African Americans. Clarence Thomas, a prominent African-American conservative and current Supreme Court justice (nominated by George H. W. Bush), observed in 1987 that the administration's decision to initially support the granting of tax exemptions to segregationist schools like BJU signaled the "death knell"<sup>515</sup> of Republican attempts to win African Americans over for the conservative cause. Demonstrating to everyone that his reversal on the trou-

512 For an overview of how this case transpired cf. Franklin 1993: *The Color Line: Legacy for the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 22–23, Crespino 2007, pp. 259–262, Haberman 2005, p. 234 and Cannon 2000: *President Reagan: The Role Of A Lifetime*, pp. 459–461.

513 Supreme Court of the United States 1983: *Bob Jones University v. United States*, 461 U.S. 574 (1983).

514 Quoted in: Williams 2010a, p. 197.

515 Quoted in: Mayer 2007: "Reagan and Race: Prophet of Color Blindness, Baiter of the Backlash." In: Longley, Mayer, Schaller, and Sloan: *Deconstructing Reagan: Conservative Mythology and America's Fortieth President*, pp. 70–89, here p. 83.

blesome tax exemption battle had not been due to a true change of heart, the sole dissenting justice in the Supreme Court ruling against Bob Jones University, William Rehnquist, was promoted to the post of chief justice by Ronald Reagan in 1986.<sup>516</sup> By the time Reagan sought re-election in 1984, significant – if not irreversible – damage had already been done to the Republican brand among African Americans. While Gerald Ford had still won a respectable – at least by contemporary Republican standards – 17 percent of African-American voters in 1976, Reagan's share had almost halved to just nine percent eight years later despite the fact that he overall of course fared far better than his Republican predecessor in the White House.<sup>517</sup> By 1986, 56 percent of African Americans also saw Reagan as “racist,” the reasons for which will be elucidated in additional detail in the next chapter.<sup>518</sup>

What the case of Bob Jones University and the general importance bestowed upon the matter by leading figures of the Christian Right like Paul Weyrich once again demonstrate is that disentangling the matters of race and religion and the role they played in the Republican conquest of the South can be quite a daunting challenge. In the white South of the 1960s and '70s, the matter of race was never far away from the pews of the region's evangelical churches. Jerry Falwell himself had made the case during the late 1950s that interracial marriage was a sin and that the integration of public schools would lead to additional interracial relationships, with this mixing of the races supposedly furthering the Communist cause.<sup>519</sup> In 1964, he also declared his opposition to the civil rights movement, proclaiming that “[i]t should be considered civil wrongs rather than civil rights.”<sup>520</sup> As such openly racist comments began to increasingly cause disdain rather than approval, Falwell also altered his message to emphasize the shared concerns of the nascent religious right and racial conservatives about the influence of the federal government and its meddling in affairs supposedly best left to state and religious authorities, a revelation many Republican strategists took to heart as well.<sup>521</sup> Ultimately that interplay between race and religion provided Ronald Reagan with a fig leaf for his (coded) appeals to even the most hardened Southern racial conservatives as he could support the discriminatory policies of Southern segregationist schools like Bob Jones University or Jerry Falwell's Lynchburg Christian School under the guise of protecting religious freedom – at least until the wider public caught on to his strategy, as highlighted by the BJU case.

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516 Cf. Balmer 2014, p. 169.

517 Cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014: *Presidential Elections*.

518 Cf. Edsall, Edsall 1992, p. 139.

519 Cf. Williams 2010b, p. 132.

520 Quoted in: Sutton 2013: *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents*, p. 12.

521 Cf. Williams 2010b, p. 133.

## Conclusion

More so than any president before him and matched only by George W. Bush since,<sup>522</sup> Ronald Reagan conflated politics and religion. After decades of a moral demise, the 40<sup>th</sup> president sought to usher in an era in which the former would once again be based on or at least aided by the latter. Speaking at an ecumenical prayer breakfast in 1984, Reagan remarked that “politics and morality are inseparable,” adding that “as morality’s foundation is religion, religion and politics are necessarily related. We need religion as a guide.”<sup>523</sup> Of a similar importance was the centrality religion played in America’s greatness and its very survival – the inferred message being that the more devout you were, the better an American you would invariably be (what this said about less religious Americans let alone atheists is obvious). “Without God,” Reagan contended, “democracy will not and cannot long endure. If we ever forget that we’re one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.”<sup>524</sup> These were words that resonated well among white Evangelicals, among them of course a disproportionate amount of Southerners whose political views had always been inextricably linked to religion. Data on the preferences of those Southern Evangelicals in particular illustrates the momentous shift that transpired within this demographic over the course of a single decade. In 1980, non-evangelical white and evangelical white support for Reagan in the South was at around the same level (62.4 and 63.8 percent of the two-party vote for Reagan respectively). By the end of the decade though, even within the community of white Southerners, a noticeable cleavage had emerged: 59 percent of non-evangelical white Southerners cast their vote for George H. W. Bush while 68.7 percent of white evangelical Southerners supported the former vice president who had done relatively little to endear himself to religious conservatives. This growing gap was particularly pronounced among younger white voters in the region, as the youngest white Evangelicals would go on to represent the most Republican cohort group in the former Confederacy by the late 1980s. Among young whites in the South, the gap in the Republican vote between non-Evangelicals and Evangelicals rose from six percentage points in 1980 (63.6 percent among non-evangelical whites and 69.6 percent among evangelical whites) to 23 points eight years later (53.7 to

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522 For the exceptional religiosity of both and how “the religious communications of Reagan and George W. Bush [...] differ in important ways from that of other presidents” see Coe, Domke 2006: “Petitioners or Prophets? Presidential Discourse, God, and the Ascendancy of Religious Conservatives.” *Journal of Communication* 56(2), pp. 309–330 (quote on p. 309).

523 Reagan 1984: Remarks at an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast in Dallas, Texas.” In: Sutton 2013: *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 136–139, here p. 138.

524 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

76.9 percent).<sup>525</sup> Due to the weaker ties to the Democratic Party among this youngest Evangelical cohort group in the region, Reagan's and the GOP's alliance with the Christian Right made the largest impression on them. Today, these now middle-aged voters form the backbone of the Republican *Solid South*.

Yet despite all the kind words that gave Christian conservatives the sense that their moral foundations made them the consummate Americans, Reagan did remarkably little when it came to converting religious goals into actual policies, in part because of the legislative constraints he found himself in but also to a not insignificant extent because the president appeared to simply have priorities that were vastly different from those of his Christian conservative backers.<sup>526</sup> After entering office, the president's primary concern was dealing with the pitiful state of the economy. Other key figures within the party also saw little need to push for Christian conservative legislation. In March of 1981, Republican Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker openly announced that while the economy was still doing poorly, "collateral" and "emotional" social issues would play a limited role in the GOP's agenda in the nation's capital.<sup>527</sup> Evangelical Christians thus had to make do with celebrating 1983 as the "Year of the Bible."<sup>528</sup> It does not come as much of a surprise then that Reagan's time in office caused a fair degree of disappointment and consternation among both Christian conservative leaders and voters. On the core concern of abortion, 68 percent of pro-life activists regarded Reagan's first four years in the White House to have been "fair to poor."<sup>529</sup> Ralph Reed, who would during the 1990s become a key figure in the Christian Right's

525 Once again these are two-party vote shares. Cf. Smidt, Kellstedt 1992: "Evangelicals in the Post-Reagan Era: An Analysis of Evangelical Voters in the 1988 Presidential Election." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31(3), pp. 330–338, here p. 336. Cf. also page 333 *ibid.* for data on partisan self-placement of different cohort groups which also reveals young white Evangelicals to have been the most Republican group in the South by 1988.

526 One such example of Reagan publicly throwing his weight behind the Christian Right but doing little to follow up his words with actions came in the summer of 1982. Standing next to Jerry Falwell and other leaders of the Christian Right in the White House's Rose Garden, Reagan used the occasion to propose a constitutional amendment that would have permitted voluntary prayers in public schools. After this public show of support for the Christian Right, Reagan and his administration did virtually nothing though to bring together the necessary supermajority for this amendment. Cf. Gilgoff 2008: *The Jesus Machine: How James Dobson, Focus on the Family, and Evangelical America Are Winning the Culture War*, p. 86 and Flippen 2011: *Jimmy Carter, the Politics of Family, and the Rise of the Religious Right*, p. 328.

527 Cf. Marley 2006: "Ronald Reagan and the Splintering of the Christian Right." *Journal of Church and State* 48(4), pp. 851–868, here p. 854.

528 A document that had been "more fundamental and enduring" in "shap[ing] the United States of America into a distinctive Nation and people" than virtually any other influence according to the presidential proclamation that accompanied Reagan's decision to turn 1983 into the Bible year. Reagan 1983b: *Proclamation 5018 – Year of the Bible, 1983*. February 3.

529 Cf. Young 2012: "There They Go Again." *New York Times*, January 19.

new more proactive approach to politics, claimed that while Reagan had given leaders of the movement “warm fuzzies” as they met the president in the White House, even the most prominent figures of the Christian Right lacked “any genuine institutional strength or influence”<sup>530</sup> within the administration. In a similar vein, Paul Weyrich concluded that “[Reagan] basically didn’t do anything for them,”<sup>531</sup> referring to the leaders of the Christian Right during the 1980s, a verdict echoed by Ed Dobson, then a leading member of the Moral Majority, who looked back at Reagan as a leader that “did nothing in terms of our long-term agendas.”<sup>532</sup>

Ultimately then, “the Reagan era was [a] time of photo opportunities, kind words, and little else”<sup>533</sup> for Christian conservatives both at the elite and mass levels. This trend would also continue under the subsequent George H. W. Bush administration. As the twelve years of unimpeded Republican governance in the White House drew to a close, Michael Farris, a Baptist minister as well as founder and former chairman of the conservative Madison Project, attacked both Reagan and Bush for giving Christian conservatives little more than “a bunch of political trinkets,” adding that both presidents had in the end produced “very little real progress in terms of advancing our public policy goals or getting our kind of people appointed to positions of real influence.”<sup>534</sup> Such criticism should not deflect attention away though from the momentous rise in prominence the Christian Right received thanks to Reagan. The president bestowed the kind of necessary legitimacy onto the movement that has allowed it to play a central role in American politics ever since.<sup>535</sup> In part through the support of the president, the Christian Right was transformed from what might have popularly been considered a fundamentalist fringe movement in the early to mid-1970s into a crusade whose soldiers could be regularly found in the White House. In general one can most certainly assert that the GOP would not be as evangelized as it is today without Reagan’s appeals to religious conservatives even if they were primarily rhetorical in nature.

The fact that Reagan did primarily offer kind words and little else would also prove to have lasting repercussions on the nature of the GOP-Christian Right alliance that went well beyond the legitimacy the latter received out of it. Bush’s

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530 Quoted in: Verhovek 1996: “Abortion Barely Mentioned, Its Opponents Are Offended.” *New York Times*, August 15.

531 Quoted in: Marley 2006, p. 866.

532 Quoted in: Balmer 2014, p. 167.

533 Marley 2006, p. 851.

534 Quoted in: Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 125.

535 As David John Marley concludes, “[i]n the final analysis, the Christian Right was not nearly as important to Ronald Reagan as he was to them. He gave them legitimacy in the public square, and they gave him their votes and the status of a living saint.” Marley 2006, p. 866.

less than enthusiastic implementation of Christian conservative policy goals that Farris lamented did not come as much of a surprise considering his rather strained relationship with the movement but the fact that Ronald Reagan, a president many Evangelicals had placed so much hope and trust in, failed to deliver on any substantial legislation served as a wakeup call for many within the Christian conservative movement, precipitating a course correction that would have momentous consequences for the Republican Party as well. Religiously conservative leaders recognized that attempting to enact policy changes through the wooing of mainstream Republican officials would always be subject to severe limitations. The solution was quite simple: The politicians themselves had to come from the ranks of the Christian Right.<sup>536</sup> As we will see in chapter II.2, the Christian Right would prove to be quite successful in their endeavor of placing themselves at the levers of power within the Republican Party, culminating in the election of a true born-again Christian to the highest office of the land in 2000. As the movement's influence and clout has grown within the party, the GOP's appeal among the broader electorate has decreased though, evidence that the religious conservative incursion into the Republican Party precipitated to a large extent by the choices of Ronald Reagan is increasingly putting its "host" at odds with the wider public in general and an increasingly secular younger electorate in particular.

### I.3.2 Reagan and race

If Nixon was "the first Republican president to use coded speech to harness resentment of black criminals and welfare recipients,"<sup>537</sup> Reagan perfected this Southern Strategy that Goldwater had on his part still used in such a rather crude manner. On the campaign trail and in the White House, Reagan was now – according to Joseph Lowndes – "seamlessly combin[ing] conservatism, racism, and antigovernment populism."<sup>538</sup> Lowndes is not alone in his assessment. As a matter of fact, other scholars arrive at even less flattering verdicts when it comes to the matter of Reagan's ideological background and his racial views. While Ian Haney López for example considers both Nixon and Wallace to have by and large been politically moderate politicians that adopted racially charged rhetoric to

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536 See Aaron Haberman's verdict which also traces these changes to the disillusionment of Christian conservatives with GOP politicians during the 1980s: "The BJU case was the first of a broad pattern of disappointments experienced by the Christian Right in the 1980s, which led it to conclude that it had no choice but to change its political strategies toward a more grassroots-style politics." Haberman 2005, p. 237.

537 Courtwright 2010, p. 171.

538 Lowndes 2008, p. 160.



win elections, Reagan does not get off as lightly. Instead of merely using racially divisive language to win over voters, Haney López contends that the 40<sup>th</sup> president was a true economic and racial conservative for whom “conservatism and racial resentment were inextricably fused.”<sup>539</sup> This fusion also of course extended to the manner of framing policies. In the eyes of Wallace biographer Dan T. Carter, Reagan “could use coded language with the best of them”<sup>540</sup> as he did his part in further racializing welfare and cementing the role of race at the heart of American politics and the nation’s policy debates. In this and many other senses Reagan can undoubtedly be considered the godfather of the contemporary GOP whose politicians regularly conflate broader (economic) conservative sentiments with race and its accompanying prejudices – either because the practice has become so commonplace over the past half a century that they no longer recognize the divisive consequences of their actions or because they do intentionally wish to bring racial conservatives to the ballot box as Reagan sought to do three decades ago.

#### Reagan’s rhetoric on race

Although his mastery of coded rhetoric gained nationwide attention in the early 1980s, Ronald Reagan’s playing of the race card and his ingenious ability to appeal to racial conservatives through using language that could be interpreted as merely standing up for traditional values of freedom and individualism predate his successful 1980 presidential campaign. In 1966, the then gubernatorial candidate supported a state ballot initiative in his home state of California that sought to allow racial discrimination in the housing market, with Reagan making that point that “[i]f an individual wants to discriminate against Negroes or others in selling or renting his house, it is his right to do so.”<sup>541</sup> As part of his

539 Haney López 2014, p. 57.

540 Carter 1996b, p. 12.

541 Quoted in: Haney López 2014, p. 58. Reagan’s comments sought to lend support to continued attempts to repeal the state’s Rumford Fair Housing Act (RFHA) which banned racial discrimination in the sale or rental of private housing. Passed in 1963, a referendum the following year resulted in a majority of Californians supporting the RFHA’s repeal – a decision subsequently deemed unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court in May of 1966. During his 1966 campaign, Reagan would prove to be a vociferous proponent of repealing the RFHA once and for all. As was the case in many instances of Reagan’s dealings with the Christian Right as well, his track record in office did not match his rhetoric on the campaign trail though. As governor, Reagan’s support for a repeal of anti-discriminatory housing laws was limited to a rather centrist bill that did not receive the approval of many of the organizations that had fought for the RFHA’s initial repeal in 1964. Speaking after his first term in office had come to an end, Reagan revealed that conversations with the “minority community” had allowed him to “[realize] the symbolism of [the RFHA] [...]

candidacy, Reagan also released an ad that employed the *law and order* rhetoric his fellow Californian Richard Nixon would make great use of in later years as well, stating in bleak terms that “our city streets are jungle paths after dark,”<sup>542</sup> an undoubtedly racialized usage of words which nonetheless served its purpose and proved to appeal quite viscerally in particular to low-income whites who lived near inner-city areas.<sup>543</sup> Even during one of the darkest days of the civil rights era, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Reagan could not help but use the incident to criticize some elements of the movement, particularly those with a supposed disregard for the law. Responding to the death of the civil rights leader, Reagan argued that it did indeed represent a “great tragedy” which nonetheless “began when we began compromising with law and order and people started choosing which laws they’d break.”<sup>544</sup> Such a thinly veiled attack against the civil rights movement essentially laid the blame for the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. at the feet of those who disobeyed segregationist laws, a stance that – in the eyes of Reagan apparently – set in motion the decision of others to live according to their own rules and laws as well.

Appeals to racial conservatives moved into another sphere as Reagan sought to win the presidency on several occasions. On the campaign trail, the candidate would time and again make statements that would ultimately wreck his and his party’s chances of making significant inroads into the African-American electorate. Unsurprisingly, those appeals were employed at their most overt in the South. When criticizing the national food stamp program for giving “some young fellow ahead of you [...] a T-bone steak” while “you were waiting in line to buy hamburger” in the South, Reagan’s “young fellow” turned into a “young *buck*” with the term denoting a strong black man with little care or concern for white authority among residents of the former Confederacy.<sup>545</sup> In non-Southern states without a sizeable black population, the “buck” epithet was on the other hand

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and how much it meant morale-wise [to blacks],” causing an about-face that caused the governor to “frankly [say] no” to the RFHA’s repeal. For context and quotes cf. Schuparra 2015: “Reagan’s Gubernatorial Years: From Conservative Spokesperson to National Politician.” In: Johns (ed.): *A Companion to Ronald Reagan*, pp. 40–53, here pp. 43–44.

542 Quoted in: Dallek 2011: “The divisive underbelly of Reagan’s sunny optimism.” *Slate*, February 3.

543 Cf. Mayer 2002, p. 153. The significant extent to which Reagan employed the tenets of the nascent racially conservative *Southern Strategy* that had first been used two years earlier by Senator Goldwater in his presidential bid is illustrated by Kevin Phillips’ views on Reagan’s victory against Democratic incumbent Pat Brown in 1966, an event hailed by Phillips as “[u]ndoubtedly the greatest vindication of the basic strategy of 1964.” Phillips 2015 [1969], p. 513.

544 Quoted in: Perlstein 2008a, p. 257.

545 Quotes and further explanation in Haney López 2014, p. 59. These comments were made in 1976 during Reagan’s second presidential campaign.

never used.<sup>546</sup> Another favorite theme employed by Reagan was that of the “[Chicago] welfare queen” who “has eighty names, thirty addresses, twelve Social Security cards and is collecting veteran’s benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands.”<sup>547</sup> This unnamed but implicitly black queen wined and dined at the expense of the (white) taxpayer, receiving “Medicaid, getting food stamps, and [...] collecting welfare under each of her names,” with “[h]er tax-free cash income [amounting to] over \$150,000.”<sup>548</sup> Recent legislative battles surrounding welfare policies such as the federal food stamp program (known official as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP]) and the deep opposition it has elicited among the most conservative Republicans who not infrequently consider those on food stamps to have the most lackluster work ethic imaginable while also justifying their opposition by reciting Reaganite talking points about the program being “riddled with fraud and abuse”<sup>549</sup> most certainly highlight the extent to which Reagan’s depiction of a welfare queen has become the accepted and widely held view within the GOP towards the minority underclass.

Attempting to win the Republican nomination for a third time in 1980, Reagan recognized the vital role the South in general and “Wallace inclined voters”<sup>550</sup> in particular could play in both his conquest of the nomination as well as the eventual move into the White House. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, a cornerstone of empowering disenfranchised blacks, was described as “humiliating to the South”<sup>551</sup> by Reagan, particularly because its Section 5 required a number of states (seven of which were located in the South) to receive pre-clearance from the Attorney General before enacting any changes in their voting laws.<sup>552</sup> Arguably the most infamous moment would come in August of 1980 as Ronald Reagan appeared at the Neshoba County Fair in Philadelphia, Mississippi, not far from where three civil rights activists had been brutally murdered in 1964 and a venue that had seen its fair share of racist appeals in previous decades.<sup>553</sup>

546 Cf. Krugman 2007a: “Innocent mistakes.” *New York Times*, November 10.

547 Quoted in: The Economist 2013c: *Let them eat nothing*. August 1.

548 Quoted in: Ibid.

549 That is the language used by Arkansas Republican congressman Tom Cotton to explain his vote to slash food stamp spending. Cotton 2013: *Cotton Statement on the 2013 Farm Bill vote*. June 20.

550 This term was used by the Republican national committeeman from Mississippi in a letter urging the party to set up a campaign stop at the later mentioned Neshoba County Fair so that Reagan could appeal to these kinds of voters in particular. Quoted in: Krugman 2007b: “Republicans and Race.” *New York Times*, November 19.

551 Quoted in: Smith 2010, p. 151.

552 Cf. ibid. For more information on the acts provisions cf. United States Department of Justice 2014: *History of federal voting rights laws – The Voting Rights Act of 1965*. In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that the formula for determining which states were covered by the pre-clearance provisions of section 5 were unconstitutional.

553 In 1963 for example, Democratic candidate for the state’s gubernatorial office Paul B.

Speaking to an audience in a part of the country that had been one of the strongest bulwarks of white supremacy, Reagan told them he “believe[d] in states’ rights,”<sup>554</sup> a term that represented, as pointed out earlier, one of the strongest outwardly non-racial coded appeals one could make to racially conservative whites and a wording that reporters who had been following Reagan on the campaign trail had not heard him utter at any previous point.<sup>555</sup> On a different campaign stop, former Mississippi governor and “arch-segregationist”<sup>556</sup> John Bell Williams joined Reagan on stage.<sup>557</sup> In the 1960s, the governor had still been denounced as “a symbol of [...] white supremacy, race-baiting, and the rebellious spirit of the Old Confederacy”<sup>558</sup> by the Council of Republican Organizations, a liberal leaning conglomerate of several different Republican groups. Now Reagan was signaling to everyone that the torch of Southern racial conservatism had been passed from segregationist Democrats onto the Republican Party. It does not come as a surprise then that South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond, like Reagan a former Democrat who had switched sides, recognized a bit of himself in the newly elected president. A few months after Reagan’s first inauguration, Thurmond would claim that the new resident of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue “ran on practically the same platform that I ran on in 1948.”<sup>559</sup> While Joseph Crespino, who has written extensively about both, does make the point that any such claims “required a great deal of selective memory,”<sup>560</sup> he nonetheless points out that Thurmond’s assertion was not without a basis in reality. By the mid-1960s, the differences between Reagan and the former Dixiecrat Thurmond with regards to their position toward the civil rights movement were, according to Crespino, “ones of degree, not kind.”<sup>561</sup>

Even when Reagan did make political decisions that not necessarily endeared him to his most hardened racially conservative supporters, the president could be accused of pandering to the (Southern) far-right. Case in point the discussions surrounding the establishment of a separate holiday for civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>562</sup> After a protracted battle in Congress and vehement opposition from some quarters of the GOP, Reagan eventually signed a

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Johnson, Jr. told an audience at the fair that in his opinion NAACP stood for “niggers, alligators, apes, coons, and possums.” Quoted in: Crespino 2007, p. 116.

554 Quoted in: Black and Black 2002, p. 216. For a detailed account of Reagan’s visit and the backlash that ensued cf. *ibid.* pp. 216–217.

555 Cf. Crespino 2007, p. 1.

556 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

557 Cf. *ibid.*

558 Quoted in: Thurber 2007, p. 357.

559 Quoted in: Crespino 2012, p. 287.

560 *Ibid.*

561 *Ibid.*, p. 288.

562 For a broader overview of the discussions within the administrations on this matter cf. Smith 2010, pp. 170–173.

congressional bill on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1983 that made the late Dr. King's birthday a national holiday. In accompanying remarks, the president commended the civil rights icon for "symboliz[ing] what was right about America, what was noblest and best."<sup>563</sup> A mere month earlier Reagan's views towards MLK appeared far less admiring though. During heated debates on the issue in the U.S. Senate, North Carolina Republican senator Jesse Helms had called on the FBI to release files that were supposed to prove Dr. King's sympathy for Communism and his close ties to known Communists to the wider public – on the Senate floor Helms would even go as far as to accuse the civil rights leader of "action-oriented Marxism [...] not compatible with the concepts of this country."<sup>564</sup> When asked about Helms' position, Reagan did little to dismiss the North Carolina senator's dubious claims. Instead he wryly remarked that "[w]e will know in about 35 years, won't we," referring to the point in time at which the FBI's files would have to be released to the public while adding that he "[did not] fault Senator Helms' sincerity with regard to wanting the records opened."<sup>565</sup>

#### Reagan's actions on race

While Ronald Reagan's vehement support for Bob Jones University was undoubtedly one of his most controversial and publicized actions on racial matters, the administration's views on race heavily influenced its policies on a variety of other matters as well. Even before his inauguration, president-elect Reagan set about making the first steps to curtail government action intended to achieve racial equality and protect minorities. In late 1980, an advisory panel tasked with examining the role and scope of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC; the country's primary federal body to enforce laws against workplace discrimination) was assembled by the president-elect and chaired by J.A. Parker, one of the rare breed of conservative African Americans who himself expressed the belief that most government programs established with the aim of alleviating the plight of the black community had actually done more harm than good.<sup>566</sup> The panel would unsurprisingly go on to produce a scathing report, attacking the general concept of affirmative action and accusing the EEOC of using its power to create "a new racism in which every individual is judged by

563 Reagan 1983c: "Remarks on Signing the Bill Making the Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., a National Holiday." November 2. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*.

564 Quoted in: Dewar 1983: "Helms Stalls King's Day In Senate." *Washington Post*, October 4.

565 Quoted in: Smith 2010, p. 173.

566 Cf. Malone 1981: "Black conservatives like 'Jay' Parker step into Reagan limelight." *Christian Science Monitor*, February 11.

race.”<sup>567</sup> Accordingly, the budgets of the EEOC and Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs<sup>568</sup> were subsequently slashed and staff laid off as the EEOC was to now focus on individual cases of discrimination rather than take a more proactive approach in combatting racial inequality in the workplace through the pursuit and imposition of hiring goals.<sup>569</sup> Individuals that shared a Southern disdain for liberal activism on matters related to race were also placed in key positions. In 1981, Reagan selected William Bradford Reynolds to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department as Assistant Attorney General despite the latter having no background in civil rights at all.<sup>570</sup> Just as Reagan’s fight against the IRS sent a signal to Southern white Evangelicals that he was on their side in the struggle to protect their right to preserve a segregated realm of education, Reynolds’ appointment made it quite clear to everyone that the administration would seek to prevent any expansion of and even roll back some racial quotas. On his part, Reynolds regarded any attempt of lending African Americans a helping hand as reverse discrimination – Reynolds could thus not sign off on such measures seeing as he was “most candidly offended by all forms of discrimination.”<sup>571</sup> The new Assistant Attorney General went to great lengths to present programs intended to help minorities as a violation of the nation’s laws and basic values, noting that he “[regarded] government tolerance of favoring or disfavoring individuals because of their skin color, sex, religious affiliation or ethnicity to be fundamentally at odds with this country’s civil rights policies.”<sup>572</sup> Just as Nixon had done in the previous decade, Reagan’s administration would also use divisive matter of the integration of schools as a tool to appeal to Southern whites. One such example of presidential action against “forced integration” came in 1983, when President Reagan vetoed a congressional bill that was set to allocate \$20 million towards desegregating Chicago schools, legislative action that became necessary after a federal judge had ordered the federal government to set aside \$14.6 million for this purpose. Of course the president noted a non-racial reason for this objection, citing his

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567 For quote and broader context: Minchin, Salmond 2011: *After the Dream: Black and White Southerners since 1965*, pp. 209–210.

568 Government body tasked with ensuring that employers doing business with the federal government abide by laws and regulations concerning nondiscrimination.

569 Cf. Norrell 2005: *The House I Live In: Race in the American Century*, p. 311. Cf. also Edsall, Edsall 1992, p. 187. The budgets of the EEOC and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs were cut by 10 and 24 percent respectively while their respective staff sizes were reduced by 12 and 34 percent.

570 Cf. Edsall, Edsall, 1992, p. 187.

571 Quoted in: Ibid.

572 Quoted in: Ibid.

opposition to judicial overreach into the legislative realm.<sup>573</sup> Unsurprisingly, a similar attitude swept through the justice department. Regarding cases pertaining to school desegregation, Reynolds also announced that his department would “refrain from seeking race-conscious remedies, such as court-ordered busing, solely for the purpose of achieving a particular racial balance.”<sup>574</sup> Once in office, Reynolds set about rolling back civil rights legislation, with his justice department making the case in front of the Supreme Court time and again that racial quotas amounted to little more than government sanctioned discrimination against whites.<sup>575</sup> The 1984 and ’88 Republican platforms would go on to reflect sentiments like these as well, promising its voters that “[w]e will resist efforts to replace equal rights with discriminatory quota systems and preferential treatment. Quotas are the most insidious form of discrimination: reverse discrimination against the innocent.”<sup>576</sup> As Ian Haney López observes, while the platform did not make a specific mention of race, “obviously ‘the innocent’ meant innocent whites.”<sup>577</sup>

Despite the rhetoric and selection of anti-affirmative action critics such as Reynolds, the Reagan administration achieved remarkably little in terms of dismantling programs intended to give preferential treatment to minorities. Some of this was due to the fact that the House of Representatives continued to remain in the hands of the Democratic Party, making life difficult for any White House resident wishing to pursue a staunch anti-minority course of action.<sup>578</sup> Others point out that in a manner not dissimilar to the lip service paid to Christian conservatives during his time in office, Reagan may have simply used affirmative action as an electoral wedge issue that would bring (Southern) racial conservatives to the polls but would possess little bearing on the policy preferences during Reagan’s time in office when he was most concerned with taxes and the nation’s defense.<sup>579</sup> Ultimately, Ronald Reagan may very well have recognized though that a better path for delivering results on conservative policies related to race was the judicial avenue. For years Southerners had lamented judicial activism and its role in bringing down their cherished institutions of segregation. During the Reagan administration the tables were turned as the

573 Cf. Pear 1983: “Reagan Veto of Chicago Integration Aid Criticized.” *New York Times*, August 15.

574 Quoted in: Edsall, Edsall, 1992, p. 188.

575 Cf. Haney López 2014, p. 70.

576 Republican Party 1984 and Republican Party 1988: “Republican Party Platform of 1988.” August 16. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*. In the ’88 platform the second sentence was slightly altered to read “[q]uotas are the most insidious form of reverse discrimination against the innocent.”

577 Haney López 2014, p. 70.

578 Cf. Mayer 2002, p. 177.

579 Cf. Smith 2010, p. 162 for a variety of viewpoints on the matter.

judiciary branch was now increasingly seen as the best means of enacting policies that could roll back some of the gains minorities had made in previous decades.<sup>580</sup> Even here though, success was by no means guaranteed, in part thanks to decisions that could be construed as Reaganite appeals to racial conservatives. The administration's highly controversial 1987 nomination to the Supreme Court, Robert Bork, was for example rejected by Congress in part due to his opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act whose supposedly coercive means related to public accommodations were referred to by the nominee as "a principle of unsurpassed ugliness."<sup>581</sup>

In spite of such setbacks, the administration's course of action was well-advised. Over a decade ago, Jeremy Mayer already noted that through his choice of Supreme Court justices and the appointment of some of the aforementioned figures like William Bradford Reynolds to agencies tasked with civil rights related matters, "Reagan was in effect laying the groundwork for a gradual (and more deniable) assault on racially preferential policies."<sup>582</sup> Recent events illustrate the extent to which this policy has paid off. In 2013, the Supreme Court for example watered down the "humiliating" Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 in a five to four decision (with the two remaining Reagan appointed justices, Antonin Scalia and Anthony Kennedy, as part of the majority) as it struck down the VRA's Section 4(b) "coverage formula" – used to determine which states require federal approval for changes in their voting laws – as unconstitutional due to the formula being based on data over 40 years old. As the court stated, "things have changed dramatically"<sup>583</sup> in the meantime, resulting in the coverage formula "having no logical relation to the present day."<sup>584</sup> Keeping in mind what we have found out about the racial views of white Southerners, this is a debatable position to take to say the least. The fact that within 24 hours of the decision, five of the seven Southern states covered by the VRA enacted restrictive new voter ID laws<sup>585</sup> also reveals that in today's Republican South – contrary to the views held by the Supreme Court – the VRA's role of protecting (largely Democratic)

580 Cf. Mayer 2002, p. 177 and Klinkner, Smith 1999: *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America*, p. 302. The authors cite Reagan's choice of William Rehnquist as Chief Justice and the nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court as evidence that the president intended to fill judiciary vacancies – with a particular emphasis on the Supreme Court – with racial conservatives.

581 Quoted in: Vieira, Gross 1998: *Supreme Court Appointments: Judge Bork and the Politicization of Senate Confirmations*, p. 15. Bork would later on disavow these positions and refer to them as having been written during his "libertarian days" (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 15–16 and p. 81). Cf. also Smith 2010, p. 174.

582 Mayer 2002, p. 177.

583 Supreme Court of the United States 2013, p. 3.

584 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

585 Cf. Childress 2013: "With Voting Rights Act Out, States Push Voter ID Laws." *PBS Frontline*, June 26.



minorities from the white majority appears more imperative than in previous decades when the post-1960s Democratic majority had a vested interest in enfranchising and mobilizing minority voters.<sup>586</sup> Other recent rulings – such as the April 2014 Supreme Court decision to reverse a lower court verdict that had deemed a Michigan ban against using affirmative action in admission to the state’s public universities to be unconstitutional<sup>587</sup> – most certainly also demonstrate that the Reagan administration’s focus on the judiciary has in the long run made up for some of its (racially conservative) shortcomings in the legislative realm.

### Conclusion

If Goldwater had clumsily used coded appeals while Nixon built upon and professionalized this “dark art,”<sup>588</sup> Reagan was the unquestioned master of bringing white racial conservatives to the polls while retaining the image of only standing up for quintessential American values and customs. Even on foreign policy matters, the president was able to appeal to racial conservatives while at all times maintaining a high degree of deniability when it came to accusations of exploiting racial conservatism. Reagan’s presidential veto against sanctions imposed by Congress on South Africa were sold to the public as being based on the president’s belief in the apartheid regime’s vital role in combatting Communism in the region and the economic damage they would cause within the black South African community.<sup>589</sup> At the same time, the president did lambast apartheid as “an affront to human rights and human dignity,”<sup>590</sup> ensuring that he could not fall into the trap of violating the norm of racial equality. As was the case on so many other issues related to race, it is hard to gauge the extent to which any genuine racial conservatism may have driven possible feelings of sympathy by the president towards the Afrikaner struggle for continued minority dominance. Regarding the Bob Jones University (BJU) tax-exemption battle, Aaron Haber-

586 For a broader argument in favor of the Voting Rights Act and its essential place in today’s American society cf. Abramowitz 2013b: “Why Section 5 Is Still Needed: Racial Polarization and the Voting Rights Act in the 21st Century.” *Sabato’s Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, March 7.

587 Cf. Supreme Court of the United States 2014: *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*, 572 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2014) (*Syllabus*). April 22.

588 This description is used by Ian Haney López who on his part concludes that Nixon “mastered Wallace’s dark art” of playing on white racial fears without ever explicitly mentioning race. For quote and broader assessment cf. Haney López 2014, p. 24.

589 For an overview of the South African sanctions debate cf. Smith 2010, pp. 164–170.

590 Reagan 1986c: “Presidential Veto Message: Reagan Vetoes South Africa Sanctions.” September 26. In: *CQ Almanac*.

man for example also notes that Reagan's insistence on helping the university despite its racist policies may have been driven by a desire to atone for the president's neglect of Christian conservative concerns in a variety of other policy areas.<sup>591</sup> Despite such non-racial intentions, Haberman nonetheless at the same time concludes that the administration's support for BJU "demonstrates its overall insensitivity to racial issues."<sup>592</sup> Part of this insensitivity may have been rooted in the complete lack of African-American input within the administration. As Reagan biographer Lou Cannon argues, "[t]he president was so cut off from the counsel of black Americans that he sometimes did not even realize when he was offending them."<sup>593</sup> For Cannon, Reagan's support for segregation academy tax-exemptions had little to do with race, seeing as "the [BJU] case had never been presented to him as a civil rights issue, which was true. [Reagan] did not even know that many of the Christian schools practiced segregation."<sup>594</sup> Considering Reagan's track record, one is hard-pressed though to attribute the president's actions on these deeply racialized matters to factors that are completely unrelated to race or based on simple ignorance. Reagan knew which buttons to push in the South and he acted accordingly on a number of occasions, from "jungle paths" and "welfare queens" to "young bucks" and "states' rights." The facts thus paint the rather straightforward picture of a man "who did not see racism in others as a problem and opposed most public efforts to fight it,"<sup>595</sup> as Jeremy Mayer concludes.

Regardless of his true motivations, the 40<sup>th</sup> president undoubtedly perfected the usage of implicit racial appeals – a key ingredient in his and the Republican Party's quest of conquering the South in the era of the "norm of racial equality." More so than Goldwater and Nixon had already attempted and to a certain extent done before him, Reagan achieved enormous "success in constructing a politics and a strategy of governing that attacked policies targeted toward blacks and other minorities without reference to race,"<sup>596</sup> a trait that has allowed figures like the aforementioned Lou Cannon to perpetuate the position (some might say "myth") that the president never intended to stoke white racial hostility towards minorities. In Reagan's and the Republican Party's outwardly non-racial yet nonetheless deeply racialized narrative, economic problems within the minority community were not portrayed as the result of centuries of discrimination that could be alleviated by government action but as deeper problems that were

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591 Reagan did little to further Christian causes such as school prayer or taking action against abortion. Cf. Haberman 2005, p. 243.

592 Ibid.

593 Cannon 2000, p. 459.

594 Ibid.

595 Mayer 2002, p. 155.

596 Edsall, Edsall 1992, p. 138.

innate to the minority populations in question and could thus not be resolved by any amount of government aid, a stance particularly prevalent among racially resentful whites of course.<sup>597</sup> Yet Reagan of course never openly stated that a particular group failed to adhere to the Protestant work ethic but instead used vaguer terms that nonetheless sought to portray parts of American society in a less favorable light. Speaking about welfare reform in a radio address in February of 1986, Reagan used a textbook example of the conflation of race, culture, and economic policies that has become a customary Republican approach since, infusing broader concerns about “the crisis of family breakdowns, especially among the welfare poor”<sup>598</sup> into the welfare topic. This was a crisis “lost in the forgotten streets of our *inner cities* [emphasis added];”<sup>599</sup> – an urban location that as we have seen represents an immensely potent cue for triggering racial resentment.<sup>600</sup> It is a language from the past eerily reminiscent of the rhetoric employed by today’s Republican leaders such as Paul Ryan and his earlier mentioned lamentation of “this tailspin of culture, in our inner cities in particular.” Reagan’s immense success at the ballot box based on targeting whites across the country who increasingly felt the government was acting in the best interests of the minority underclass and no one else has created a contemporary Republican Party in which the position that welfare recipients are inherently work-shy and primarily located in the (non-white) inner cities has become the accepted position both at the base and among those elected to office. Deep-seated Southern racial resentment if not downright hostility towards less privileged non-whites has thus become so commonplace within the GOP that few within the party dare speak out against it – a dangerous ideological foundation for a party to rest on in an increasingly diverse nation.

### 1.3.3 The legitimate heir to Wallace – Reagan’s lasting impact on the Republican Party

Once one delves deeper into Ronald Reagan’s ideological underpinnings and steps behind the veneer of jovial likability, we can see that the president’s rhetoric and policies were ultimately not all that different from those propagated

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597 As Joseph Aistrup points out, the ideological foundations for Reagan’s and Southern views on matters like affirmative action were based on the belief that no amount of government aid could help the poor because their poverty was rooted in personal positions and their attitude towards work. “Reverse discrimination” was thus bound to inevitably fail since it did not address the underlying basis of minority poverty. Cf. Aistrup 1996, p. 45.

598 Reagan 1986a: *Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform*. February 15.

599 Ibid.

600 Cf. Hurwitz, Peffley 2005.

by the staunch segregationist and populist George Wallace, the late Alabama governor and four time U.S. presidential candidate who towered over Southern politics for much of the latter part of the twentieth century. At the center of their shared ideology lay a deep distrust of the federal government – an institution “whose natural state is to grow forever unless you do something to starve it”<sup>601</sup> according to Reagan’s autobiography.<sup>602</sup> This message resonated well across the white South for obvious reasons. While Wallace on his part never truly supported the sort of laissez-faire economics that President Reagan subscribed to,<sup>603</sup> the Alabamian’s manner of riling up racial animus and hostility along with his incessant attacks on the liberal elites in Washington, D.C. served as a blueprint that was to be emulated by Reagan as he visited the South during his presidential campaigns and sought to appeal to whites across the nation during his time in the White House. At venues such as the infamous Neshoba County Fair, states’ rights, Wallace’s favorite targets of “pointy headed intellectuals”<sup>604</sup> and “welfare loafers,”<sup>605</sup> or “the little people who feared big government in the hands of [...] social engineers with unworkable theories”<sup>606</sup> were frequently at the center of Reagan’s speeches – a man who had himself held a long-standing aversion towards that “little intellectual elite” which believed it could “plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves.”<sup>607</sup>

Wallace’s overall impact on the Republican Party in general and Reagan’s

601 Reagan 1990: *An American Life*, p. 232.

602 Rhetoric reminiscent of Wallace’s was employed in Reagan’s 1964 “Time for Choosing” speech as well. Claiming that his values represented those of “man’s old – old-aged dream, the ultimate in individual freedom consistent with law and order,” his political opponents were accused of drawing up policies that led the country “down to the ant heap of totalitarianism.” The 1964 presidential election therefore was about “[w]hether we believe in our capacity for self-government or whether we abandon the American revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capitol can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves.” Reagan 1964: *A Time for Choosing*. October 27.

603 Cf. Horwitz 2013, p. 57. Michael Kazin also describes Wallace as someone who “explicitly favored a government that aided the common folk – as long as it stayed out of their schools, their unions, and their family lives. His grievances against federal power began and usually ended with its measures to force integration.” Kazin 1998: *The Populist Persuasion – An American History*, p. 236.

604 Wallace quoted in: Edsall, Edsall, p. 85.

605 Wallace quoted in: Kendall 2000: *Communication in the Presidential Primaries: Candidates and the Media, 1912–2000*, p. 120.

606 In his 1976 part autobiography, part manifesto *Stand up for America*, the Alabama governor listed the kinds of people that “backed” him, among which one could find “concerned parents who wanted to preserve the neighborhood schools, homeowners wanting to protect their investment, [...] small businessmen who wanted to preserve the free-enterprise system, attorneys who believed in the Constitution, [and] police officers who battled organized demonstrators in the streets. ...” These were of course also the kinds of people Reagan sought to appeal to. Wallace quoted in: Horwitz 2013, p. 58.

607 Reagan 1964.

attempts to conquer the white South in particular is therefore quite remarkable (a fact that contemporary Republicans would undoubtedly like to de-emphasize).<sup>608</sup> Thomas Byrne Edsall and his wife Mary for example contend that Wallace's presidential campaigns would go on to shape the "rhetoric, themes, and tactics" of the Republican presidential campaigns of the 1980s "to an extraordinary degree."<sup>609</sup> Even earlier campaigns bore the hallmarks of the segregationist's rhetoric. Assessing the 1968 Republican campaign by Richard Nixon and his vice-presidential running mate Spiro Agnew<sup>610</sup>, Wallace – only half-jokingly – lamented that he wished "I had copyrighted my speeches" in order to collect the "immense royalties" he would have gone on to receive in light of the frequent usage of his themes by the GOP duo.<sup>611</sup> Historian Michael Kazin lends a degree of support to that assertion, arriving at the conclusion that Nixon's run for the White House "borrowed from Wallace's themes while avoiding their caustic sting and Southern provenance."<sup>612</sup> Wallace's impact went well beyond phrases and campaign strategies though. The late Alabama governor's anti-statist populist message that preyed on the white middle and working classes' fears of an intrusive federal government, social disorder, and economic uncertainty all the while minorities received governmental aid helped re-fashion America's political right as an ideological movement that was no longer a "defender of privilege" but rather a "representative of the whole American people"<sup>613</sup> according to Joseph Lowndes. Thanks to Wallace's work in transforming the right, "besieged working-class voters and their traditional Republican adversaries" had now found "a common bond in opposition to federal regulation and high taxes."<sup>614</sup> Just as Reagan perfected the Wallaceist art of racial appeals without explicit mentions of race, the president also played a central role in continuing Wallace's transformation of American conservatism by turning the Republican Party into a political alliance that could conceivably portray itself as the defender of the traditional values of everyday working and middle class Americans against a liberal elitist onslaught. Reagan understood that the key to a

608 As Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2015, p. 193) conclude, "[t]he first rumblings of the new right agenda were heard in George Wallace's 1968 presidential bid." Forced into using ever more coded populist appeals instead of his hallmark outright racist rhetoric due to the emergence of the *norm of racial equality*, "Wallace [...] struck certain chords that anticipated the new right agenda – defense of traditional values, opposition to 'big government,' and patriotic and militaristic themes."

609 Edsall, Edsall 1992, p. 10.

610 Who – according to Wallace biographer Dan T. Carter – "[sounded] like a rather dignified clone of George Wallace" on the 1968 campaign trail. Carter 2000, p. 332.

611 For quotes and wider context cf. Kruse 2005, p. 253.

612 Kazin 1998, pp. 249–250.

613 Lowndes 2008, p. 79.

614 Edsall, Edsall 1992, p. 79.

sustained conservative majority was predicated on – in his words – overcoming the Republican Party's “country club-big business image” and getting “the man and the woman in the factories, [...] the farmer, [and] the cop on the beat”<sup>615</sup> into the Republican Party. Eleven years after he had called for the creation of such a “New Republican Party” that process appeared to have been completed in the eyes of the president as he surmised at the end of his second term in 1988 that while the hard left had taken over the Democratic Party, his GOP had been turned “into the party of the working people”<sup>616</sup> among others. While this assertion does require a certain ignorance of the electoral preferences of the general working class, Reagan was not far from the truth when it came to many white voters, particularly in the South of course. His administration's focus on scaling back measures intended to bring about racial equality and the alliance he forged with the Christian Right did entice a large number of not infrequently socially conservative working class whites into joining the ranks of the GOP, particularly those “white ethnics” that Nixon had already identified as a key group to be conquered by the GOP, seeing as they were the ones who had felt most betrayed by a Democratic Party that was seen as fighting on behalf of everyone except *working class whites*.<sup>617</sup> These aforementioned “little people” – as Wallace described his own voters – that objected to governmental power wielded by “phony intellectuals”<sup>618</sup> had now crossed the partisan divide and would not look back. During the 1980s, this group of voters came to be known as the Reagan Democrats – today, conservative columnist George Will observes, “they are called the Republican base.”<sup>619</sup> As we will see in later chapters on the Tea Party, that is indeed the case. Wallace's still sometimes overtly racialized anti-statist torch was picked up by Reagan and rebranded into a more covert and thus more appealing message<sup>620</sup> which put the GOP on a path towards becoming the party of Southern whites and social conservatives across the country, groups that form the backbone of today's Tea Party. While Reagan was the heir to Wallace, the Tea Party is the heir to both.

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615 Reagan 1977: *The New Republican Party*. Speech delivered to the 1977 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), February 6.

616 On top of being the party of “the family, the neighborhood, the defense of freedom, and [...] the American flag.” Quoted in: Black, Black 2008, pp. 102–103.

617 For Nixon's appeals to these *white ethnics*, cf. Sugrue, Skrentny 2008.

618 Quoted in: Horwitz 2013, p. 58.

619 Will 2012: “Suddenly, a fun candidate.” *Washington Post*, January 4.

620 See Wallace biographer Dan T. Carter who concludes that Reagan “domesticated” Wallace's message and ran on “many of the same ideas, many of the same values, many of the same things that Wallace did, but in a much more appealing way.” Quoted in: J. Thomas 1996. In a similar vein, Michael Kazin argues that Reagan “cleansed” conservative ideology of its more toxic components, “making an ideology that had once sounded extreme appear to be the bedrock of common sense and consensual values.” Kazin 1998, p. 262.

Reagan's legacy of the Tea Party and a *southernized* GOP begs the question to what he extend he ultimately approved of prejudicial Southern white sentiments towards blacks and how the *Gipper* would feel towards the activist, racially conservative core of the twenty-first century Republican Party. Calling Reagan an outright "racist" would probably be a step too far. If we however use the four racial resentment propositions as a gauge, there can be little doubt that the 40<sup>th</sup> president can be described as harboring racially resentful sentiments. Moreover, the president's racial resentment was not limited to simple rhetoric but also followed up by actions; racial conservatism was not merely exploited for electoral gain but stood at the center of the administration's racial policies. Throughout his presidency, Ronald Reagan "lined up with suburban whites in opposition to government insistence on equal rights for minorities," presidential historian Robert Dallek observed, "thus signaling to white-middle class Americans that their values and influence were once again predominant in national affairs."<sup>621</sup> That one of their own (despite his west coast background) had entered the White House was not lost on Southern white racial conservatives. After Reagan's 1980 victory, Joseph Crespiño relates the reaction of two friends and advisers of Strom Thurmond – Robert Figg and Walter Brown – to the election's outcome. Figg reminded Brown that the latter had once commented "that someday, somebody's going to run for president on the platform that this is a white man's country."<sup>622</sup> Looking back at the campaign that had just transpired and assessing the candidate who had come out on top, Figg added with some sense of satisfaction that while he had "never heard of Reagan saying that," the election had nonetheless "turned out that way, didn't it?"<sup>623</sup>

This was a sentiment shared by whites across the South who now began to look at their regional GOP outfits in a different light as well. Reagan's ideological tenets, "tailor-made"<sup>624</sup> for the South, helped his party become a force to be reckoned with in the former Confederacy beyond the presidential level as the white electorate of the region recognized that the GOP had well and truly become their (anti-statist and racially conservative) political home,<sup>625</sup> an important re-

621 Dallek 1984/1999: *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*, p. 80.

622 Quoted in: Crespiño 2012, p. 289.

623 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

624 The New York Times' John Herbers noted that Reagan's 1980 campaign was "tailor-made for the Southern majority on matters concerning the family, religion, and military strength." Herbers 1980: "Reagan's Sweep In South Called Delayed Reaction." *New York Times News Service*, in: *The Dispatch (Lexington, NC)*, page 5. November 7.

625 While 43 percent of Southern conservative whites identified as Democrats in 1976, that share had dropped to 28 percent by the end of Reagan's two terms in 1988. Cf. Abramowitz, Knotts 2006: "Ideological Realignment in the American Electorate: A Comparison of Northern and Southern White Voters in the Pre-Reagan, Reagan, and Post-Reagan Eras." *Politics & Policy* 34(1), pp. 94–108, here p. 102.

alization in an era of the increasing nationalization of congressional contests at the expense of local factors.<sup>626</sup> Contesting congressional races against the previously all-powerful Democratic candidates and incumbents therefore no longer was a worthless endeavor as whites began to defect in these non-presidential contests as well,<sup>627</sup> providing the Democrats with an increasingly difficult task of cobbling together a sufficiently strong biracial coalition and making them more reliant on the black vote with each successive election (which in turn of course made the party an even less appealing home to many Southern whites). Thanks to these shifts in competitiveness, promising white candidates in the region now saw that a political career could be obtained on the Republican side as well, a significant alteration of the Southern political environment of previous decades partially brought about by Ronald Reagan that would prove vital in the ultimate destruction of the last vestiges of the congressional Democratic *Solid South*.<sup>628</sup>

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626 Cf. Brady, D'Onofrio, and Fiorina 2000: "The Nationalization of Electoral Forces Revisited." In: Brady, Cogan, and Fiorina (eds.): *Continuity and Change in House Elections*, pp. 110–129. As the authors' data reveals, the local component in U.S. House elections decreased steadily from the late 1960s onward while the national component (represented by presidential vote coefficients) simultaneously increased its role in the vote, reaching an all-time high during the timeframe assessed by Brady and his colleagues (1954–1998) in 1994 and 1996, a culmination that was "foreshadowed by the growing nationalization evident in the midterm elections of 1974 to 1984, and the presidential elections from 1976 onward." For data cf. pp. 138–141, quote on p. 141. For a look at the increasing correlation between a voter's approval or disapproval of the president and their Senate vote for or against a member of the incumbent president's party cf. Abramowitz 2014a: "Nationalization of Senate Elections Poses Challenge to Democrats in 2014." *Sabato's Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, May 22. In 2014, past presidential election results also accurately predicted 76 percent of Senate results, the highest percentage in the three decades assessed by Dhruvil Mehta and Harry Enten. Prior to 2010, the only other time past presidential election results predicted more than 40 percent of Senate results during the time frame came in 2002. Cf. Mehta, Enten 2014: "The 2014 Senate Elections Were The Most Nationalized In Decades." *FiveThirtyEight*, December 2.

627 For a rise in the Republican contestation of Southern seats cf. Shafer, Johnston 2001, pp. 619–621. As their data does reveal, the 1980s did not actually see a significant increase in the share of districts contested by GOP candidates, hovering at around 75 to 80 percent throughout the decade. A sharp spike beyond the 90 percent level came in 1992 (cf. p. 620), which Shafer and Johnston attribute to the conscious effort of the Republican National Committee to reap the rewards of decades of Republican appeals to white Southerners (p. 621). Reagan's presidency with all of its different aspects undoubtedly laid a fair share of the groundwork though for these shifts, in a sense culminating in the conquest of the first Republican congressional majority in the South since the end of reconstruction in 1994.

628 Cf. Warren Tompkins' earlier statement (quoted in Black, Black 2002, p. 215) as well as Black, Black 2002, pp. 205–206 who note the important role Reagan played in finally bringing about an end to the biracial coalition that had kept Southern Democrats in power for such a significant period of time after the civil rights revolution. The candidates that were now attracted by the GOP were usually more professional and more likely to have held some sort of previous elected office than the ones that had run on the party's ticket in previous years and decades. For more on the importance of fielding more experienced



and set the stage for the Republican *Southernization* at the congressional level that will be assessed in chapter II.1.1.

Reagan's legacy extends beyond the South as well. One look at contemporary politics with its deep and entrenched divisions that are increasingly difficult to bridge reveals the lasting impact Ronald Reagan's eight years in office and his alliance with the Christian Right and Southern racial conservatives have had on the wider world of national American politics. The 40<sup>th</sup> president's focus on values voters and former Southern Democrats (with a significant overlap between the two) has turned today's Republican Party into the home of these two groups, with both of them exerting ever more influence on the GOP as we will see in chapters II.1 and II.2. In the meantime, moderates, secular minded voters, and even some white (non-Southern) conservatives have defected into the Democratic camp.<sup>629</sup> This process has created two distinct and ideologically cohesive and consistent parties, leading to a political environment in which ideology and partisan affiliation are more closely linked than at any point in living memory (see also chapter II.1.4). Moreover, Ronald Reagan also helped cement the African-American aversion to voting for Republican candidates. To be sure, politicians like Nixon and Goldwater played a key role in this shift well. Reagan's pitiful performance among black voters vis-à-vis his Republican presidential predecessor Gerald Ford nonetheless indicates the extent though to which the *Gipper* did irreparable damage to the Republican brand among African Americans.<sup>630</sup> The transformation of the GOP into a party of white Southerners has, as we will see time and again in the chapters on demographics, also lessened the party's chances among the burgeoning segment of the Hispanic electorate who care little for a political movement that thrives on anti-statist racially charged conservatism.

The legacy Ronald Reagan has left the Republican Party through his focus on the white South has thus been a double-edged sword as will become evident throughout the second part of this book. More so than any other conservative politician of the twentieth century, Reagan looms large over today's GOP for a variety of reasons. His vehement, one might call it *Wallaceist*, anti-statism along with its inherent constant demonization of "government" – epitomized by everyday quips such as the comment that "[t]he nine most terrifying words in the

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candidates and the role this played in Republican gains in the South cf. Lublin 2004, pp. 61–63. McKee 2010 (pp. 4–5) also notes how a lack of Republican competitiveness at the local and congressional levels deterred potential Republican candidates from running and how changes in this dynamic ultimately aided the GOP in its attempts of conquering the (congressional) South.

629 For data on these changes in partisan preferences among whites related to the Reagan era cf. Abramowitz, Knotts 2006.

630 Reagan won nine percent of the black vote in 1984, compared to Ford's 17 percent in 1976. Cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.

English language are ‘I’m from the government and I’m here to help,’<sup>631</sup> or that “government is not the solution to our problem; it is the problem,”<sup>632</sup> a line delivered in a more prominent setting during his 1981 inaugural address – forms the ideological backbone of the twenty-first century Republican Party, as evidenced by the 2013 government shutdown and other legislative battles that revolve around questions pertaining to the size of government. Reagan’s decision to press forward with the Republican-Christian Right alliance and his remarkably skilled exploitation of white racial animus and fears played a virtually impossible to overstate role in turning the Republican Party into the *southernized* and *evangelized* political organization that it is today. A precarious position for the party to be in as the wider American public is increasingly turning away from the values of the white evangelical South.

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631 Reagan 1986b: *News Conference, August 12*. Online at: The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Library.

632 Reagan 1981: *Inaugural Address*. January 20.



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**Part II: The *southernized* and *evangelized* Republican Party  
and its future prospects**



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## II.1 The Southernization of the Republican Party across all levels

The first part of this book described how the seeds were laid for the events that were to unfold during the 1990s and have continued largely unabated ever since. The following chapters will illustrate how one particular region of the country has been able to shape a party in its image with little if any opposition emanating from more moderate factions, in the process allowing the region to incorporate many of the central ideological tenets that have been at the core of Southern political views for decades if not centuries into the Republican Party's basic political platform: a strong opposition to the federal government and any attempts by it to expand its power, a sense that one's own values are constantly under attack or threatened by immoral secular liberal elitists, and the fusion of economic, social, and racial conservatism into a single, interconnected brand of conservatism that appears to be increasingly at odds with a growing segment of the non-Southern electorate. The following subchapters will showcase the specific data and underlying trends of these developments at the congressional and presidential levels while once again illustrating the continued existence of *Southern exceptionalism* even within the GOP House Conference as representatives from the South stand out for their brand of strong conservatism; ideologically hardened positions that have made the job of forging Republican majorities for Republican congressional leaders far harder as we will see in chapter II.1.2. Due to their strength in numbers, Southern Republican members of Congress are today playing a more pivotal role within the GOP's Conferences than ever before while the party's presidential candidates have found success in the South to be increasingly correlated with a distinct lack of it in the rest of the nation – evidence of how the conquest of the South appears to have come at a substantial price in electoral fortunes in the non-South.

One of the key moments in the *Southernization* of the GOP no doubt turned out to be the 1994 Republican Revolution that not only handed the Republican Party its first House majority in over 40 years but also allowed the party of Lincoln to win a majority of Southern congressional seats for the first time since the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. What transpired in 1994 – repre-

senting the culmination of a decades long realignment trend – meant that the region south of the Mason-Dixon Line had finally become “the dominant element, regionally, ideologically, and culturally in the congressional GOP.”<sup>633</sup> If anything this trend appears to have gained even more traction since. Over the past twenty years, the South has steadily increased its weight within the Republican Party, becoming the single strongest regional voting bloc within its congressional caucus. As Southerners have risen up the GOP’s ranks, the party’s outlook and ideology have also received a distinctly Southern taste, leading some to the conclusion that it is rather difficult today to pinpoint “where the Confederacy ends and the Republican party begins”<sup>634</sup> while identifying the differences between Republican platforms and the issue positions of influential social conservative organizations like the Christian Coalition that draw their strength from their white evangelical bases in the South has become a rather challenging task as well,<sup>635</sup> unsurprising in light of the data that will be presented throughout chapter II.2 which assesses the *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party. The increasing Southernization and the problems this has presented have not gone unnoticed even within the Republican camp. Veteran GOP pollster Whit Ayres recognizes that “when the rest of the country says, ‘I don’t believe the same things,’ or ‘I don’t admire the same candidates,’ as the South does”<sup>636</sup> the GOP sees itself in a challenging position to form national majorities. As the following chapters on the Southern weight within the party both at the elite and mass level and the continued exceptionalism of the region will illustrate, this conclusion will ring true for the foreseeable future, presenting the Republican Party with a sizeable challenge in its quest for presidential majorities, particularly as the ideological and partisan gaps between the white South and the rest of the nation appear to be widening ever further.

### II.1.1 Growth in Southern representation within the congressional Republican Party

Over the past half century, the share of Southerners within the ranks of the House GOP conference has increased in a remarkable manner. Once a relatively small subgroup within the perennial minority caucus, they have now risen to set the agenda in a Republican caucus that has – since the Republican takeover of the

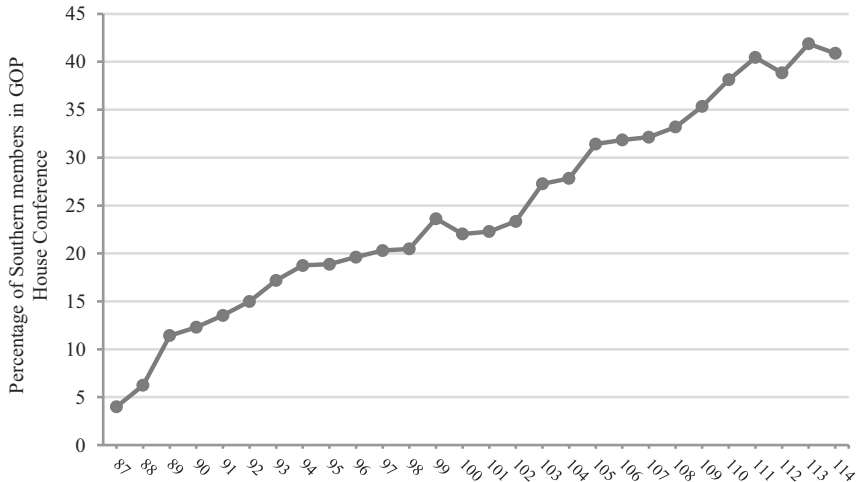
633 Rae 2001: “The Conscience of the Revolution: Southern Influence in the House Republican ‘Class of 1994.’” In: Kuzenski, Moreland, Steed (eds.): *Eye of the Storm: The South and Congress in an Era of Change*, pp. 135–152, here p. 149.

634 Applebome 1996, p. 120.

635 Cf. Williams 2010a, p. 231.

636 Quoted in: Brownstein 2009: “For GOP, A Southern Exposure.” *National Journal*, May 23.

House in 1994 – held the majority in the lower chamber of Congress for 18 of the last 22 years (including the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress from 2015 through 2017); an achievement in no small part due to the party’s increasing strength in the congressional South over the past two decades that has allowed the party to compensate for average electoral results in the rest of the nation.



**Figure II.1.1.a:** Share of Southerners in GOP House Conference (in percent), 87<sup>th</sup> (1961–1963) through 114<sup>th</sup> Congress (2015–2017).<sup>637</sup>

As figure II.1.1.a illustrates, the Southern march into the GOP caucus saw its first promising signs in the wake of the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act as the share of Southerners within the Republican House Conference jumped from 6.3 to 11.4 percent in the elections to the 89<sup>th</sup> Congress (1965–67), a result of gains within the South and losses in the rest of the nation. Increasing fortunes in that particular election were unsurprisingly confined to the most racially conservative part of the nation, the Deep South, though: While no representative from the region belonged to the party of Lincoln after the 1962 congressional races, the number of Republicans from the heart of Dixie increased to seven in 1964. In the peripheral South on the other hand the party actually lost two of its eleven seats the same year. After the South had reached a share of around 19 percent in the GOP House caucus by the mid-1970s, the next two decades saw relatively minor Republican gains in the congressional South despite the re-

637 Own work. All shares and calculations are based on election day results. For a complete overview of historic election results leading up to and including the 2012 congressional election cf. Haas 2013: “Statistics of the Presidential and Congressional Election of November 6, 2012.” *Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives*, p. 74. For a detailed breakdown of each election cf. United States House of Representatives 2013.



gion's realignment at the presidential level. When George H. W. Bush was elected president in 1988 (while carrying all eleven Southern states), Southerners still only made up a mere 22.3 percent of all House Republicans. The year (1994) Republicans won a House majority for the first time since the 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1953–55) they also captured a majority of Southern House seats for the first time since 1874<sup>638</sup> as the region increased its share in the GOP House Conference to 27.8 percent.

Today, Southern Republicans are undoubtedly the most powerful regional faction within the congressional GOP as the former Confederacy reached a peak share of 41.9 percent in the party's house caucus in 2012. The remarkable rise has shown little signs of abating in recent years with decreases seen in elections to the 112<sup>th</sup> and 114<sup>th</sup> Congresses being a side effect of particularly strong Republican gains outside the South. The party's hemorrhaging of seats in both the 2006 and 2008 congressional elections was on the other hand also particularly pronounced in the rest of the nation (see figure II.1.1.b). While the GOP lost ten Southern U.S. House seats between 2004 and 2008 – a decrease of 12.2 percent – it lost 29.3 percent of its seats outside the South in the two disastrous elections after Hurricane Katrina and in the midst of the 2008 economic meltdown.<sup>639</sup>

Increases in the share of Southern congressional seats won by Republicans have of course gone up in a similarly stunning manner. In 1960, Republican candidates won just seven of the 106 House seats allocated to the South (a share of 6.6 percent). In the follow years, progress was steady but by no means impressive, especially in light of simultaneous Republican gains at the presidential level. Republican congressional candidates won just a third of all Southern seats in 1988 (39 out of 116), despite the good nationwide showing of the GOP presidential candidate at the top of the ticket and the fact that Republican congressional candidates managed to win almost 43 percent of all non-Southern congressional seats that year.<sup>640</sup> A quarter of a century later, the share of Re-

638 Republicans lost their Southern majority in elections to the 44<sup>th</sup> Congress (1875–77).

639 The number of Southern Republican seats dropped from 82 to 72 while the number of non-Southern Republicans in the House decreased from 150 to 106 between the 109<sup>th</sup> and 111<sup>th</sup> Congresses.

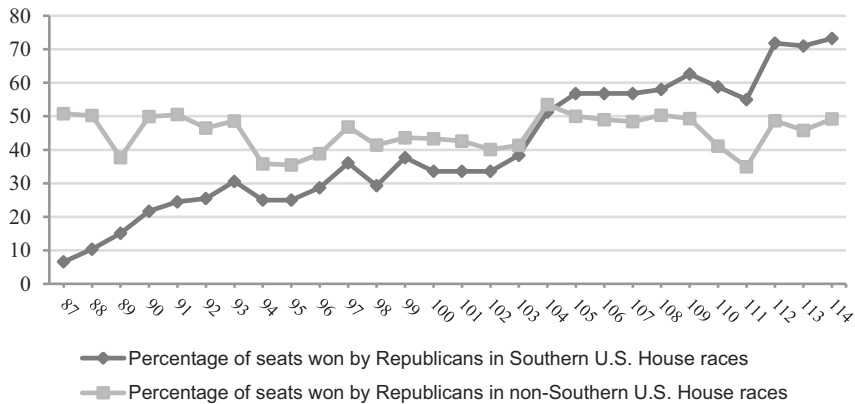
640 A variety of reasons allowed Democrats to retain power at the state and substate level well into the 1980s (and in case of substate elections even well into the late 1990s and early 2000s). As already addressed in the general introduction to this work, Republican state parties were virtually non-existent when Barry Goldwater first captured the Deep South in 1964. (Conservative) Democratic incumbents had the experience and seniority in Congress that made them a more attractive option to white Southerners for a number of years well after the Democratic embrace of the civil rights struggle at the national level. Republicans on the other hand ran inexperienced candidates that stood little chance of unseating their seasoned opponents – that is if Republicans even decided to contest these elections. As Republican state parties grew stronger, many Democrats were able to retain power for a significant period of time by forging a biracial alliance. It was not until the early 1990s then

publican congressional victories in the South had increased to 73 percent (101 out of 138; see also figure II.1.1.b), levels not seen since the era of Reconstruction.<sup>641</sup> These increasing gains in the Old Confederacy have coincided with a mixed record in Republican fortunes in the rest of the nation. In the six congressional elections between 1994 and 2004 (in other words the 104<sup>th</sup> through 109<sup>th</sup> Congresses) the GOP won an average of 50.1 percent of non-Southern seats, having since failed to conquer a majority of non-Southern seats on a single occasion. The emergence of a substantial regional gap in Republican winning percentages is illustrated particularly well by assessing the ten-year period between 2002 and 2012. Between the elections to the 108<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses, the GOP managed to raise its seat share in the South by 22.4 percent (as the Republican “winning percentage” in the region increased from 58 to 71 percent); in the non-South however it decreased by 8.9 percent during the same period (dropping from 50.3 to 45.8 percent of all seats won). The 2014 midterms provided Republicans with gains in both regions although the party once again barely failed to obtain a majority of non-Southern U.S. House seats, winning 146 of the 297 districts outside the South. It will most certainly be interesting to see to what extent the growing rift in electoral success may widen in future congressional elections and how long the GOP will be able to carry the House on the back of strong Southern showings.

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that African-American Democratic preferences were no longer able to compensate for Democratic losses among white Southerners. For more on the reasons behind continued Democratic dominance in local and state elections cf. McKee 2010. For a closer look at the challenges Republicans faced for decades, cf. Black, Black 2002, pp. 72–204.

641 In the elections to the 41<sup>st</sup> Congress (1869–71), Republicans won 75.9 percent of all Southern seats. Two years later this share would decrease to 53.5 percent before slightly nudging back up to 54.8 percent in 1872. By 1874 though, Republican domination in the region had finally come to an end as its candidates won fewer than 21 percent of all Southern seats, signaling the beginning of a long period in the electoral dark for Republicans in the former Confederacy. Own calculations based on data from United States House of Representatives 2013.



**Figure II.1.1.b:** *Republican winning percentage in Southern and non-Southern U.S. House races, 87<sup>th</sup> (1961–1963) through 114<sup>th</sup> Congress (2015–2017).*<sup>642</sup>

These gains have also been reflected in the composition of the party's congressional leadership. As Kevin Hill and Nicol C. Rae aptly noted, any Southern politician frozen in the 1950s and thawed out in the late '90s would see a familiar scene in Congress, with Southern politicians occupying many of the congressional body's most prominent positions.<sup>643</sup> The key difference being that they no longer represented the Democratic but rather the Republican Party. Particularly in the mid-1990s after the Republican takeover of the House, virtually all of the GOP levers of power were occupied by Southerners. Newt Gingrich (Georgia) was Speaker of the House between 1995 and '99 while Dick Armey (Texas) was the House Majority Leader between 1995 and 2003, a post that was then taken up by Tom DeLay (also a Texan) who himself had been the House Majority Whip from 1995 until 2003. In the Senate, Mississippian Trent Lott led the Republican conference as majority and minority leader from 1996 until 2003 when – as already mentioned in the chapter on the *Art of Coded Appeals* (I.1.4) – he had to step down after remarking at an event staged for Strom Thurmond's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday that “if the rest of the country had followed [Mississippi's] lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years,”<sup>644</sup> referring to Thurmond's 1948 Dixiecrat candidacy in which the late segregationist carried, among others, Lott's home state. This Southernization to a certain extent then culminated in the election of a Texan born-again Christian to the presidency in 2000. The upper echelons of the congressional GOP appear somewhat less southernized today than they did during the 1990s particularly because of Rep.

642 Own work based on data from United States House of Representatives 2013.

643 Cf. Hill, Rae 2000: “What Happened to the Democrats in the South? US House Elections, 1992–1996.” *Party Politics* 6(1), pp. 5–22, here p. 19.

644 Quoted in: Micklethwait, Wooldridge 2004, pp. 249–250.

Eric Cantor's premature departure. Both in the Senate and House, Southerners (at least from the extended region) were until very recently at the very top with Mitch McConnell (Kentucky) in the Senate and Eric Cantor (Virginia) in the House occupying the posts of majority/minority leaders until the latter was defeated by a Tea Party primary challenger in early 2014. Former Speaker of the House John Boehner was ultimately brought down by the Ohioan's decision to disregard the right fringe of the party on a number of key votes throughout his later reign (see chapter II.1.2), as a number of conservative organizations had been arguing for quite a while that the Speaker's distinct lack of conservative orthodoxy made him unfit for the position.<sup>645</sup>

Has the Republican dominance in the congressional South reached a plateau, as evidenced by figure II.1.1.b? The three most recent elections to the U.S. House do indicate that expanding much further upon the 71 to 73 percent share may be rather difficult. The establishment of (near) majority-minority districts as well as the generally rigid partisan affiliations in the region have created an electoral environment in which not only many Republicans enjoy comfortable majorities thanks to the removal of African-American voters from their districts but quite a few of the remaining – not infrequently African-American – Southern Democratic officeholders appear relatively safe as well.<sup>646</sup> Moreover, as we have seen in the most recent presidential elections, the newly established Republican Solid South also appears to be fraying at the edges. After the 2013 elections, Democrats for example controlled all five of Virginia's statewide offices<sup>647</sup> for the first time in 44 years<sup>648</sup> – this came after President Obama had won the state twice, the first consecutive Democratic victories in presidential elections in the *Old Dominion* since the 1944 and '48 elections. North Carolina, also won by President Obama in 2008 and his narrowest defeat four years later, could also become more “purple” as the population shifts in the Tar Heel state make its electorate more Hispanic

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645 A variety of right-wing action groups called on the Speaker to resign throughout 2013 as he allowed legislation to be passed thanks to Democratic votes on a number of occasions that year. The Senate Conservatives Fund for example accused Boehner of “help[ing] President Obama enact his liberal agenda,” adding that the Speaker had “completely surrendered to the Democrats” rather than “[fight] for conservative principles.” Senate Conservatives Fund 2014: *Replace the Speaker*, February 11.

646 After the 2012 congressional election, eight of the nine remaining Democrats in the Deep South were African Americans for example with John Barrow (from Georgia's 12<sup>th</sup> congressional district) representing the last remnant of an almost extinct breed of Deep Southern white Democrats. Two years later, Barrow would finally lose his seat as well. Unseating those eight African Americans appears almost impossible unless substantial changes are made to the ethnic composition of their districts.

647 Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and both U.S. Senate seats.

648 Cf. Sullivan 2013b: “The five biggest things to watch this Election Day.” *Washington Post*, November 5.

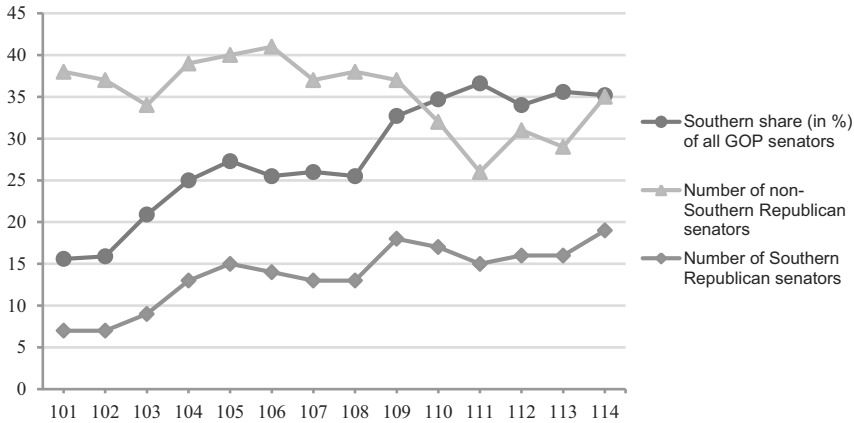
and less white.<sup>649</sup> Of course congressional elections, particularly those of the midterm variety, are waged in a different and more GOP friendly environment than their presidential counterparts but population trends in the peripheral South appear to indicate that the GOP's zenith in Dixie may already lie in the past – not necessarily the most worrying prospect though if the party is able to continue to win around 70 percent of the region's U.S. House seats.

### Trends in the Senate

A similar trend of increased Southern representation and eventual overrepresentation has also transpired in the upper chamber of the U.S. Congress where the share of Southerners within the GOP Senate conference rose by 20 percentage points between the 101<sup>st</sup> and 114<sup>th</sup> Congresses, roughly in line with the 19.6-point increase obtained by Southern Republicans in the House during the same period. Just as was the case in the House, Republicans continued to hold a minority of the region's 22 senate seats up until the 1994 Republican landslide. After the 1988 elections for example, all senators from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee were Democrats with the party still controlling 15 of the region's 22 Senate seats overall. The diverging successes Republicans have been able to achieve in the South and non-South in recent years become particularly evident if we compare the Senate GOP's composition during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress to the one a decade earlier, in other words the 108<sup>th</sup>. Having retaken the Senate majority after the 2002 elections, Republicans held 51 seats in the upper chamber of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, 13 of which came from the South meaning that Southern Republicans made up around a quarter of the Senate GOP conference. By the beginning of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress the number of Republican senators had shrunk to 45. Losses were limited to the non-South though with the eleven states of the Old Confederacy now holding 16 (35.6 percent) of all Republican senate seats. In other words, while the South added three Republican seats over the course of a decade, Republicans lost a remarkable nine Senators across the rest of the nation.

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649 See chapter II.6.4 (Virginia, Colorado, Nevada – Who will be next to turn blue?) for a more detailed look at how demographic changes could impact a new realignment of the (peripheral) South.



**Figure II.1.1.c:** Share of Southerners in Senate GOP Conference (in percent) and total number of non-Southern and Southern Republican senators, 101<sup>st</sup> through 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>650</sup>

As we can see in figure II.1.1.c, the worst losses sustained in the 2006 and 2008 senate races (represented in the 110<sup>th</sup> and 111<sup>th</sup> Congresses) came outside the South as the region managed to increase its share within the Republican Senate Conference despite losing seats itself, as the number of GOP senators from the South dropped from 18 to 17 and subsequently 15. In the non-South however, the number of Republican Senators decreased from 37 during the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress to 26 two sessions later. The recent 2014 takeover of the U.S. Senate was achieved through gains in both regions though. With their wins in Arkansas, Louisiana, and North Carolina the GOP now has 19 Senators from the South, its highest total since the late 1860s, as just three Senators from the region continue to be Democrats (with two of the three remaining Southern Democratic senators coming from Virginia alone). Gains were also made outside the South though as the number of non-Southerners in the GOP Senate Conference rose from 29 to 35 between the 113<sup>th</sup> and 114<sup>th</sup> Congresses. Looking at the last few years, we can note that Southern Republican senators have made up around 35 percent of the Senate GOP Conference despite the region only holding 22 percent of the chamber's seats.

### Positive aspects

The 2012 congressional election perfectly illustrates that the growing Southernization of the Republican Party does not have to come at the expense of

<sup>650</sup> Own work based on congressional profiles (which include data on senate elections) obtained at United States House of Representatives 2013.

parliamentary majorities – instead the party's Southern gains can insure a continued GOP majority in the lower chamber of Congress. Both in 1988 and 2012, the Republican Party won the same number of U.S. House seats outside the South: 136. After the last congressional election of the 1980s, the GOP trailed its Democratic opponents in the House by 85 seats though. By the opening of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress that deficit had turned into a 34 seat advantage without any numerical gains in the non-South. Despite winning a mere 45.8 percent of all non-Southern districts in 2012, Republicans were able to wind up with their second largest majority in the U.S. House since the late 1940s on the back of a strong showing in the South.<sup>651</sup> Two years later Republicans actually managed to better this result, winning their largest number of House seats (247) since the 1928 Congressional races netted them 267 seats. This was achieved despite winning only around 49 percent of the non-Southern seats in the House of Representatives.

As Republican dominance has become a staple of Southern politics, the party has been able to pay far less attention to the rest of the country. In 1994, the party still won a substantial majority of 53.5 percent of all non-southern U.S. House seats which nonetheless actually provided Republicans with a smaller majority than the one they enjoyed after the 2012 congressional election (230 in 1994 and 234 in 2012). With its 64 House seats from the Old Confederacy, Republicans would have had to win 49.7 percent of all non-Southern seats in 1994 in order to win the necessary 218 seats to obtain a majority in the House of Representatives. Fast forward twenty years and the electoral environment and its dynamics have changed substantially due to the growth of both the South (which expanded its number of seats in the House from 125 in the 1990s to 138 in the 2010s) and the GOP within the region. If the Republican Party reproduces its recent congressional success in the South in the remaining congressional races of the decade (i. e. until the next reapportionment) by continuing to secure about 100 Southern districts each time voters head to the polls, winning around 40 percent of all U.S. House seats outside the South (118 of 297; 39.7 percent) would be sufficient in getting the party to 218 seats. Considering that the GOP has failed to get past this 40 percent mark in the non-South on just a single occasion since 1980 (see figure II.1.1.b) this makes a Democratic takeover of the House dependent on a rather sizeable Democratic wave election (such as the one in 2008, when Republicans only won 34.9 percent of all non-Southern U.S. House races). With Southern population growth continuing to outpace that of the wider nation – leading to additional Southern seat gains in future reapportionments<sup>652</sup> – those non-

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651 For data cf. Haas 2013, p. 74.

652 For calculations of possible future reapportionments cf. Trende 2013d: "Population Data Show More Movement South and West." *RealClearPolitics*, December 30.

southern shares can decrease further even if the Republican Party fails to make additional inroads in Southern congressional races (which may very well be the fact due to the aforementioned safe majorities on both sides of the political divide in the region). The “defection” of a Southern majority into the Republican camp in 1994 and the party’s expansion in the region ever since have thus done to the GOP what the South used to do for the Democrats – make them the natural rulers of the House of Representatives.

The Senate provides a less auspicious picture, a fact partially owed to the simple underrepresentation of the South in the chamber (just 22 percent of all senators are from the region after all, compared to 31.7 percent of all House representatives after the reapportionment based on the 2010 census). This makes it far more difficult for the Republican Party to cushion and compensate for losses sustained in the non-South with strong showings in the former Confederacy. While the party appears to have created a relatively solid base in the South, holding at least 15 of the region’s 22 seats over the past six election cycles, the simultaneous weak showings in the rest of the country have left it short of the necessary 51 seats during four of those six congresses. With a Democratic structural advantage present in presidential elections,<sup>653</sup> it may very well be that the current set-up of America’s political system is here to stay for the foreseeable future. In this environment Republicans are able to primarily exert influence through their control of the House (in large part in place due to their strong Southern base) while encountering severe problems in their attempts to regain the White House – also in part due to the party’s Southernization – with the Senate being up for grabs but trending Democratic due to losses incurred by the GOP outside the South.

### The strong conservatism of Southern Republicans and its negative impact

The South has always been and continues to be one of the if not *the* most conservative region in the country.<sup>654</sup> Unsurprisingly, its representatives are some of the most conservative as well which has had the effect of pulling the Republican House Conference to the right as its ranks have swelled with Southerners.<sup>655</sup> Even in the immediate aftermath of the 1994 Republican land-

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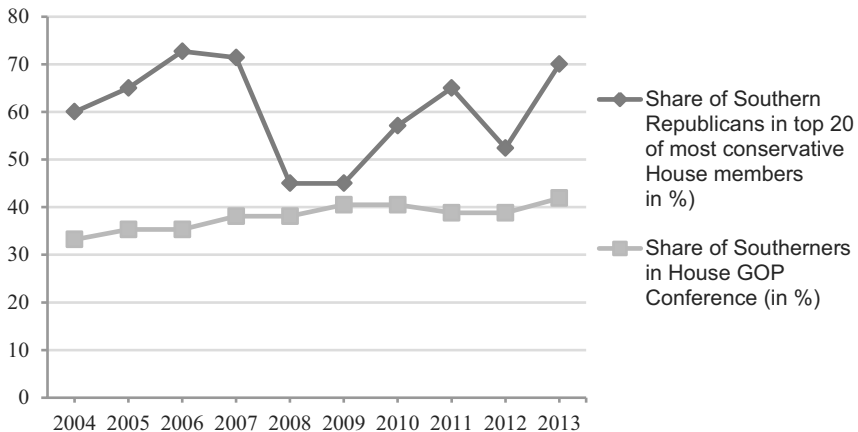
653 See chapter II.1.4 Southernization of the GOP – Polarization of the nation (The future quest for presidential majorities).

654 See also chapter II.1.5 for more on the continued conservative exceptionalism of the region.

655 For more on this trend consult chapter II.1.4. For actual data on the rightward shift of the House GOP cf. Poole 2015b: “The Polarization of the Congressional Parties.” *Voteview*, March 21 and T. Hall 2013: “Is Boehner’s GOP more Conservative than Gingrich’s?” *The Mischiefs of Faction*, October 14.



slide with its conquest of the South, Nicol C. Rae had already arrived the conclusion that “southern members of the Republican class of 1994 [...] acted as the ‘conscience’ or ‘keepers of the flame’ of this Republican revolution”<sup>656</sup> with many of the GOP’s “loudest and most conservative voices”<sup>657</sup> of that class of 1994 coming from the South. Data from the National Journal’s congressional vote ratings that rank members of Congress according to their conservative or liberal voting records (based on both economic and social issue areas) lends credence to the assertion that Southern Republicans continue to play the role of the party’s conservative conscience, with Dixie’s Republicans making up a disproportionate share of the most conservative members of the House. As figure II.1.1.d shows, Southern Republicans have in recent years often comprised more than 60 percent of the top 20 (or 21/22 if representatives had tied scores) conservative House Representatives, with 14 of the 20 most conservative members of the House coming from the South in the 2013 ranking for example.<sup>658</sup>



**Figure II.1.1.d:** Share of Southern Republicans in the top 20 (or 21/22 in case of tied scores) of the most conservative House Representatives according to the National Journal’s congressional vote ratings and the share of Southern Republicans in the GOP House Conference, 2004–2013.<sup>659</sup>

At the very top those shares tend to often be even higher. In 2012 for example, seven of the nine most conservative members of the House were from the South while the South overall made up just 52 percent of the top 20 House conservatives in this instance. A year earlier, the top ten conservative members of the House included seven Southerners. Over the past decade, the shares of Southern Re-

656 Rae 2001, p. 135.

657 Ibid., p. 139.

658 Cf. National Journal 2014: *National Journal Vote Ratings: 2013 House Ratings*.

659 Own work based on the National Journal’s House ratings for the period. For archive of vote rating cf. National Journal 2013c: *Past Years’ National Journal Vote Ratings*.

publicans at the top of the National Journal's conservative ranking have been substantially higher (bar 2008 and 2009) than the share of Southerners found within the House GOP caucus during the same period which rose from 33 percent in 2004 to 42 percent in 2013.

A different manner of gauging the ideological lean of members of Congress is to calculate their "ideal point," a means of measuring the liberal/conservative position of Representatives based on the voting history of each member of the House.<sup>660</sup> Members of Congress each possess "a most preferred policy or ideal point [...] and his or her utility for a policy declines with the distance of the policy from his or her ideal point."<sup>661</sup> Simon Jackman's ideal point estimates of all members of the U.S. House based on roll call votes of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress through mid-February of 2014 showed that out of the 20 Republicans with the most conservative ideal points, 15 hailed from Southern districts,<sup>662</sup> a result relatively similar to the National Journal's. This strong conservatism is also reflected by the membership – or lack thereof – of Southern Republicans in moderate Republican organizations such as the "Main Street Partnership" (RMSP) which considers itself to be "part of the governing wing of the Republican Party"<sup>663</sup> with its membership comprised of "main stream fiscally conservative elected officials."<sup>664</sup> 52 House Republicans were part of this centrist GOP club in 2013; enrollment in the South was rather limited though as just one of the RMSP's members hailed from the region – Mario Diaz-Balart from Florida's 25<sup>th</sup> congressional district,<sup>665</sup> a district where President Obama actually defied the national trend and increased his share of the popular vote from 45.6 % in 2008 to 48.7 % in 2012.<sup>666</sup> In other words one would be hard-pressed to find a Southern Republican from a more moderate district. Of course membership in an organization such as the RMSP is a somewhat arbitrary criterion of measuring conservatism but it does nonetheless show – in conjunction with vote ratings and ideal points – that few if any Southern Republicans can be found in the Republican Party's surviving moderate camp.

Along with their innate conservative inclinations, Southern Republicans may also to a certain extent be a product of the electoral environment they find

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660 For a more extensive description of the ideal point cf. Jackman 2013: *Fiscal Cliff House Vote splits Republicans*, January 2.

661 Clinton, Jackman, Rivers 2004: "The Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data." *American Political Science Review* 98(2), pp. 355–370, here p. 355.

662 Cf. Jackman 2014: *113<sup>th</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, estimates of member's preferences (95 % credible intervals)*, 637 *non-unanimous rollcalls*, February 12.

663 Republican Main Street Partnership 2013a: *RMSP History*.

664 *Ibid.*

665 Cf. Republican Main Street Partnership 2013b: *RMSP Members*.

666 For data on President Obama's vote cf. Nir 2012: "Daily Kos Elections' presidential results by congressional district for the 2012 and 2008 elections." *Daily Kos*, November 19.

themselves in which has the added effect of intensifying the conservative tendencies they display in Washington, D.C. It is an environment that provides them with few incentives to reach out to their partisan counterparts from across the political aisle with challenges to their incumbency often emanating from the right instead. The districts Southern Republicans hail from are some of the most Republican in the nation. According to the 2013 Cook Partisan Vote Index – a measure that gauges how much more Republican or Democratic any given congressional district is compared to the nation at large – 20 of the 30 congressional districts with the highest Republican lean in the land were located in the South (as were 32 of the most Republican 50 and 38 of the most Republican 60 districts).<sup>667</sup> This provides Southern Republicans with a particularly high degree of safety from their Democratic opponents. According to the University of Virginia’s Center for Politics’ forecast for the 2014 congressional election, 90 of the 98 Southern Republican seats were in the “safe Republican” category (91.8 percent) while another seven were considered to be “likely” and one to be “leaning” Republican. Outside of the South their ratings considered 133 seats to be safe, likely, or leaning Republican out of which “only” 104 were regarded as “safe” (78.2 percent).<sup>668</sup> The 2012 congressional contest illustrates this discrepancy in safety between Southern and non-Southern Republicans quite well. Overall, 129 Republicans managed to achieve so called “safe-seat” victories meaning that they won 60 percent of the vote or more. In the South, over two thirds of all Republican wins were of the safe-seat variety with 66 of the 98 (67.3 percent) Southern Republicans cruising to a comfortable victory. Outside of the South though fewer than half of all Republicans had the luxury of such a safe electoral environment as 63 of the 136 (46.3 percent) wins were achieved with 60 percent of the vote or more.<sup>669</sup> This means that there is a remarkable 21-point gap in Republican safe-seat victories between the two regions. Having an even more detailed look at the 2012 results reveals the high degree of security Southern Republicans enjoy as well. The average margin of victory in the 2012 U.S. House elections stood at 31.85 percentage points.<sup>670</sup> 73 Republicans managed to amass a larger margin of victory, out of which 41 (56.2 percent) came from the South, quite a disproportionate share considering that Southerners only made up 41.9 percent of the GOP House Conference after the election. Looking at victories achieved with a gap of 50 or more percentage points reveals an even more

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667 Cf. The Cook Political Report 2013: *Partisan Voting Index. Districts of the 113th Congress. Arranged by PVI rank, most Republican to most Democratic*, p. 2.

668 Cf. Sabato’s Crystal Ball 2013: “2014 House Ratings.” *University of Virginia Center for Politics*. Data as of July 1, 2013.

669 Own calculations based on Wasserman 2012.

670 Cf. Ballotpedia 2012b: *United States Congressional election results, 2012. US House Margin of Victory*.

distinctive Southern overrepresentation: 23 (almost a quarter of the entire Southern Republican group in the House) of the 29 Republicans with those winning margins hailed from the South (a share of 79.3 percent).<sup>671</sup>

The safety is to some extent also rooted in the fact that hardly any swing voters are to be found south of the Mason-Dixon Line. According to statistician Nate Silver, the South is home to some of the most “inelastic” states in presidential elections meaning that few if any non-partisan independent voters are to be found in the region. These are the kinds of voters who are swayed by short term political developments and lack the strong ties to one of the two parties that have become so commonplace in contemporary American politics. A larger share of these voters makes a state more elastic, making it more difficult for candidates to win elections by solely relying on their base to turn out and thereby creating an environment in which politicians are well-advised to run on a more centrist platform. Instead, the eleven states of the South are home to overwhelming shares of Republican and Democratic “base voters” (in this case white Southern evangelicals and African Americans) who will hardly ever cross party lines, a feature of the region which serves to insulate the states from national factors – such as the state of the economy or other current events of the day – during an election season.<sup>672</sup> The five states (excluding Washington, D.C.) with the lowest elasticity ratings are all located in the South, while nine Southern states can be found among the 17 most inelastic states meaning that the balance of power in those states appears to be set in stone for the time being.<sup>673</sup> Of course such findings, after all referring to presidential elections, cannot just be transferred to the congressional realm but as the data from U.S. House elections in this chapter has shown, Southern Republicans appear relatively insulated from some of the bigger swings transpiring at the national level as well. As mentioned earlier, while the Republican share of all U.S. House seats won outside the South dropped by over 29 percent between the 109<sup>th</sup> and 111<sup>th</sup> Congresses, it decreased by just 12 percent in the South during the same period (see figure II.1.1.b). Other factors undoubtedly feed into these diverging trends – after all uniform swings to the left will always have fewer repercussions for Republicans in heavily con-

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671 Own calculations based on *ibid.*

672 Cf. Silver 2012: “Swing Voters and Elastic States.” *FiveThirtyEight / New York Times*, May 21.

673 Those five states are (note: the lower the score, the more inelastic the state): Mississippi (0.63), Alabama (0.67), South Carolina (0.72), Louisiana (0.79), and Georgia (0.85). This means that a one percentage point shift in the national numbers would lead to just a 0.63 percentage point shift in Mississippi. Cf. Silver 2012. Once again it warrants pointing out that this data specifically refers to presidential elections. In a Congressional environment that is increasingly nationalized though, these traits have also become an ever more prominent feature in elections below the presidential level.

servative areas in terms of seat losses – but data like this nonetheless serves to illustrate the job security many Southern Republicans enjoy.

Having arguably become the most powerful faction within the Republican Party over the last two decades, the safety of Southern Republicans presents the party with a problem in its efforts to appeal to a broader segment of the electorate. When all many Southern Republicans have to fear is a possible intra-party challenger from the right, what is good for a member of congress from Dixie (an uncompromising anti-government stance to please the activist base at home in an attempt to fend off those challengers) and what is good for the wider party appear to be at increasing odds today, a discrepancy which indicates that while the South may provide the GOP with majorities at the congressional level it also presents a formidable roadblock to any attempts by Republican leaders to move the party in a more moderate direction; a finding buttressed by the data on the voting behavior of Republican members of the House of Representatives in the following chapter.

### II.1.2 The rift between Southern and non-Southern Republicans in the U.S. House

2013 was the year the Hastert Rule – which calls on the House speaker to not pass legislation against the wishes of the majority caucus<sup>674</sup> – appeared to have been relegated to the scrap heap of history. Over the course of around 13 months between January of 2013 and February of 2014, Speaker John Boehner flaunted the rule on five major occasions (six in total), incensing the Tea Party and conservative members of Congress in the process.<sup>675</sup> While the total of six votes may not seem like much, it represented a steep rise compared to the speaker's almost religious adherence to the rule throughout the first two years (bar a few days) of his speakership during which a rather uncontroversial veterinary act proved to be the sole exception until the fateful fiscal cliff vote in January of 2013.<sup>676</sup> Keeping in mind the facts presented in the previous chapter, it should not come as much of a surprise that these votes reveal a stark cleavage between Southern Republicans and their fellow GOP House members from the rest of the nation with Southerners voting in a far more conservative manner than their

674 According to former Republican House Speaker Dennis Hastert, the eponymous rule's basic instruction for a speaker "is not to expedite legislation that runs counter to the wishes of a majority of the majority." Quoted in: Feehery 2011: "Majority of the majority." *The Hill*, August 1.

675 For a complete list cf. New York Times 2014b: *House Votes Violating the "Hastert Rule."*

676 For the single Hastert Rule violation during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress cf. Govtrack 2014: *H.R. 525 (112th): Veterinary Public Health Amendments Act of 2011.*

compatriots from outside the region. Regardless of whether bills pertain to economic or social issues, voting habits within the GOP House caucus diverge in a frequently quite significant manner. This rift is nothing new. Even as early as the mid-1990s, after the GOP had finally won its first Southern congressional majority, Republicans from outside the South were already tacitly complaining that the party was beginning to be dominated by a group of staunchly conservative Southern Republicans – such as House Speaker Newt Gingrich, House Majority Leader Dick Armey, and Tom DeLay as the House Majority Whip – whose policy preferences and ideological focus showed their inability to understand the electoral and often less conservative environments that non-Southern Republicans found themselves in.<sup>677</sup>

The focus in this chapter will be on the House for a couple of reasons. First of all, it simply provides us with a larger sample size, especially when the focus is placed on the South. After the 2014 congressional elections, 19 Southern Republicans served in the Senate compared to the 101 fellow Southerners who were part of the GOP House Conference. And secondly, it also provides a faster gauge for popular sentiment tides both at the base and within the halls of Congress than the Senate does. Two year terms and a more partisan electorate at home mean that representatives have to invariably be more attuned to shifts and changing opinions at the base than their counterparts in the Senate, providing us with a more precise depiction of the majorities, positions, and partisan trends at the state level. DW-Nominate scores that portray the partisan lean of members of Congress<sup>678</sup> of both Republican congressional factions are also a testament to these facts as they indicate that the GOP House Conference has moved far more strongly and rapidly to the right in recent years than Senate Republicans have done during the same period, with the House therefore more accurately reflecting both the broader trends of polarization and partisan sorting occurring among the American electorate in general and the increasingly accelerated Republican shift to the right in recent years in particular.<sup>679</sup>

Figure II.1.2 illustrates the diverging issue positions of Southern and non-Southern House Republicans that will be explained in more detail over the

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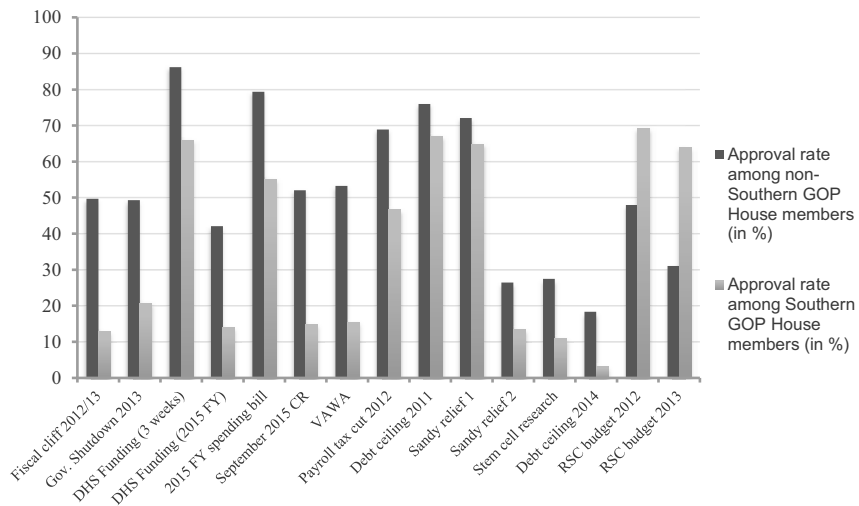
677 Cf. Rae 2001, p. 149.

678 DW-Nominate (dynamic and weighted) scores are based on congressional roll call votes that are analyzed on two dimensions. The first dimension assesses the “basic issue of the role of the government in the economy, in modern terms liberal-moderate-conservative.” The second dimension differentiates between the members of different regions primarily on race related issues. Since the passage of the civil and voting rights acts in the mid-1960s this dimension has been “almost totally absent” and will therefore not be considered in this book. A more detailed look at these developments will be made in the chapter on polarization (II.1.4). For quotes and further insights into DW-Nominate scores cf. Poole 2015b.

679 For data on the move to the right by the GOP House Conference cf. *ibid.* See also chapter II.1.4.

following pages. Regardless of the policy area, Southern Republicans stand out for their notably more conservative positions, shown by their disapproval towards bipartisan budgetary compromises as well as objections to pieces of social legislation such as the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) or the allocation of federal funding for stem cell research.

The legislative results assessed in this chapter are divisive votes that primarily took place during the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses, with Speaker Boehner relying on Democratic support for bills to pass the House, in the process therefore frequently breaking the aforementioned “Hastert Rule.” The reason for choosing votes that have split the GOP House Conference is made abundantly clear by figure II.1.2: it allows us to recognize the rift that has emerged between the regional factions in the Republican Party. At the same time, these bills provide us with the most recent data on this intra-Republican fissure.



**Figure II.1.2:** Regional variations in support for legislative bills, non-Southern and Southern Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives. Percentage of Republican House members voting “yes.”<sup>680</sup>

680 Own work based on votes in the House of Representatives. Percentages based on number of Representatives from both regions serving in the House at the time (total tally therefore includes members who did not vote on the bills in question). Shown in the graph are votes to avert the fiscal cliff in January of 2013, end the 2013 government shutdown, fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for three weeks in February/March of 2015, pass a “clean bill” to fund the DHS until the end of the 2015 fiscal year, pass a spending package for the 2015 fiscal year in December of 2014, fund the government with a Continuing Resolution (CR) through December 11, 2015 to avert a shutdown in late September of 2015, extend the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) in February of 2013, pass a payroll tax cut extension in February of 2012, raise the debt ceiling in the summer of 2011, provide areas

Vote on the fiscal cliff (“American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012”)<sup>681</sup>

The debate surrounding the so called “fiscal cliff” provided many Republicans with an immense ideological conundrum. Had the act not been passed by Congress, massive automatic tax hikes would have gone into effect. At the same time, the Democratic side offered little signs of wanting to keep the Bush-era tax cuts in place for the richest Americans. Ultimately, 85 Republicans decided to give their backing to the deal, the first time any Republican lawmakers had voted in favor of tax increases since 1990.<sup>682</sup> In return, taxes were increased only for individuals with a household income above \$400,000, up from the initial threshold of \$250,000 that President Obama had intended to introduce.<sup>683</sup>

The vote taken on the first day of 2013 marked the first notable violation of the Hastert Rule in a Republican controlled House since March of 2006,<sup>684</sup> as a majority of 151 of the 241 House Republicans opposed their own speaker and voted against the bipartisan agreement. This opposition was primarily based on the stance of Southern Republicans though. While roughly 49.7 percent of all non-Southern Republicans approved of the deal (73 out of 147), support in the South stood at a measly 12.8 percent as only twelve of the region’s 94 House Republicans voted “yes.” Not a single Republican member of Congress from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, or Virginia supported the act with the lion’s share of Southern Republican approval coming from Florida (five yes votes) and Texas (four yes votes). The strong opposition emanating from the South is also discernible when we turn our attention to the general “no camp” in the House. Even though Southern Republicans made up only 21.8 percent of the entire House membership at the time of the vote (94 out of 432; three seats were vacant) their 81 no votes constituted almost half (48.5 percent; 81 of 167) of the House camp that objected to the Taxpayer Relief Act.

The obstinate position adopted by Republicans during the negotiations – which the data would seem to suggest was primarily driven by Southerners – did not exactly endear the party to the general public. Heading into the fiscal cliff negotiations in early December of 2012, a Pew survey revealed that 55 percent of the American public felt President Obama was “making a serious effort to reach

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affected by Hurricane Sandy with relief on two separate occasions, the 2005 vote to pass a stem cell research act that was ultimately vetoed by President Bush, the 2014 vote on raising the debt ceiling without any conditions until March of 2015 and votes on the deeply conservative Republican Study Committee (RSC) budgets in both 2012 and 2013 where we see a reversal in approval rates between both regions.

681 For data cf. New York Times 2013a: *House Vote 659 – Passes Fiscal Cliff Deal*. January 1.

682 Cf. Nivola 2013, p. 28.

683 For more on the contents of the agreement cf. Hollander 2013: “Here’s What’s in the Fiscal-Cliff Deal.” *National Journal*, January 1.

684 Cf. New York Times 2014b.



[an] agreement on [the] budget deficit” while only 32 percent said the same thing about Republican leaders with 57 percent instead arguing that the GOP was guilty of not making enough of an effort.<sup>685</sup> This result was not a mere side-effect of the President taking advantage of standing above the (unpopular) congressional fray as the survey showed Democratic leaders in Congress also receiving a higher approval rating (40 percent) than their Republican counterparts (25 percent).<sup>686</sup> A survey conducted in the wake of the showdown moreover also revealed that Americans approved of President Obama’s handling of the negotiations by a margin of 48 to 40 percent. 66 percent on the other hand *disapproved* of the way Republican leaders had conducted themselves during the negotiations while just 19 voiced approval.<sup>687</sup> Data like this serves to illustrate the harmful impact Southern Republican policy positions have on the popularity of the party among the wider public.

Ending the 2013 government shutdown (“Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014”)<sup>688</sup> / Funding the Department of Homeland Security through the 2015 fiscal year / Funding the government through December 11, 2015 to avert shutdown in September of 2015<sup>689</sup>

The government shutdown of 2013 caused a major internal dispute within the Republican House Conference. For many political commentators and analysts, the battle was being waged between the Tea Party on one side – led by Senator Ted Cruz – and moderate Republicans in the opposing camp with the former increasingly drawing up the GOP’s political strategy at the expense of compromise and moderation. As we will see later on, this strict division into two camps fails to accurately depict the state of today’s Republican Party. Nonetheless an intra-party divide did exist – between the South and non-South. As the data of the vote shows, the South once again found itself in the less conciliatory camp, not much of a surprise considering that around half of the 80 House Republicans – dubbed the GOP’s “suicide caucus”<sup>690</sup> by journalist Ryan Lizza – who sent a letter to Speaker Boehner in August of 2013 urging him to use the upcoming budgetary

685 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012k: *As Fiscal Cliff Nears, Democrats Have Public Opinion on Their Side*, December 13, p. 1.

686 Cf. *ibid.*

687 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013a: *Obama Viewed as Fiscal Cliff Victor; Legislation Gets Lukewarm Reception*, January 7, p. 2.

688 For data cf. New York Times 2013f: *House Vote 550 – Passes Senate Budget Compromise*. October 16.

689 New York Times 2015c: *House Vote 528 – H.R.719: On Concurring in the Senate Adt to the House Adt to the Senate Adt*. September 30.

690 Lizza 2013: “Where the G.O.P.’s Suicide Caucus Lives.” *The New Yorker*, September 26.

battle to defund Obamacare hailed from the South.<sup>691</sup> Overall, 37.5 percent (87 out of 232) of House Republicans voted to reopen the government. Outside of the South though, Republicans were virtually split down the middle with 67 of them voting in favor and 69 voting against the bipartisan Senate agreement (i. e. an approval rate of 49.3 percent). Among Southern Republicans the level of approval was substantially (almost 30 percentage points) lower as only 20 of the region's 96 House Republicans gave their approval (an approval rate of 20.8 percent). The regional breakdown of the vote reveals some interesting trends as a number of delegations (Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas) unanimously voted against the agreement while support for the act was relatively strong in the two peripheral Southern states that Barack Obama carried twice (Florida and Virginia; a combined 40 percent of all Republicans from the two states voted in favor of the deal).

	AL	AR	FL	GA	LA	MS	NC	SC	TN	TX	VA	Total:
YES	1	4	6	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	4	20
NO	4	0	10	9	3	2	6	6	7	24	4	75
DNV	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Even if the staunchly conservative Texan bloc is removed from the tally, fewer than 30 percent of the remaining Southern Republicans (27.8 percent to be precise; 20 out of 72) approved the raising of the debt ceiling and reopening of the government. The passage also marked the fifth time (and fourth major vote) John Boehner broke the “Hastert Rule” in 2013, highlighting the remarkable internal divisions that came to the fore within the Republican camp that year which – as we can already deduce by looking at the two major votes above – appear to not have been driven by a Tea Party versus non-Tea Party divide but rather by a Southern versus non-Southern difference in ideology and opinion.

As was the case on the aforementioned fiscal cliff vote and the negotiations that preceded it, the American public by and large laid the blame at the feet of the GOP for the failure to come to an agreement to avert the shutdown. An NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll conducted one week into the shutdown showed that respondents felt congressional Republicans were to blame for the government shutdown by a margin of 53 percent to 31 percent (the latter percentage indicating the share of respondents who blamed the President) while 70 percent of respondents also answered that congressional Republicans were putting their own political agenda ahead of the welfare of the nation with only 51 percent

691 For a list of the Republican House members who signed a letter penned by Rep. Mark Meadows of North Carolina cf. Withrow 2013: “Have Your Members of Congress Signed the ‘Defund ObamaCare’ Letter? Find Out Here!” *FreedomWorks*, August 22. According to this tally, 39 of the 80 Republican representatives who signed the letter were from the South.

claiming President Obama was guilty of doing the same thing.<sup>692</sup> Another poll conducted at around the same time also revealed that just 24 percent of the public approved of the way congressional Republicans were handling budget negotiations, compared to an approval rate of 45 percent for President Obama and 35 percent for congressional Democrats.<sup>693</sup> Changes detected in the approval and disapproval rates of the parties' positions during the negotiations also serve to buttress the assertion that the hardline stance emanating from the South once again did little to endear the GOP to the wider public. While the share of the general public disapproving of President Obama's handling of the crisis rose by just three points over the course of the first two weeks of the shutdown – increasing from 50 to 53 percent – disapproval of the congressional GOP's actions expanded by eleven points, rising from 63 to 74 percent (disapproval of congressional Democrats also increased, but only did so by five points [from 56 to 61 percent]).<sup>694</sup>

Did Republicans learn a lesson from this protracted and ultimately futile Southern-led battle? After substantial Republican gains in the 2014 midterms, Mitch McConnell used his role as designated Senate Majority Leader to indeed promise there would “be no government shutdowns”<sup>695</sup> under his leadership, a vow put to the test a mere eight weeks into the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress as the Department of Homeland Security was set to run out of funding. As had been the case during the 2013 shutdown, this renewed battle between both parties and *within* the GOP revolved around an issue that caused a furor among Republican ranks as few other contentious topics could: President Obama's executive action on immigration in November of 2014 that bestowed legal status to undocumented parents of U.S. citizens while expanding the eligibility under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to anyone who had come illegally to the United States before the age of 16 and had lived in the U.S. for a continued period of time, thus removing the threat of deportation hanging over the heads of millions of potential deportees.<sup>696</sup> The Republican reaction to this – agreeing in December of 2014 to a bipartisan deal that funded the entirety of the government (bar the Department of Homeland Security [DHS]) through the 2015 fiscal year while allowing the DHS to run out of money by the end of February of 2015 –

692 Cf. NBC News, and Wall Street Journal 2013b: *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey: Study #13413*, October 7–9, pp. 12–13.

693 Cf. Washington Post, and ABC News 2013: *Post-ABC poll: Approval for handling of federal budget negotiations (week 2)*, October 7.

694 Cf. ABC News, and Washington Post 2013: *Disapproval of GOP Peaks In Blame for the Budget Crisis*, October 14, p. 1.

695 Quoted in: Kane 2014a: “McConnell's promise of no shutdowns will be tested by Senate's staunch conservatives.” *Washington Post*, November 15.

696 Cf. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services 2015: *Executive Actions on Immigration*. February 17.

ensured another one of the by now infamous partisan showdowns in the halls of Congress in early 2015. Heading into the negotiations, an emboldened and larger Republican House Conference fell back on its old ways of threatening a partial shutdown unless its demands – a complete revocation of the President’s executive actions on immigration – were met. Discussions between both chambers unsurprisingly did not yield sufficient majorities for a single consolidated bill in both houses of Congress, as the GOP lacked a filibuster proof majority in the Senate. Attempting to avert a shutdown at the very last minute, 45 Senate Democrats<sup>697</sup> and 23 Senate Republicans ultimately went ahead and passed a “clean bill” to fund the Department until the end of September without any wording on the President’s actions attached to the piece of legislation, a course of action that now turned the focus on the irascible GOP House Conference once again. Seeing that House Republican plans of using the DHS funding battle to fight off supposed presidential overreach had by and large failed, Speaker Boehner offered a “clean bill” of his own that intended to fund the DHS for merely three weeks though with the hope of receiving concessions through further negotiations conducted in a bipartisan conference committee. What was to follow would surprise political veterans and analysts across the land alike as 52 House Republicans refused to lend their approval to this compromise, causing the legislation to fail by a margin of 224 to 203 votes. 34 of the 52 Republican House opponents came from the South (amounting to a share of 65.4 percent, despite the region only representing 40.8 percent of all House Republicans at the time of the vote). Overall, 66 percent of Southern House Republicans backed the bill – a share which stood at 86.2 percent among non-Southern GOP representatives.<sup>698</sup> A mere four days after his conference’s failure to pass a bill backed by a sufficient number of House Republicans, John Boehner finally conceded defeat in the funding clash by putting the clean Senate bill without any additional changes up for a vote. Once again requiring Democratic votes to obtain a majority, just 14 percent of Southern Republicans voted in favor of funding the DHS through the 2015 fiscal year while 42.1 percent of non-Southern Republicans on the other hand recognized the apparent necessity for a bicameral and bipartisan compromise.<sup>699</sup>

Having entered the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress with a renewed hope of proving to the American people that the Republican Party represented a viable alternative across all levels of government, the House revolt primarily driven by the South

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697 To be more precise: 43 Democrats and the two independent Senators that caucus with the party.

698 For data on vote cf. New York Times 2015a: *House Vote 104 – Fails to Approve Homeland Security Funding*. February 27.

699 For data on vote cf. New York Times 2015b: *House Vote 109 – Passes Homeland Security Funding*. March 3.

cast doubt on the GOP's capability to act as a governing party while simultaneously causing a fair amount of embarrassment for leading Republicans, perhaps for none more so than John Boehner. Not exactly a popular figure among some of the more conservative members of his conference to begin with,<sup>700</sup> the DHS showdown and Boehner's failure to rein in fellow Republicans reignited questions about the Ohio congressman's ability to lead an ever more rightward leaning caucus, culminating in rumors about a possible coup attempt by staunch conservatives.<sup>701</sup> The hardline stance ultimately adopted by the GOP – evidently particularly prominent in the South – also once again went against the grain of national popular opinion. A CNN/ORC survey from mid-February of 2015 revealed that 53 percent of respondents blamed congressional Republicans for a possible DHS shutdown as just 30 percent instead saw President Obama as the primary culprit.<sup>702</sup>

While the February coup failed to succeed, it once again illustrated the rift between the Speaker and his flock and his continued inability to rein them in. By the fall of 2015, House Republicans were itching for another shutdown showdown, this time revolving around the funding of Planned Parenthood, whose provision of abortions has long made the organization a favorite target of conservative Republicans. As the September 30<sup>th</sup> deadline loomed ever closer, John Boehner realized that the days of his Speakership were essentially numbered with the Ohio congressman announcing his retirement in the midst of budgetary negotiations – a decision that in the words of veteran New York Republican Peter King “signal[ed] that the crazies have taken over the party.”<sup>703</sup> The eventual vote that kept the funding in place for Planned Parenthood revealed the extent to which Boehner was indeed at odds with his own caucus, albeit primarily with its Southern delegation. Only 91 Republicans (76 from its non-Southern wing) eventually voted to keep the government funded through mid-December of 2015 as 83 Southern Republicans led the charge against both Planned Parenthood and John Boehner. This meant that while a majority of 52.1 percent of non-Southern House Republicans backed the continuing resolution, a mere 14.9 percent of their Southern counterparts joined them on the “yea” side.

700 Boehner's precarious standing within his own conference was illustrated quite vividly by the 25 House Republicans who failed to back Boehner in his re-election to the post of Speaker in January of 2015. This number represented the largest defection by a majority party in one and a half centuries. Cf. Blake 2015: “John Boehner just endured the biggest revolt against a House speaker in more than 150 years.” *Washington Post*, January 6.

701 Cf. Bresnahan, Palmer, French 2015. “John Boehner allies fret coup attempt.” *Politico*, February 28; cf. also Wong 2015: “Disgruntled right wing keeps Boehner coup talk alive.” *The Hill*, February 26.

702 Cf. CNN, ORC International 2015: *February 12–15 2015 poll*, p. 5.

703 Quoted in: Sherfinski 2015: “Rep. Peter King on Boehner resignation: ‘Crazies’ have taken over GOP.” *Washington Times*, September 25.

Similar to previous occasions, the wider public disagreed with Southern conservatives as one poll showed two-thirds of the American electorate opposed defunding Planned Parenthood<sup>704</sup> while Republicans were also seen as the primary culprits behind a possible government shutdown.<sup>705</sup>

Omnibus spending bill to fund the government for the 2015 fiscal year<sup>706</sup>

While the internal battles in the GOP during the spring and fall of 2015 tore open old wounds, previous discussions concerning spending bills did appear to indicate that Republicans had indeed taken some of the lessons of the 2013 government shutdown to heart. Internal Republican debates surrounding a spending package for the 2015 fiscal year in December of 2014 were considerably less acrimonious than they had been a year earlier. This time around, the primary opposition emanated from the Democratic side of the House, revealing a split within the party that may very well become a more common sight in future years as its more liberal wing takes on centrists (in this case President Obama) within the party that are deemed to compromise too much<sup>707</sup> – a sight political observers have of course become accustomed to when it comes to the other side of the political spectrum. Ultimately, the funding bill passed by a narrow margin as 219 House representatives gave their approval, 162 of which were Republicans. A majority of the GOP's Southern caucus did approve of the legislation as well, as 55.1 percent voted yes. Nonetheless, this represented a far smaller level of support than could be found among Republicans from the rest of the country where the share of yes-votes came in at 79.4 percent. More than 60 percent of the Republican House Conference's no-votes therefore came from the South alone (41 of 67). Once again, Southern opposition was particularly strong in the region's sizable Texan faction where 58 percent voted *against* the funding package. Even with the 24 Texans removed from the Southern GOP caucus though, the share of yes-votes in the remaining states of the South (63.5 percent) was still substantially below that seen in the non-South.

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704 Cf. Page, Firozi 2015: "Poll: By 2–1, funding for Planned Parenthood supported." *USA Today*, September 29.

705 Cf. Pew Research Center 2015c: *Majority Says Any Budget Deal Must Include Planned Parenthood Funding*, September 28, p. 1. 40 percent of the public blamed the GOP as 26 percent saw the Democrats as the party responsible for a possible shutdown.

706 Cf. New York Times 2014d: *House Vote 563 – Passes \$1.1 Trillion Spending Bill*. December 11.

707 Cf. Dove, Everett 2014: "Liberals: Obama abandoned us." *Politico*, December 11 and Kane 2014b: "Congressional Democrats take a stand with spending bill." *Washington Post*, December 11.

Extension of the Violence against Women Act<sup>708</sup>

One of the key demographics to have rejected the GOP in recent years is women. In 2012, Barack Obama won female voters by eleven percentage points with his lead among unmarried women particularly pronounced, coming in at 36 points.<sup>709</sup> None of this should come as much of a surprise considering the Republican Party's stance on a variety of female rights issues in recent years particularly as the Christian Right has expanded its weight within the party. As we already saw earlier on, the religiously conservative movement was one of the key driving forces behind the Republican about-face on the Equal Rights Amendment while the religious right and its adherents are most certainly not known for their progressive stance on the role of women in society either. The party's stance on the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) most certainly did little to help it in its quest of winning back women voters. The act itself assists women who have been victims of domestic abuse. After months of Republican stalling on the issue – primarily because many House Republicans objected to extending protection to gay, bisexual, or transgender victims of domestic abuse<sup>710</sup> – the act finally made it through the House in late February of 2013 thanks to the support it received from the Democratic House caucus. Overall, only 87 Republicans backed to extension of the VAWA while 138 voted no (with seven not voting).

Once again though, much of the opposition came from the socially conservative Southern Republican caucus with the vote proving to be one of the most regionally divisive ones in recent years. 79 of the Old Confederacy's 97 Republicans rejected the bill, in other words 81.4 percent, with support coming in at a mere 15.5 percent. Outside of the South, 72 of the 135 non-Southern House Republicans voted in favor of the VAWA meaning that the approval rate stood at 53.3 percent. A number of Republican state delegations outside of the South had considerable majorities in favor of the bill even though some of these states are not exactly known for their rampant liberalism. Strong majorities of Republicans from Indiana (six out of seven), West Virginia (two out of two), New York (five out of six), Washington (three out of four), Colorado (three out of four), New Jersey (four out of six), California (ten out of fifteen), and Illinois (four out of six) approved the extension of the act. Slimmer majorities of Republicans in Pennsylvania (seven out of thirteen) and Michigan (five out of nine) also gave their backing. The breakdown of the vote in the South provides a stark contrast:

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708 For data cf. New York Times 2013d: *House Vote 55 – Passes Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act*. February 28.

709 Cf. CNN. 2012l. *President: Full Results, Exit Polls*, December 10.

710 Cf. A. Parker 2013: "House Renews Violence Against Women Measure." *New York Times*, February 28.

	AL	AR	FL	GA	LA	MS	NC	SC	TN	TX	VA	Total:
YES	1	0	7	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	1	15
NO	5	4	10	9	3	2	7	5	7	20	7	79
DNV	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3

As we can see, only Florida and Louisiana saw significant levels of support for extending the act while not a single Republican from Arkansas, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee could bear to vote yes. What the data therefore demonstrates quite vividly is that a fair degree of what some Democratic opponents call the *Republican war on women* is led by troops from the South whose social conservatism appears to be so strong that they simply cannot bring themselves to approve an act providing protection to women against domestic abuse if such a bill includes defending the rights of sexual minorities as well.

### Hurricane Sandy Relief

The storm that struck the northeastern United States on the eve of the 2012 presidential election would prove to have far reaching repercussions that extended well beyond the vote in early November. With House Republicans still debating more than two months after the storm had made its way through the North Atlantic on how to shoulder the funds that were to be allocated for disaster relief, many from the affected areas – even within the Republican camp – grew increasingly impatient and annoyed at the ideological squabbles that were conducted on the backs of people who were literally left sitting in the rain. These discussions in the run-up to two votes that sought to provide the bruised and battered regions with aid once again also demonstrated the internal Republican regional divisions in a pronounced manner. Republican House Representative Peter King from Long Island, New York appeared especially exasperated at the behavior of his colleagues, arguing that congressional Republicans had “put a knife in the back of New Yorkers and New Jerseyians”<sup>711</sup> when a vote to extend aid to the region had to be scrapped due to a lack of Republican support with King also calling on his fellow New Yorkers to cease all donations to the GOP.<sup>712</sup> For King the behavior of his Republican colleagues served to highlight a recent shift in Republican attitudes against the northeast of the nation which King perceived as a key reason for why his party had by 2012 become an almost extinct species in its former stronghold:

711 Quoted in: Robillard 2013: “Peter King: Halt donations to House GOP.” *Politico*, January 2.

712 Cf. *ibid.*



*“And why the Republican party has this bias against New York, bias against New Jersey, bias against the northeast? They wonder why they’re becoming a minority party? Why we’ll be the party of the permanent minority? What they did last night [note: refusing to vote on an aid package] was so immoral, so disgraceful, so irresponsible.”*<sup>713</sup>

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie was not be outdone by his colleague from the House, arguing that the placement of politics before the needs of citizens that he had detected within the Republican House Conference was “disappointing and disgusting to watch”<sup>714</sup> adding that there was “only one group to blame for the continued suffering of these innocent victims: the House majority and their speaker, John Boehner.”<sup>715</sup> When the House finally did vote to provide the region with \$9.7 billion to cover insurance claims, support turned out to be widespread among Republican ranks as well with some slight regional variations. Overall, 161 Republicans backed the bill while 67 opposed it and five did not vote.<sup>716</sup> In the Republican South the rate of approval stood at 64.9 percent (63 out of 97) while support among non-Southern Republicans was marginally higher at 72.1 percent (98 out of 136). Compared to the overall tally, support was particularly weak in the Deep South (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina) though where just 15 of the region’s 28 (53.6 percent) Republican House members supported the bill.

Two weeks later the House also approved a substantially larger financial aid package of \$50.7 billion, with John Boehner this time not able to persuade a majority of his own caucus to back the bill. Of the 233 Republicans in the House, a mere 49 voted in favor of additional aid while 179 opposed it and five did not vote.<sup>717</sup> Support among Southern Republicans was particularly lackluster: Only 13 of the region’s 97 House representatives voted yes (13.4 percent). While their non-Southern counterparts by no means glowingly endorsed the bill, the approval rate was nonetheless roughly twice as high as 36 of the 136 non-Southerners gave their backing (26.5 percent). One of the more notable and interesting details about this vote was the simple fact that a fair number of (Southern) Republicans hailing from regions commonly affected by hurricanes themselves were particularly vehemently opposed to additional aid. 13 of Florida’s 17 House Republicans voted no while not a single one of the 14 House Republicans from the Carolinas cast a yes vote.

713 Quoted in: Ibid.

714 Quoted in: Johnson, Siddiqui 2013: “Chris Christie On Sandy Aid: House Republicans Were ‘Disappointing And Disgusting To Watch’.” *Huffington Post*, January 2.

715 Quoted in: Ibid.

716 For data cf. New York Times 2013b: *House Vote 7 – Passes \$9.7 Billion in Hurricane Sandy Relief*. January 4.

717 For data cf. New York Times 2013c: *House Vote 23 – Approves \$50.7 Billion In Hurricane Sandy Aid*. January 15.

Payroll Tax Cut Extension 2012 (“Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act”)<sup>718</sup>

Officially called the *Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act*, this piece of legislation was another occasion on which Speaker Boehner had to rely on Democratic support for the bill’s passage although in this particular instance a majority of the GOP House majority did bestow their approval (i. e. the Hastert Rule was not broken), albeit it only thanks to the actions of non-Southern House Republicans. Republican objections to the tax cut extension were primarily based on the lack of accompanying spending cuts as well as the reluctance of their Democratic counterparts to embrace the severe cuts in unemployment benefits proposed by the GOP, issues on which Republicans eventually had to concede defeat.<sup>719</sup> 146 Republicans voted in favor of the bipartisan agreement while 91 disapproved and five did not vote, indicating an overall level of support of 60.3 percent. Among Southern Republicans though, merely 44 of the region’s then 94 members of the House voted yes, amounting to a rate of approval of 46.8 percent. Republican representatives outside the Old Confederacy strongly supported the deal, as close to 70 percent endorsed it (102 out of 148 which amounts to a percentage of 68.9 percent). Numerous non-Southern GOP state delegations overwhelmingly endorsed the bill’s passage: All of Pennsylvania’s twelve Republican House members voted yes, as did ten of eleven Republicans from Illinois, seven of eight from New York, five out of six from New Jersey, nine out of thirteen from Ohio, and six out of nine from Michigan. Six of the South’s eleven Republican state delegations on the other hand (as seen in the following table) had a majority disapproval rate, with four states – Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, and North Carolina – joining their non-Southern compatriots in backing the extension of the tax cut.

	AL	AR	FL	GA	LA	MS	NC	SC	TN	TX	VA	Total:
YES	0	3	12	2	2	3	5	1	2	10	4	44
NO	6	0	7	6	4	0	1	4	5	12	4	49
DNV	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

718 For data cf. New York Times 2012a: *House Vote 72 – Passes Payroll Tax Cut Extension*. February 17.

719 For an overview of the contents and discussions leading up to the vote cf. Pear, Steinhauer 2012: “Tax Cut Extension Passes; Everyone Claims a Win.” *New York Times*, February 17.

Raising of the Debt Ceiling 2011 (“Budget Control Act”)<sup>720</sup> and raising of the Debt Ceiling 2014<sup>721</sup>

The two votes to raise the debt ceiling – roughly two and a half years apart – revealed smaller yet still evident fissures in the Republican House Conference. The first time around, after months of exhausting negotiations, Republicans did overwhelmingly consent in the summer of 2011 to a deal that cut \$2.1 trillion in government spending over the course of a decade.<sup>722</sup> 174 House Republicans voted in favor while 66 instead opposed the agreement. In the South, 67 percent of Republican representatives voted yes (63 out of 94), in this instance just marginally below the 76 percent approval rate found outside the region among Republicans (111 out of 146). Two and a half years later, the environment John Boehner found himself in looked starkly different. Having been through a government shutdown that ultimately achieved little to nothing, the Ohio congressman – recognizing that a bill drawn up by his own conservative caucus would stand little chance of ever seeing the light of day due to the Democratic majority in the Senate – essentially relinquished control on this occasion to the Democratic caucus as the Speaker put a “clean bill” without any sort of Republican conditions attached to it up to a vote in early February of 2014. Democrats duly supported increasing the government’s borrowing limit until March of 2015 while only 27 other Republicans joined the speaker in voting yes, marking the fifth major Hastert Rule violation under John Boehner’s speakership, all transpiring over the course of a little over a year. 25 of those 28 Republicans came from outside the South (amounting to a non-Southern approval rate of 18.4 percent) with Republican support primarily emanating from the northeast and west coast. Four of New York’s six House Republicans voted yes, as did eight of California’s fifteen. The state delegations of New Jersey (three out of six) and Washington (two out of four) were split down the middle. The three Southern Republican yes votes (constituting the 3.1 percent of Southern Republicans who backed the bill) came from Virginia (two) and North Carolina. Of course this is a relatively small sample size of Republican supporters compared to some of the other more divisive votes we have already addressed but this roll call as well nonetheless showcases some of the regional differences between the South and the rest of the nation, in this case the northeast and west coast in

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720 For data cf. New York Times 2011: *House Vote 690 – Approves Compromise to Increase the Debt Ceiling*. August 1.

721 For data cf. New York Times 2014a: *House Vote 61 – Raises Debt Ceiling Without Conditions*. February 11.

722 For an overview of the contents of the agreement cf. Hulse 2011: “Long Battle on Debt Ending as Senate Set for Final Vote.” *New York Times*, August 1.

particular – diverging attitudes that prevail even within the Republican caucus to this day.

Reaction to the agreement and John Boehner's actions was unsurprisingly less than enthusiastic. Jenny Beth Martin, co-founder of the *Tea Party Patriots*, called the bill “a complete capitulation on the speaker's part” that “demonstrate[d] [...] he ha[d] lost the ability to lead the House of Representatives, let alone his own party.”<sup>723</sup> The Senate Conservatives Fund, a leading political action committee determined to rid the Republican ranks of conservative imposters, reacted to the Speaker's decision by calling on John Boehner to be replaced, arguing that he had “chosen to ignore [conservatives]” and instead “help[ed] President Obama enact his liberal agenda.”<sup>724</sup>

### Republican Study Committee Budgets, 2012 / 2013

Over the past few years the Republican Study Committee (RSC), a caucus for House Republicans “organized for the purpose of advancing a conservative social and economic agenda” and “dedicated to a limited and Constitutional role for the federal government [...] and the preservation of traditional family values,”<sup>725</sup> has usually released its own budgetary proposals that present a stark contrast even to the budgetary plans drawn up by Paul Ryan. Budgets by the RSC incorporate cuts that are deeper and faster implemented than virtually all other budgetary proposals,<sup>726</sup> or summed up in the words of one of its former chairmen, Representative Steve Scalise “[w]e do the same thing [as the Ryan budget]; we just do it a little quicker.”<sup>727</sup> Past votes on those budgets have traditionally nonetheless been symbolic for the most part since they have stood little chance of passing as even many of the more conservative members of the House saw no point in discarding the budgets drawn up by their fiscal superstar Paul Ryan in favor of a plan that was set to have an even smaller chance of ever being implemented. Nonetheless some on the right have in recent years decided to embrace the approach outlined by the RSC. Georgia Representative Paul Broun for example – who voted for the Ryan budget in 2011 – failed to bestow his approval

723 Quoted in: Weisman, A. Parker 2014: “House Approves Higher Debt Limit Without Condition.” *New York Times*, February 11.

724 Senate Conservatives Fund 2014.

725 The committees own description of themselves. Republican Study Committee 2013: *About RSC*.

726 In 2013 Senator Rand Paul released his own budget which sought to slash federal government spending at an even faster pace. Cf. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget 2013b: *Comparing the Budgets on Spending, Revenue, Deficits, and Debt*. March 26.

727 Quoted in: Alberta, Cook 2013: “House GOP Committee's New Budget Plan: Faster, Deeper Cuts.” *National Journal*, March 18.

on the vice presidential candidate's proposals in 2013 due to the congressman's complete opposition to any increases in future federal spending which he believed were insufficiently dealt with by Representative Ryan's proposals. According to Broun, "[i]t didn't cut spending. It just slowed the growth in spending."<sup>728</sup>

The RSC budget on the other hand – given the seal of approval by Representative Broun in both 2012 and 2013 – traditionally takes the knife to government spending with the 2013 proposals proving no exception. Contrary to Ryan's plans, it aimed to balance the budget in four instead of ten years. Tax increases agreed upon in the 2012/2013 fiscal cliff deal were to be repealed (establishing a full extension of the Bush tax cuts) as were spending increases brought in for the Affordable Care Act, otherwise also known as Obamacare. Sequester cuts were also shifted from the defense to the non-defense side.<sup>729</sup> The RSC's total cuts would have decreased government spending from 22.3 percent of GDP in 2013 to 17.8 percent a decade later. In comparison, the Ryan budget envisioned slashing federal government spending to 19.1 percent of GDP by 2023 while the proposals drawn up by the Democratic House and Senate caucuses sought to lower spending levels to 22.1 and 21.9 percent respectively over the course of a decade.<sup>730</sup> The 2013 RSC budget divided the GOP House Conference as 104 backed the proposal while 118 opposed it with ten Republicans not taking part in the vote.<sup>731</sup> This level of opposition was primarily due to the position adopted by non-Southern Republicans though where a mere 31.1 percent gave their backing to the budget (42 out of 135 representatives), a remarkable contrast to the level of support the budget garnered among the Southern members of the GOP House Conference as 63.9 percent (62 out of 97 representatives) of them voted to pass the RSC's budget on to the Senate. Looking at the behavior from a different angle, we see that 63 percent of non-Southern Republicans instead voted no, in other words a complete reversal of the attitudes found in the South demonstrating the regional division on a matter as salient as government spending. Not a single Republican member of the House from New York, Pennsylvania, or Washington (21 Republicans in total) backed the RSC's budgetary vision while just three of the seventeen GOP House members from Illinois, New Jersey, and Wisconsin voted yes. In the South, only Arkansas,

728 Broun 2013: *Broun takes aim at 'fiscal irresponsibility.'* March 26.

729 For an overview of the RSC budget and data on its savings cf. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget 2013a: *Republican Study Committee Adds to the Alternative Budgets.* March 19.

730 For a comparison of the different 2013 budget proposals cf. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget 2013b.

731 For data cf. New York Times 2013e: *House Vote 86 – Rejects Republican Study Committee Budget.* March 20.

Florida, and Virginia saw majorities of their Republican delegations vote against the budget. Support was especially strong in Texas where 22 of the state's 24 GOP representatives gave their nod of approval. Even if we remove Texas from the Southern tally though, 54.8 percent of the Southern Republicans in the remaining ten states still voted yes.

The 2012 RSC budget vote displayed a similar geographic divide. Overall, 136 Republicans voted in favor with 104 opposed and two not voting.<sup>732</sup> The larger support that year stemmed from the fact that House Democrats, contrary to both in 2013 and 2011 for example, chose to actually cast “no”-votes instead of merely voting “present” (the latter representing an abstention). This procedural move has far reaching consequences for the potential passage of a bill. Serving as an abstention, a House member's “present” vote is not included in the overall tally used to determine the positive or negative outcome of a floor vote, making it far easier for a determined minority to pass legislation in an environment of a substantially reduced number of cast ballots. With a sizeable “no” vote coming from Democratic House members in 2012 though, some Republicans who might have otherwise voted against the RSC's budgetary proposals in order to avoid making the Study Committee's budget the official proposal forwarded by the House – therefore superseding the generally preferred *Ryan Budget* – were thus free to bestow their approval onto the RSC budget without fear of it actually making it to the Senate floor.<sup>733</sup> Support for the budget was nonetheless substantially lower in the non-South where a minority of 48 percent of House Republicans backed the budget (71 out of 148 representatives). 69.1 percent of Southern Republicans on the other hand endorsed the RSC's plans (65 out of 94 representatives).

Ultimately of course none of these budgets have actually become the law of the land. As the roll call votes demonstrate though it would be wrong to conclude that congressional Republicans reject the basic principles set out in the RSC's proposals. While not going as far, Paul Ryan's budgets placed a similar emphasis on discretionary spending cuts that were primarily made within the non-defense part of the budget while rejecting increased revenue through tax hikes. The strong support the Study Committee's budgets receive from the South also demonstrates to key players within the party what sort of budgetary proposals can and cannot gain traction within the Republican House caucus, particularly if

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732 For data cf. New York Times 2012b: *House Vote 149 – H.CON.RES.112: On Agreeing to the Amendment*. March 29.

733 For details on the 2011 RSC budget vote and the procedural tactic employed by the Democrats that year (and in 2013) cf. Sonmez 2011: “In surprise move, House Democrats vote ‘present’ on conservative budget, forcing Republicans’ hand.” *Washington Post*, April 15, as well as Waldron 2011: “Democratic Procedural Move Forces Republicans To Vote Down Their Own Crazy Budget Proposal.” *ThinkProgress*, April 15.

one bears in mind the extent to which the Southern branch of the party has increased its share within the GOP in recent years. More moderate proposals that are rejected by the South and its staunchly conservative members of congress have no chance of getting the necessary 218 votes for passage among the Republican ranks alone.<sup>734</sup> There is another key drawback to the RSC's plans as well. The contents of their proposals – and the incorporation of their core (predominantly Southern) anti-statist tenets into general GOP policies on the budget – can be used by the Republican Party's Democratic opponents as a tool to accuse the GOP of playing party politics rather than having a genuine determination to bring down the deficit – all due to the Republican strategy of solely focusing on spending cuts while simultaneously removing tax revenues from state coffers. Perhaps even more importantly, fact of the matter is that the RSC's approach to balancing the budget is far from popular among the general public. A survey conducted during the budgetary negotiations that transpired in early 2013 which sought to avoid the biting sequester cuts showed that 76 percent of the public favored a resolution that included a combination of spending cuts *and* tax increases while just 19 percent backed the Republican stance of opposing any and all tax increases.<sup>735</sup>

#### Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005<sup>736</sup>

The final vote to be assessed represents a return to the socio-cultural sphere. Even though Dennis Hastert coined the eponymous rule, the former speaker did not abide by it without any exceptions. One such violation came in May of 2005 when the *Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act*, which sought to provide federal funding to stem cell research on human embryos, was passed in the House by a margin of 238 to 194 votes with just 50 Republicans crossing the aisle to join 187 Democrats in voting for the bill. The vote itself and the heavy opposition found among Republicans from all areas of the country highlights that this was not necessarily an instance in which Southern Republicans stood out – although

734 The 2013 bipartisan budget deal drawn up by Paul Ryan and Democratic Senator Patty Murray received the backing of just 169 Republicans (i. e. over a quarter – 26.7 percent to be precise – of all House Republicans voted against the agreement with opposition among House Democrats standing at just 15.9 percent). While this was not another Hastert Rule “violation” it nonetheless serves to demonstrate the vehement opposition found among a devoted group of House Republicans against any budgetary plans that do not adhere to their strict anti-statist views. For data on the vote cf. New York Times 2013g: *House Vote 640 – Passes Bipartisan Budget Bill*. December 12.

735 Cf. Pew Research Center, USA Today 2013a: *If No Deal is Struck, Four-in-Ten Say Let the Sequester Happen*, February 21, p. 1.

736 For data cf. New York Times 2005: *House Vote 204 – H.R.810: On Passage*. May 24.

opposition in the South was higher than in the rest of the nation (among Republicans) as we will address shortly. Instead this vote better serves as an example of the *Evangelicalization* the Republican Party has undergone, that is to say the growing influence white evangelical Protestants have in recent years acquired within the party and their ability to drive the party's policy positions in a certain direction, a development addressed in closer detail in chapter II.2. Opposition to the act was most certainly particularly pronounced within the white evangelical community with veteran scholar John C. Green arriving at the conclusion that the issue of stem cell research had by the time of the vote "merged with the antiabortion argument in the minds of many activists," in the process developing into "a surrogate for doing something about abortion."<sup>737</sup> General data on stem cell research reveals a significant rift in opinion between the wider public and white evangelical Protestants which by extension means that such a rift is also in place between the *evangelized* GOP and the American public. 2007 data from the Pew Research Center showed that while 51 percent of Americans considered conducting research on stem cells to be more important than protecting the potential life of human embryos, a mere 31 percent of white evangelical Protestants came to the same conclusion as 57 percent instead voiced the opinion that the protection of the potential capacity of embryos to live superseded any possible cures that might be obtained via stem cell research.<sup>738</sup> A more recent survey conducted between March and April of 2013 reveals part of the reasons behind the opposition: 38 percent of white evangelical Protestants felt embryonic stem cell research was "morally wrong" compared to a nationwide share of just 22 percent.<sup>739</sup> After the 2005 act had cleared both houses of Congress, President Bush made use of his veto power – the first time he had done so during his presidency – citing his opposition to the destruction of living human embryos as the reason,<sup>740</sup> a decision undoubtedly heavily influenced by his own religiosity.

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737 Quoted in: Gilgoff 2006: "Religious right takes on stem cell research." *U.S. News & World Report*, July 18.

738 Cf. Pew Research Center 2008c: *Declining Majority of Americans Favor Embryonic Stem Cell Research*, July 17.

739 Other religious denominations were also far less likely to possess such a damning view of stem cell research. Just 15 percent of white mainline Protestants and 22 percent of white Catholics regarded stem cell research as morally wrong. Cf. Pew Research Center 2013l: *Abortion Viewed in Moral Terms: Fewer See Stem Cell Research and IVF as Moral Issues*, August 15, p. 6.

740 In his statement to the House of Representatives, the president argued that "H.R. 810 [the research act] would overturn my Administration's balanced policy on embryonic stem cell research. If this bill were to become law, American taxpayers for the first time in our history would be compelled to fund the deliberate destruction of human embryos. Crossing this line would be a grave mistake and would needlessly encourage a conflict between science and



The regional divide on the vote was less pronounced than in the other votes we have addressed but it was discernible nonetheless. Within the camp of Southern Republicans (82 at the time) a mere nine voted yes, constituting eleven percent of all Republicans from the region. Among non-Southern Republicans this share stood at 27.5 percent (41 out of 149 representatives). Five of the Southern supporters of the stem cell research act were from Florida alone with not a single Deep Southern Republican backing the bill, an unsurprising breakdown considering the strong religiousness found in the heart of Dixie in particular.

Conclusion: What are the causes behind the legislative behavior of Southern Republicans?

The data we have now seen paints a rather clear picture: Southern Republicans are more conservative than their non-Southern counterparts on a variety of issues both in the economic as well as the social realms. The one important question that does remain though is if these legislative patterns are merely artifacts of Southern Republicans finding themselves in more conservative – and devoid of centrist voters – environments than their colleagues outside of the Old Confederacy. After all, as already noted Southern Republicans are at home in some of the most partisan Republican districts that provide these Southern politicians with little incentive to reach out to moderate voters while constantly living with the threat of a primary challenger from the right emerging ahead of the next election. The data used earlier to underpin that assertion – the Cook Partisan Vote Index (PVI) of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress – also allows us to compare Republicans from both regions of the country who hail from similarly Republican districts. The two 2013 votes that provide us with some of the most distinctive regional rifts were the votes to reopen the government in October and extend the Violence against Women Act in February. The former dealt with a fundamental fiscal and economic question while the latter presented representatives with a key socio-cultural piece of legislation. Representatives from both regions are grouped into three different camps according to their districts' respective Cook PVI: R+1 to R+5 (indicating the district is one to five points more Republican than the country as a whole), R+6 to R+10, and R+11 to R+15.<sup>741</sup> The following table shows the percentage of Republicans from the non-South and South who approved the bill to reopen and fund the government:

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*ethics that can only do damage to both and harm our Nation as a whole.*" Bush 2006: *Message to the House of Representatives*. July 19.

741 For an overview of the district leans cf. The Cook Political Report 2013, p. 2.

**Table II.1.2.a:** Support for the “Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014” among Republican members of the U.S. House, in percent and grouped by Cook PVI of district.<sup>742</sup>

Cook PVI	Non-South	South
R+1 to R+5	60 % (24/40)	50 % (4/8)
R+6 to R+10	44.2 % (19/43)	42.1 % (8/19)
R+11 to R+15	37.5 % (9/24)	12.9 % (4/31)
<i>R+1 to R+15 Total</i>	<i>48.6 % (52/107)</i>	<i>27.6 % (16/58)</i>

The facts presented by this particular vote paint a somewhat mixed picture regarding the supposedly unique and exceptional conservatism found in the South. Looking at the districts with the smallest Republican lean (R+1 to R+5), we see an approval rate of 60 percent outside the South and 50 percent within it, although the sample size in the latter group is rather small with non-Southern GOP House members outnumbering their Southern counterparts by a margin of five to one. The eight Southern Republicans in that range can also all be found in the two Southern states that voted for Barack Obama twice, Virginia and Florida; with Virginia representing a state that has moreover not just at the presidential level become more Democratic in recent years. The difference in support within the next range of Republican districts is similarly small. A stronger rift emerges once we move into the safe (R+11 to R+15) Republican territory where the support for reopening the government was lower in both regions vis-à-vis the less Republican districts with approval dropping off substantially among Southern Republicans in particular, decreasing by almost 30 percentage points compared to the R+6 to R+10 bracket. Compare this to a rather minute drop of roughly seven points outside the South where the 37.5 percent approval of R+11 to R+15 non-Southern Republicans put them exactly in line with the general support level for reopening the government expressed by the entire GOP House Conference (87 out of 232 House Republicans voted in favor of the *Continuing Appropriations Act*).

In this particular instance the voting habits in districts with a Republican lean between a point and ten points did not differ all that much although a slight rift is already evident as the combined vote of both brackets shows that a majority of non-Southern GOP representatives backed the bill (51.8 percent) while just 44.4 percent of their Southern counterparts voted yes. What is most certainly noteworthy is the distribution of representatives across the different partisan lean groups. While more than half of all the Southern representatives across the entire R+1 to R+15 range could be found in the safest bracket in question (R+11 to

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742 Own work based on data obtained from 2013 Cook PVI and New York Times 2013f.

R+15; 33 out of 60<sup>743</sup>), merely 22.4 percent of their non-Southern counterparts enjoyed such a safe electoral environment. Still, one cannot get past the fact that even in such a similar environment, Southern Republicans were far less supportive of the bill that authorized an end to the closure of the federal government. Returning to the question of “district safety” and looking at the entire sample once again, we see that while 85 percent of non-Southern Republicans represented districts with a Republican lean of R+15 or less,<sup>744</sup> just 61 percent of all Southern Republicans hailed from districts in the same sort of partisan environment.<sup>745</sup> What this of course indicates is that a sizeable number of Republican Southerners represent districts with a Republican lean above R+15 – as already pointed out, 20 of the 30 districts with the highest Republican Cook PVI during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress could after all be found in the South. All in all, while 38 Southern Republicans were located in these >R+15 districts, just 21 non-Southern Republicans enjoyed this kind of safety.<sup>746</sup> It appears then that the voting patterns of Southern Republicans can be traced back to a unique blend of conservatism among elected officials that sets them apart even from non-Southern Republicans in similar electoral environments along with the relative safety of their seats which provides Southern Republicans with little incentive to appeal to moderate or independent voters through accruing a centrist voting record.

The former factor and an even starker regional difference between both regional camps become even more evident on the vote to extend the Violence against Women Act (VAWA). Contrary to the vote on the Continuing Resolution to reopen the government, a significant rift between the two regions already emerges in the R+6 to R+10 range where a strong majority of almost 56 percent of non-Southern Republican House members backed the extension while just two of the nineteen Southern Republicans in this bracket voted yes. Compared to the vote that reopened the government we also see a higher rate of approval across the entire range of non-Southerners (57.9 percent compared to the 48.6 percent share of R+1 to R+15 non-Southern Republicans that backed ending the

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743 This tally includes vacant seats at the time of the vote and therefore differs from the one shown in table II.1.2.a.

744 An additional eight non-Southern Republicans had their home in districts with a Republican lean below R+1.

745 60 out of 98. Along with the 58 mentioned in this tally there were two vacant seats (Alabama’s 1<sup>st</sup> and Louisiana’s 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional districts) at the time of the vote to reopen the government.

746 It most certainly also warrants pointing out that 8 of the 21 *non-Southerners* in this 2013 Cook PVI district range were from Oklahoma and Kentucky, two states that are frequently considered to be part of the extended South. If we incorporate these eight members of the U.S. House into the *Southern* bracket, the “safety gap” between both regions becomes even more impressive.

shutdown) while fewer Southern Republicans approved of extending the VAWA than funding the government (18.6 percent compared to 27.6 percent). Data like this indicates that the regional rift dividing the Republican House Conference is particularly pronounced on social issues, in particular those pertaining to bread and butter white evangelical concerns surrounding matters of sexuality. As already mentioned earlier, one of the primary points of contention for House Republicans was the act's added inclusion of gay, bisexual, and transgender victims of domestic abuse<sup>747</sup> – what we see here then is the particularly strong opposition these new provisions elicited among Southern Republicans.

**Table II.1.2.b:** Support for the “Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, 2013” among Republican members of the U.S. House, in percent and grouped by Cook PVI of district.<sup>748</sup>

Cook PVI	Non-South	South
R+1 to R+5	72.5 % (29/40)	50 % (4/8)
R+6 to R+10	55.8 % (24/43)	10.5 % (2/19)
R+11 to R+15	37.5 % (9/24)	15.6 % (5/32)
<i>R+1 to R+15 Total</i>	<i>57.9 % (62/107)</i>	<i>18.6 % (11/59)</i>

Looking at the DW-Nominate scores of Republican House members provides us with another opportunity of gauging different levels of conservatism within the GOP conference. Non-Southern House Republicans serving in the R+6 to R+10 range had a mean first-dimension DW-Nominate score (which measures the position on the economic liberal-conservative divide) of 0.451 based on data from the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress while their Southern counterparts came in at a mean score of 0.522.<sup>749</sup> This amounts to a gap between the 139<sup>th</sup> and 107<sup>th</sup> most conservative members of the House during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>750</sup> Moving on to the R+11 to R+15 range we see a non-Southern mean score of 0.52 (i. e. still below that of the Southern Republicans in a district range [R+6 to R+10] that is broadly speaking actually less conservative) while Republicans from the South obtained a mean score of 0.545, representing a gap between the 108<sup>th</sup> and 87<sup>th</sup> most conservative House members. It should be noted that this Southern tally includes two relatively moderate House members, Jo Bonner from Alabama (with a DW-Nominate score of 0.402) and Rodney Alexander from Louisiana (0.357), who left the House during the 2013 legislative year and were replaced

747 Cf. A. Parker 2013.

748 Own work based on data obtained from 2013 Cook PVI and New York Times 2013d.

749 The higher the score the more conservative a member of Congress is.

750 Data from the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (updated on February 6, 2013) was the most recent one available at the time these calculations were made. The members included in the calculation were of course still serving in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. For DW-Nominate scores cf. Voteview 2013b: *Rank Orderings for all Houses and Senates. House, 112<sup>th</sup> Congress*. February 6.

with freshmen who will in all likelihood accrue a more conservative DW-Nominate score than their predecessors. If the two are removed from the Southern score, we see a rise to a mean of 0.56 which is in line with the DW-Nominate score of the 78<sup>th</sup> most conservative member of the House during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. The differences we have seen here once again illustrate that even in relatively similar electoral environments, Southern Republicans both tend to be and vote more conservative than their non-Southern counterparts. With regards to the DW-Nominate scores we see that in both subgroups for which we have large enough sample sizes, the differences in mean scores between the two regions is equal to around 30 U.S. House seats (constituting a divide of around seven percent of the House's size). Not necessarily a huge but nonetheless a significant gap.

### II.1.3 Southern partisan trends in presidential elections

The trends that have been observed in both the House and Senate can also be seen at the presidential level where a strong difference in voting behavior is in place between the South and the rest of the nation. The most recent presidential election produced an almost perfect mirror image of regional partisan preferences: Mitt Romney's eight-and-a-half-point victory in the South was simultaneously met with a nine point Obama lead in the rest of the nation. As the following table showing the popular vote percentages in the South and the rest of the nation in the presidential elections between 2000 and 2012 demonstrates, this significant gap in partisan preferences has been a staple of recent presidential elections, ranging from a gap of 15.7 points (Democratic lead in non-South + Republican lead in the South) in 2000 to 19.2 points in 2008.

**Table II.1.3.a:** Southern and non-Southern popular vote, presidential elections 2000–2012.<sup>751</sup>

2000

South		Non-South	
Bush	54.3 %	Bush	45.4 %
Gore	43.5 %	Gore	50.3 %

Diverging presidential preference: 15.7 points

<sup>751</sup> Own work based on data obtained from Leip 2014.

2004

South		Non-South	
Bush	56.8 %	Bush	48.3 %
Kerry	42.4 %	Kerry	50.6 %

Diverging presidential preference: 16.7 points

2008

South		Non-South	
McCain	52.6 %	McCain	42.6 %
Obama	46.4 %	Obama	55.6 %

Diverging presidential preference: 19.2 points

2012

South		Non-South	
Romney	53.6 %	Romney	44.4 %
Obama	45.1 %	Obama	53.7 %

Diverging presidential preference: 17.8 points

The last Republican presidential candidate to actually win the non-Southern popular vote was George H. W. Bush in 1988.<sup>752</sup> That gains in the South have come at the expense of substantial losses in other parts of the nation is made abundantly clear by looking at the northeast of the nation – meaning New England<sup>753</sup> and New York State – a region that actually used to be one of the Republican Party’s key regional bases.<sup>754</sup> The 1960 and 2000 presidential elections serve as a decent measuring stick for changes in voting patterns due to the similarly close outcome of both elections. John F. Kennedy, himself hailing from Massachusetts, won roughly 54 percent of the two-party popular vote in the seven state region in 1960, a result Al Gore bettered and increased to a share of 61.8 percent in 2000 (despite the latter’s Southern background). A less dramatic but nonetheless worrying shift can be seen on the west coast as well: While Richard Nixon won 50.6 percent of the two-party popular vote in the three Pacific Coast states (Washington, Oregon, and California, which were all won by the former California senator), George W. Bush only managed to carry 44.9

752 Cf. Brownstein 2009: “For GOP, A Southern Exposure.” *National Journal*, May 23.

753 This includes the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

754 Between 1896 and 1931, Republicans won 82.8 and 83.3 percent of all elections for the U.S. House and Senate in New England. Over the subsequent three decades (1932–1965), this Republican winning percentage still stood at 60.6 and 65.1 respectively before dropping to 27.7 and 42.2 percent between 1966 and 2012. Cf. Stanley, Niemi 2013, p. 12.

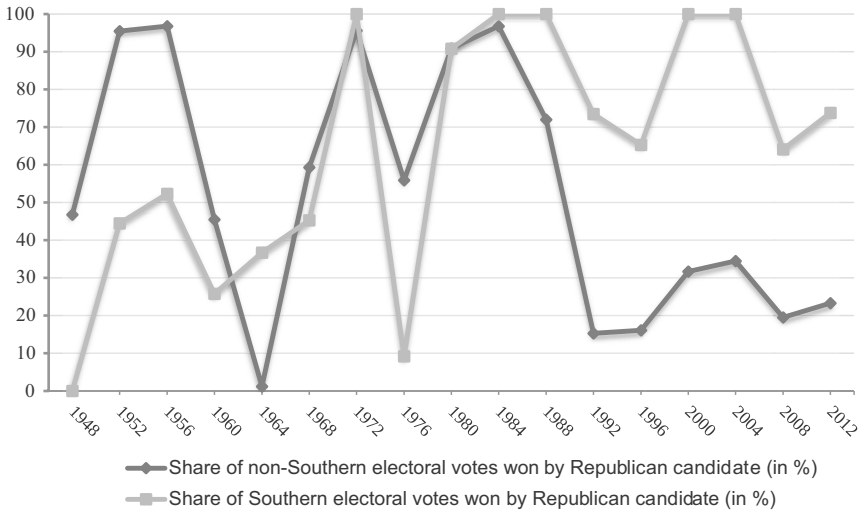
percent of the two-party tally in 2000 while losing all three states. Twelve years later that margin of roughly ten points between the Republican and Democratic candidates had more than doubled to over 21 points as Barack Obama won 60.6 percent of the two-party vote on the west coast, a shift towards the Democratic Party that significantly outpaced the general nationwide leftward trend between 2000 and 2012.<sup>755</sup>

### The increasing reliance on the South in presidential elections

The rift between both regions is also made evident if we look at the voting tally that ultimately matters, the electoral vote. Over the past two decades, Republican showings outside of the former Confederacy have been abysmal. Even during George W. Bush's two successful presidential runs, the GOP never managed to win more than 34.5 percent of all non-Southern electoral votes, as illustrated in figure II.1.3.a. A large degree of the Texas governor's success was therefore owed to his ability to sweep all eleven Southern states twice. A few decades ago, Republican candidates were far more competitive outside the former Confederacy. In 1960, Richard Nixon carried over 45 percent of all non-Southern electoral votes, raising that share to almost 60 percent eight years later. Another eight years later Gerald Ford won a similar percentage (55.9 percent to be exact) outside the South as the Democrats' last large scale success south of the Mason-Dixon Line delivered the presidency into the hands of one of the region's own – former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter.

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755 Own calculations based on data obtained from Leip 2014.



**Figure II.1.3.a:** *Percentage of non-Southern and Southern electoral votes won by Republican presidential candidates, 1948–2012.*<sup>756</sup>

Since the 1990s though, Republicans have failed to come close to even matching the worst Republican showing in the non-South (bar Goldwater’s 1964 campaign whose decidedly Southern flavor proved to have disastrous results in the rest of the nation) in the period between 1948 and 1988 (which was Richard Nixon’s aforementioned win of 45.5 percent of all non-Southern electoral votes in 1960). Instead we have seen a complete reversal of the patterns apparent during the immediate postwar era when Republican candidates like Thomas E. Dewey and Dwight D. Eisenhower were at their strongest in the non-Southern parts of the nation. Most recently, Mitt Romney won 23.3 percent of all electoral votes outside the South, a slightly better showing than John McCain’s 19.5 percent obtained four years earlier but hardly enough to make the election competitive from an electoral college point of view. Assessing the GOP’s presidential performance from the angle of the South, we once again see a strong overrepresentation of the region (see table II.1.3.b). While the South currently only holds 29.7 percent of all electoral college votes (160 out of 538), it provided Mitt Romney with over 57 percent of his total tally of electoral votes. Somewhat similar to the development at the congressional level, we can note a relatively steady increase in Southern dominance in the GOP’s electoral totals over the past dozen years as well.

<sup>756</sup> Own work and calculations based on data obtained from Leip 2014.



**Table II.1.3.b:** *Southern overrepresentation in Republican presidential election results, 2000–2012.*<sup>757</sup>

Year	Southern electoral votes won by GOP (total Southern electoral votes)	Total electoral votes won by GOP	Share of Southern electoral votes within the total Republican tally
2012	118 (160)	206	57.3 %
2008	98 (153)	173	56.6 %
2004	153 (153)	286	53.5 %
2000	147 (147)	271	54.2 %

Also similar to what we have seen in congressional contests, the South most certainly provides Republican candidates with a solid base from which to launch their campaigns to reclaim the White House. Figure II.1.3.a highlights that George W. Bush was able to win and retain the presidency despite winning only around a third of all non-Southern electoral votes, an achievement that would have been impossible to obtain for any Republican candidate a few decades ago as illustrated by the 1960 and '76 elections. With the South gaining electoral votes in recent reapportionments this currently means that any candidate who carries the South and its 160 electoral votes in their entirety will only have to win 29.1 percent of the remaining non-Southern electoral vote to get to 270.<sup>758</sup> The fact that neither of President Bush's victories was won by substantial margins though – with the former Texas governor perilously close to not winning the presidency in 2000 in particular – despite his consecutive sweeps through the South also demonstrates that, first of all, current Republican paths to presidential victories do not leave much of a margin for error even if a candidate dominates Dixie and that, second of all, we are witnessing the emergence of a significant rift in electoral behavior between the South and non-South in presidential contests, a substantial change in the electoral patterns and outcomes compared to those observed between the late 1960s and '80s when Republican candidates were able to carry both the South and non-South, as demonstrated in figure II.1.3.a. These patterns therefore reveal that it is increasingly difficult to do well in the South *and* win a sufficient amount of non-Southern electoral votes to obtain the presidency. Moreover, the GOP's recent rather poor performance in presidential elections along the edges of the South, namely in Florida, Virginia, and to a lesser extent North Carolina, means that it will be rather difficult to emulate President Bush's path (reliant on a sweep of the South while winning less than 35 percent of the non-Southern electoral vote) to the White House.

<sup>757</sup> Own work based on data obtained from Leip 2014.

<sup>758</sup> 110 out of 378.

As the South goes, so goes...

Presidential elections before the completion of the South's realignment in the 1990s show that this brand of *Southern presidential exceptionalism* had not been a dominant feature of American politics for a number of decades. In 1992, veteran scholars of Southern politics Earl and Merle Black arrived at the conclusion that "as the united South goes: so goes the nation,"<sup>759</sup> a conclusion based on the observation that the party which had captured all or nearly all of the Southern electoral votes in the nine presidential elections between 1932 and 1988 had also entered the White House.<sup>760</sup> Not doing well in the South would spell almost certain doom for any candidate wishing to get past the 270 electoral vote mark. Even more recently, some claimed that running against the Southern mindset and the electorate that represented it was a futile endeavor. Inferring the lessons of George W. Bush's two election wins, German journalist Matthias Rüb concluded that the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections established the hopelessness of Democratic attempts to win the White House against a united front of (Southern) evangelical Protestants and that any future Democratic candidate wishing to take back the presidency had to inevitably make inroads into the religious white electorate<sup>761</sup> – and one can argue by extension into the South.

The assessments and assertions of the Black brothers and Matthias Rüb have not stood the test of time though. The first cracks in Earl and Merle Black's theory could already be seen in the 1992 and 1996 elections. George H. W. Bush managed to win 108 of the region's then 147 electoral votes (73.5 percent) while Bob Dole lost a landslide election despite winning 96 Southern electoral votes. Dole's tally can probably not be described as "nearly all" but it nonetheless represented almost two-thirds of all Southern electoral votes. As already discussed, George W. Bush's victories that relied heavily on the South only served to highlight the regional rift that had appeared in presidential elections. Winning and retaining the presidency on the back of two successive sweeps across the South, he did just enough outside of the South to win the electoral college, winning 31.7 and 34.5 percent of all non-Southern electoral votes in 2000 and 2004. The smallest slip-up in 2000 – for example by losing New Hampshire and its four electoral votes – would have delivered the presidency to his Democratic opponent despite carrying all eleven Southern states.

As the party has become more *southernized* in recent years, this trend has become even more pronounced. John McCain lost three Southern states in 2008 but even if he had won them, his new tally of 228 electoral votes would have left

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759 E. Black, M. Black 1992: *The Vital South: How Presidents Are Elected*, p. 344.

760 Cf. *ibid.*

761 Cf. Rüb 2008: *Gott regiert Amerika: Religion und Politik in den USA*, p. 7.

the Arizona senator well short of the 270 necessary to win the presidency. Four years later, Mitt Romney would have made it to 248 electoral votes with a united South. If we delve slightly deeper into the popular vote results of that year's presidential election, we also get a clearer picture of the uphill battle Republican candidates face today. A uniform national swing of 3.9 points in the popular vote towards Governor Romney would have resulted in a popular vote tie while shifting both of President Obama's southern victories of Florida and Virginia into the Republican camp.<sup>762</sup> This swing would have also turned Ohio red. Nonetheless, even with those three additional states and a united Republican Solid South, Governor Romney would have been four electoral votes short of 270. This development of the South losing part of its bellwether status is particularly remarkable because the South's weight within the Electoral College has increased noticeably since the Blacks came to their aforementioned conclusion, with the number of Southern electoral votes rising from 138 to 160 between the 1980s and 2010s.

Future Republican attempts to take back the White House will therefore have to increase the share of votes won outside the South, particularly because the Republican bulwark south of the Mason-Dixon Line is fraying at the edges. President Obama managed to win the two peripheral Southern states of Virginia and Florida twice, arguably due to the demographic changes occurring in both states which we will address in closer detail later on. Mitt Romney did quite well in the nine remaining Southern states, winning roughly 56 percent of the vote there. The former Massachusetts governor nonetheless failed to convey a message that appealed to a majority of voters in many other regions of the nation, as indicated by the fact that he trailed President Obama by over nine points in the 39 others states and Washington, D.C. Such results highlight that vast swathes of the South today are out of tune with the rest of the nation, as is the GOP's key constituency in the region, white evangelical Protestants. While Mitt Romney even managed to equal President Bush's 2004 strong showing among this group of conservative values voters, he lost substantial ground among many other voters during the same period.<sup>763</sup> Taking into account these trends, it appears obvious that the Black brothers' claim therefore is in dire need of a slight but far-reaching alteration: *as the united South goes, so goes the nation – in the other direction.*

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762 For all election results consult Leip 2014.

763 Both Bush and Romney won 79 percent of all white evangelical Protestant voters. Cf. Pew Research Center 2012i: *How the Faithful Voted: 2012 Preliminary Analysis*, November 7.

## Where has the South gone?

The past 20 years have been rather good for the Democrats at the presidential level. Having won five out of six popular votes, a number of factors – that we will look at in the demographics chapters in more detail – promise more election night celebrations for progressives and liberals in the coming years. The (white) South has bucked this trend though, having moved further into the Republican camp as the nation at large has moved left over the last few years, once again highlighting the region's unique – or some would say exceptional – status. What the data over the coming pages illustrates is the existence of a vicious political and electoral circle for the Republican Party which serves to ultimately dampen its chances of wide scale electoral success outside the region and making it more difficult to obtain the required 270 electoral votes to win the presidency. As the Republican Party has increased its popularity in the white South, the party itself has become more *southernized* (demonstrated by its the earlier shown congressional composition and the general policy positions of the party), in the process making the GOP a more enticing electoral choice for the remaining Southern holdouts whose Democratic allegiances grow weaker with each successive election – both at the congressional and presidential levels. The Republican share of the white Southern vote therefore increases at the subsequent election which once again serves to southernize it even further. The flip side of this development of course is that the GOP simultaneously becomes a less attractive choice for many non-Southern moderates with each election cycle – already illustrated by the severe lack of electoral vote success of the GOP in the non-South over the past twenty years (see figure II.1.3.a).

Data from recent American National Election Studies as well as the Pew Research Center covering elections from 1980 through 2012 serve to highlight how a growing gap in electoral preferences has emerged not just between the different regions but even among whites hailing from the South and outside of it. Between 1992 and 2000 and in 2008 once again, non-Southern whites actually preferred the Democratic candidate over his Republican opponent while no Democrat was able to win a majority of the Southern white vote during the period covered. In 1992, the gap in partisan preferences between whites from both regions stood at just single digits – by the time the first black president was elected, it had reached over 40 points though as Barack Obama lost the white South by 38 points in 2008 while actually carrying the non-Southern white vote by a margin similar to Bill Clinton's victories during the 1990s (see figure II.1.3.b). The 2008 figure is of course particularly impressive because it demonstrates the problems a black candidate faces in the South. While non-Southern whites followed the national trend and significantly increased their Democratic

vote, then-Senator Obama fared worse in the South than John Kerry had done four years before him.

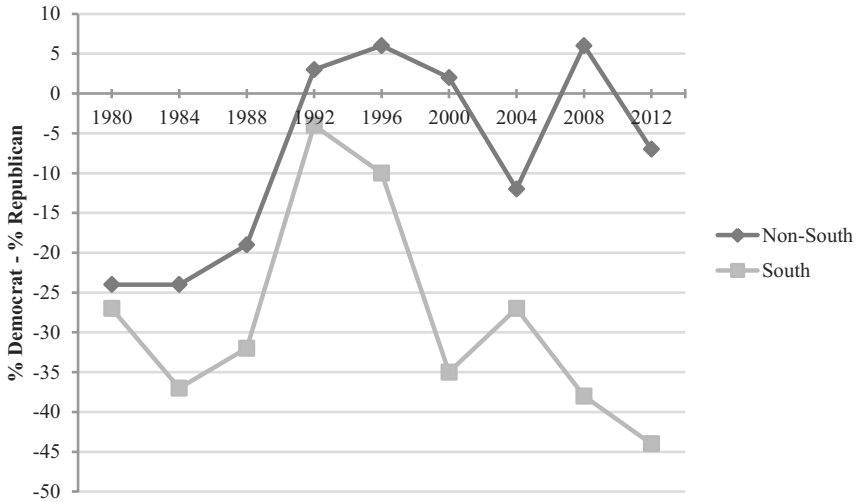


Figure II.1.3.b: Partisan vote for president among whites by region, 1980–2012.<sup>764</sup>

A regional breakdown of the 2008 white vote also illustrates even further how the South – and its *Deep* part in particular – stand out. While President Obama won majorities of the white vote in the Northeast (53 percent) and Pacific Coast (54 percent) he lost to Senator McCain by 32 percentage points in the peripheral South (65 to 33 percent) and a remarkable 58 percentage points in the Deep South (78 to 20 percent).<sup>765</sup>

Another way of gauging the gap in voting behavior between the South and the rest of the nation and to what extent it has widened in recent years is by tracing the Republican lean of a state’s popular vote – in other words comparing the winning margin of a particular state’s popular vote to that of the nation at large. The following graph shows the Republican lean (in percentage points) of the eleven Southern states over the four presidential elections between 2000 and 2012. In the 2012 presidential election for example, Alabama exhibited a Republican lean of 26.1 percentage points: While Barack Obama carried the nation by 3.9 points, Mitt Romney won the late Governor Wallace’s home state by 22.2 points. Twelve years earlier, when Al Gore won the national popular vote by half a percentage point while losing Alabama by 14.9, its lean had therefore stood at “just” 15.4 points.

764 Cf. Fisher 2014: *Demographic Gaps in American Political Behavior*, p. 172.

765 Cf. Black, Black 2012: “Deep South Politics: The Enduring Racial Division in National Elections.” In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*, pp. 401–423, here p. 404.

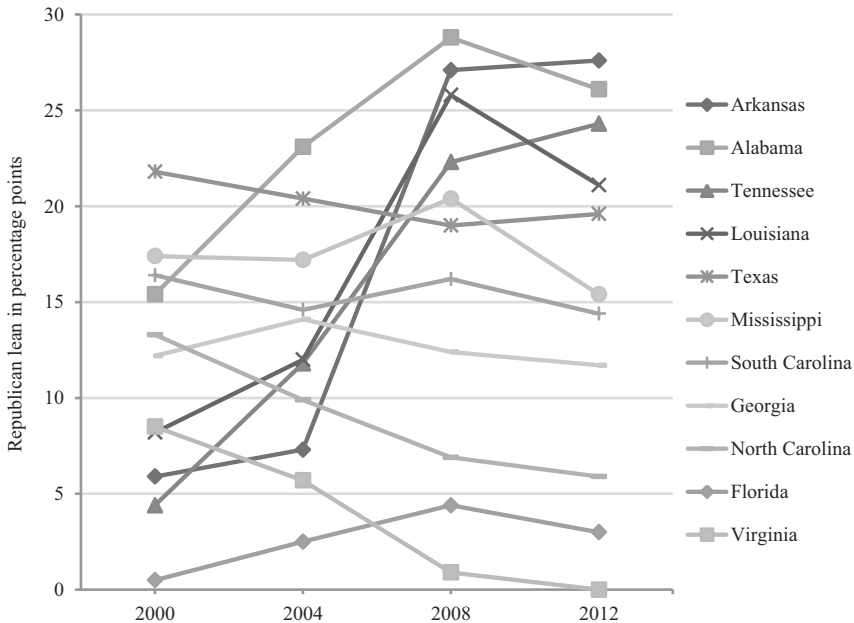


Figure II.1.3.c: Republican lean of Southern states, presidential elections 2000–2012.<sup>766</sup>

On average, the Republican lean in the eleven Southern states stood at 11.3 percentage points in 2000 – by 2012 that value had risen to 15.3 points. Five of the eleven Southern states saw a rise in their Republican lean between 2000 and 2012 (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, and Tennessee). A couple of states do stand out for their large-scale shifts. While Virginia's GOP lean stood at 8.5 percentage points in 2000 (Al Gore won the national popular vote by 0.5 points while then Governor Bush carried the *Old Dominion* by 8 points), it came in at a flat zero by 2012 (Barack Obama won both the national and Virginian popular vote by 3.9 points that year). Another state that appears to have shifted in lockstep with Virginia is North Carolina. Its Republican lean dropped from 13.3 points in 2000 to 5.9 in 2012. When looking at these trends, it is important to take into consideration that factors outside of (native) white partisan affiliation trends tend to account for the decreases in Republican lean in a number of states. Georgia and South Carolina (whose GOP leans decreased by just 0.5 and 2.0 percentage points respectively between 2000 and 2012) along with the aforementioned states of Virginia and North Carolina either have substantial African-American populations whose turnout was far higher in 2012 than in previous elections and/or have seen remarkable demographic shifts within their states –

766 Own calculations based on data obtained from Leip 2014.

such as a large-scale influx of Hispanics<sup>767</sup> (along with other non-Southerners who have come to the region due to its economic growth) that will be addressed in a more detailed manner in the demographics chapter. Texas' slight shift to the left – from a Republican lean of 21.8 in 2000 and 20.4 in 2004 to 19.6 points in 2012 – should if anything provide Republicans with a degree of hope considering that despite the absence of a Texan atop the ballot along with the general lack of enthusiasm in the region for Governor Romney's candidacy and President Obama's strong performance among Hispanics in 2012 that outpaced Gore's showing from twelve years earlier<sup>768</sup> the state continues to be solidly Republican with the Republican lean actually having edged up slightly in 2012 compared to 2008. For the time being, any increases in Hispanic turnout in the Lone Star state have therefore been offset by a white electorate that continues to vote overwhelmingly Republican, in many largely white parts of the state even more so than it did when President Bush was on the ballot.<sup>769</sup> The GOP's core base in the region has most certainly shown no signs of abandoning the party. Support for Republican candidates among the South's "high-commitment" white evangelical Protestant population increased from 80 to 86 percent between 2000 and 2008 despite John McCain's less than stellar rapport with the Christian Right.<sup>770</sup> The aggregate county data on the following pages also serves to highlight that often rural and sometimes suburban Southern areas with large white population majorities have seen a shift towards the Republican side over the past few presidential election cycles that is not reproduced in other areas of the country, evidence of a diverging trend in partisan attitudes and fluctuations between the South and the rest of the nation. While many non-Southern areas have seen notable moves to the left in recent election cycles, the South appears to have become more entrenched in its Republican identification even after decades of a continuous realignment process.

Looking at the group of states that have moved substantially towards the Republican side, we can primarily find examples in the Deep South (Alabama and Louisiana) along with the two home states of the Democratic ticket of the 1990s, Arkansas and Tennessee. Even shortening the time frame of comparison

767 South Carolina's Hispanic population for example increased by a staggering 148 percent between 2000 and 2010. Cf. Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert 2011, p. 6.

768 Take the example of Webb County, TX (with a population of 259,172 that was 95.4 percent Hispanic in 2012), nestled right up against the Texan-Mexican border. While Al Gore won it by a comfortable 16 points in 2000, President Obama managed to expand that lead to a remarkable 54 points in 2012. For county population and demographic composition cf. United States Census Bureau 2014b: *State & County QuickFacts (Webb County, TX)*. For election data cf. Leip 2014.

769 See figure II.4.4.c: (Popular vote (in %) in Texan counties with a population 80 percent non-Hispanic white or more / 80 Hispanic/Latino or more).

770 Cf. Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2010, pp. 291–293.

from twelve to eight years (in other words comparing the 2012 to the 2004 data) in order to account for Al Gore being on the ticket in 2000 while also putting some distance between an election and the Southern Democratic Clinton presidency, Republican leans have increased substantially, rising from 7.3 to 27.6 points in Arkansas (making it the most Republican state in the South in 2012) and from 11.8 to 24.3 points in Tennessee. Florida as the perennial battleground and swing state has seen some of the smallest volatility in the region, and despite having been won by President Obama twice, has continued to remain to the right of the nation although by relatively slim margins. The more traditional Southern parts of the state – after all the further north you go in Florida, the further South you actually are in terms of the views and ethnic composition of the electorate<sup>771</sup> – such as its panhandle have, similarly to its Deep Southern neighbors, trended substantially to the right in recent years.<sup>772</sup>

Mississippi showcases some of the ethnic patterns that render the South unique while highlighting why a decreased Republican lean does not amount to a move to the center by white Southerners. While the state's GOP lean stood at a relatively stable 17.4 and 17.2 points in both 2000 and 2004, it jumped to 20.4 the first time Barack Obama was at the top of the ticket. By 2012 it had dropped to 15.4, a change that can largely be attributed to better black turnout (the African-American share of the state's electorate increased from 33 percent in 2008 to 36 percent in 2012) and not to changes in white voting behavior – white Mississippians gave 88 percent of their vote to Senator McCain in 2008 and 89 percent to Governor Romney in 2012.<sup>773</sup> If anything, as we will now see, many largely white counties in Mississippi moved even further into the Republican camp, a pattern repeated many times over in other white Southern regions.

#### Electoral shifts in predominantly white southern counties<sup>774</sup>

The following tables assess the presidential popular votes in largely white areas of Mississippi and Georgia, two states whose Republican lean decreased between 2000 and 2012. As the data will make abundantly clear, these shifts are not due to

771 For an overview of Florida's demographic peculiarities cf. M. Cohen 2012: "The Political Geography of Florida." *FiveThirtyEight / New York Times*, January 31.

772 In eighteen western and northern Florida counties that all voted Republican both in 2000 and 2012, George W. Bush won 66.62 percent of the two-party presidential vote in 2000. Twelve years later, Mitt Romney was able to better Bush's share by over three percentage points, winning 69.83 percent of the two-party presidential vote in those eighteen counties. Own calculations based on data from Leip 2014.

773 For 2008 cf. New York Times 2008c: *Mississippi Exit Polls*, for 2012 cf. CNN 2012j.

774 All electoral calculations in this subchapter are own calculations based on data from Leip 2014.



white Southerners moving towards the left as the rest of the nation did during the same period. Comparisons between 2004 and the 2008 and 2012 elections are also of particular interest because both John Kerry and Barack Obama shared a similar, non-Southern ideological platform. The National Journal's Vote Ratings which rank members of Congress according to their liberal or conservative voting behavior attest to this. Aside from the 2007 scores, in which President Obama received the highest liberal rating of any member of the U.S. Senate with a composite liberal score of 95.5 – while John Kerry received a rating of 79.5<sup>775</sup> – both Senators showed rather similar legislative habits. In 2006, Obama and Kerry received respective liberal composite scores of 86.0 and 85.7;<sup>776</sup> a year earlier the ratings came in at 82.5 and 86.7,<sup>777</sup> indicating that Kerry was actually more liberal than Barack Obama in the latter's first year in the Senate. The aforementioned DW-Nominate scores that depict the partisan lean of members of Congress on a scale running from -1 to +1 (with negative 1 representing the most liberal and positive 1 the most conservative score) paint a similar picture. John Kerry's most recent common space DW-Nominate score came in at -0.386 placing him in a marginally more liberal position than Barack Obama whose DW-Nominate score from his time in the U.S. senate stood at -0.373.<sup>778</sup> With regards to ideology then there appears little reason for white Southerners to have moved to the right between 2004 and 2008/2012.

Move to the right they did though. Between 2000 and 2012, counties in Mississippi with a non-Hispanic white population of 75 percent or more (according to the 2010 US Census data<sup>779</sup>) bucked the nationwide trend, casting a higher share of their ballots for a Republican presidential candidate in 2012 than they did in 2000. While President Bush's margin of victory in these counties stood at 41.2 percentage points in 2000, Romney had managed to widen this lead to 53.4 points twelve years later:

**Table II.1.3.c:** *Presidential popular vote in Mississippi counties with a non-Hispanic white population of 75 percent or more (N=16):*

	2000	2004	2008	2012
<b>Republican</b>	69.77 %	73.84 %	75.64 %	76.03 %
<b>Democrat</b>	28.58 %	25.25 %	23.06 %	22.66 %

775 Cf. National Journal 2008: *National Journal Vote Ratings: 2007 Senate Ratings.*

776 Cf. National Journal 2007: *National Journal Vote Ratings: 2006 Senate Ratings.*

777 Cf. National Journal 2006: *National Journal Vote Ratings: 2005 Senate Ratings.*

778 Cf. Voteview 2013c: *Rank Orderings for all Houses and Senates. Senate, 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.* February 6.

779 Cf. Index Mundi 2010c: *Mississippi White, not Hispanic Population Percentage by County.*

Romney and, perhaps even more remarkably John McCain, also bettered President Bush's 2004 showing in these counties despite the fact that 2004 provided the GOP with the best nationwide result over the past two decades. Even more interesting results appear if the sample is broken down into counties with a population of between 75 and below 80 percent non-Hispanic white (nine counties in total) and counties with a non-Hispanic white population share of 80 percent or above (seven counties) (see tables II.1.3.d and e).

**Table II.1.3.d:** *Presidential popular vote in Mississippi counties with a non-Hispanic white population of 75 to below 80 percent (N=9):*

	2000	2004	2008	2012
<b>Republican</b>	73.89 %	76.62 %	75.35 %	75.26 %
<b>Democrat</b>	24.77 %	22.45 %	23.54 %	23.59 %

As both tables illustrate, the whitest counties in the state actually (80 percent or more white) voted notably more Democratic than counties with a white population between 75 and 80 percent in both 2000 and 2004 but had moved to their right by 2008 and expanded that gap even more so four years later. Particularly noteworthy is the remarkable shift in these very white counties between 2004 and 2008: On both occasions similarly liberal Democratic candidates were on the ballot while the national environment most certainly looked better for Obama in 2008 than it did for Kerry in 2004. Moreover, John McCain was hardly a popular figure in the evangelical South, having previously attacked members of the Christian Right like Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell for their "political intolerance" while accusing them of employing "political tactics of division and slander."<sup>780</sup> Yet between 2004 and '08 we see a substantial drop in the Democratic vote of over seven percentage points in the whitest counties. One cannot help but wonder if the then Senator from Illinois' skin color had something to do with this shift in voting patterns. All in all, the Republican lead in those 80 percent or more non-Hispanic white counties already stood at a comfortable 30 percentage points in 2000; a dozen years later it had nonetheless almost doubled to 56 percentage points.

**Table II.1.3.e:** *Presidential popular vote in Mississippi counties with a non-Hispanic white population of 80 percent or more (N=7):*

	2000	2004	2008	2012
<b>Republican</b>	63.94 %	69.75 %	76.10 %	77.27 %
<b>Democrat</b>	33.97 %	29.38 %	22.30 %	21.15 %

780 Quoted in: CNN 2000.

Similar but not as pronounced trends could be seen in Georgia<sup>781</sup> where counties with a population of 90 percent or more non-Hispanic white voted more Democratic than counties with a white population between 80 and 90 percent in 2000 and 2004 while being to the latter's right in 2008 and 2012, albeit by the slimmest of margins (see tables II.1.3.f through h). Contrary to the national trends that unfolded during this period, Republicans were able to improve upon their winning margins in both samples over the twelve-year span. Even if the 2004 presidential poll that pitted a Southern incumbent against a Massachusetts liberal is compared to the 2012 election, a further move into the Republican camp is nonetheless visible. Similar to the changes seen in the whitest Mississippi counties, Georgia counties with a non-Hispanic white population of 90 percent or more saw the Republican margin of victory increase by almost 25 percentage points during the entire timeframe, expanding from 34.9 in 2000 to 59.3 points in 2012.

**Table II.1.3.f:** *Presidential popular vote in Georgia counties with a non-Hispanic white population of 80 percent or more (N=31):*

	2000	2004	2008	2012
<b>Republican</b>	68.97 %	76.27 %	75.65 %	78.49 %
<b>Democrat</b>	28.51 %	22.96 %	22.89 %	19.64 %

**Table II.1.3.g:** *Presidential popular vote in Georgia counties with a non-Hispanic white population of 80 to below 90 percent (N=19):*

	2000	2004	2008	2012
<b>Republican</b>	70.24 %	77.17 %	75.64 %	78.43 %
<b>Democrat</b>	26.99 %	22.06 %	23.00 %	19.75 %

**Table II.1.3.h:** *Presidential popular vote in Georgia counties with a non-Hispanic white population of 90 percent or more (N=12):*

	2000	2004	2008	2012
<b>Republican</b>	66.46 %	74.28 %	75.68 %	78.64 %
<b>Democrat</b>	31.55 %	24.95 %	22.63 %	19.38 %

To be sure, there most certainly are other regions in the country that have become more Republican over the past few years as well which might call Southern exceptionalism into question (the area of the country that has seen a similar move into the Republican camp is Appalachia in general<sup>782</sup> and West

781 Cf. Index Mundi 2010b: *Georgia White, not Hispanic Population Percentage by County*.

782 While President Clinton managed to win 47 percent of all counties in Appalachia in 1996,

Virginia in particular,<sup>783</sup> although their recent shifts can to a certain extent also be attributed to the GOP's Southernization). The continued move into the Republican camp since 2000 – even after more than 35 years of Southern realignment in presidential elections – along with the tendency of similarly white areas in other parts of the nation to have become more Democratic lends some support to the argument though that Southern voting habits are indeed increasingly *exceptional*. A particularly noteworthy and appropriate example of an area of the country that could be described as a Republican bastion for a number of decades but has lost its Republican lean as the party has become more *southernized* would be Upstate New York. The four counties of Essex, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington all have a non-Hispanic white population above 92 percent and have traditionally voted Republican.<sup>784</sup> In the ten presidential elections between 1968 and 2004 these counties always unanimously supported the same candidate and cast their presidential vote for a Democrat just once (in 1996). Even George W. Bush, despite his overall poor showing outside the Old Confederacy, managed to carry the counties in both 2000 and 2004 by comfortable margins. The two most recent presidential elections have seen a sea change though as all counties voted for Barack Obama twice. While President Bush was able to win the combined popular vote of these counties by almost eight and a half points in 2004, Mitt Romney trailed his Democratic opponent by close to four points eight years later.

**Table II.1.3.i:** *Presidential popular vote in Essex, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington counties in Upstate New York:*

	2000	2004	2008	2012
<b>Republican</b>	50.27 %	53.17 %	47.21 %	47.02 %
<b>Democrat</b>	44.27 %	44.77 %	51.11 %	50.93 %

Of course this is just a small sample but it nonetheless showcases some of the diverging regional trends found in the United States even in areas that are somewhat comparable in terms of their demographic composition. It is precisely these former Republican strongholds that the GOP has lost due to its *Southernization*. Despite being overwhelmingly white and rural, the counties in question moved from being around six points more Republican than the country

President Obama's shares in 2008 and 2012 dropped to 13 and 7 percent respectively. Cf. Sabato, Kondik, Skelley 2012: "12 From '12: Some Takeaways From a Wild Election." *Sabato's Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, November 15.

783 President Obama for example was the first presidential nominee of a major party who failed to win a single county in West Virginia. Cf. Giroux 2012: "Obama Shut Out in West Virginia." *Bloomberg*, November 8.

784 Non-Hispanic white share of the population: Essex: 92.9 %; Saratoga: 92.1 %; Warren: 94.9 %; Washington: 93.1 %. Data from 2012; cf. U.S. Census Bureau 2014b.

at large in both 2000 and 2004 to actually leaning slightly to the left of the wider nation by the time Barack Obama won re-election in 2012 (to be precise, Barack Obama's popular vote margin in the four New York counties that year was 0.05 percentage points higher than his national winning margin).

What are the underlying reasons for these shifts? Most of Georgia's overwhelmingly white counties lie in the north of the state for example, bordering Al Gore's home state of Tennessee. The comparatively decent showing Al Gore managed to attain may to a certain extent be explained by this and the rather large drop in the Democratic vote between 2000 and 2004 appears to support this thesis. As is so often the case in the South, one of the key underlying factors appears to be race though. Fact of the matter after all is that white Southerners continue to be more racially resentful than whites in the rest of the nation to this day as was described in more detail in chapter I.1.5. If we try to nonetheless give white Southerners the benefit of the doubt one could raise the question if Obama's supposedly fanatical liberalism instead of his skin color is the reason behind their increasingly entrenched Republicanism. This frequently levied assertion against the president of being borderline socialist emanating from the right fails to hold up to scrutiny though as the president's DW-Nominate data indicates he may very well turn out to be the most moderate Democratic president of the post-World War II period.<sup>785</sup> The fact that John Kerry fared better in these heavily white Southern areas than President Obama did despite the latter's far better national results also weakens the point that non-racial factors were at play.<sup>786</sup>

The initial intention of this particular part of the chapter was to demonstrate white Southern exceptionalism in recent presidential elections to illustrate the extent to which this region differs from the rest of the nation – an important matter to assess as the GOP has become more *southernized*. The question could be raised though if these partisan shifts are merely but one example of the “sorting” of the American electorate into two distinct camps that has been reproduced many times over across the United States, in the process creating increasingly red and blue states. With regards to the South though we have to remember that the region's increased (white) Republican partisan affiliation is

785 Cf. Voteview 2013a: *An Update on the Presidential Square Wave*. January 18.

786 Some analysts most certainly do feel that racial factors played a substantial role in Southern GOP gains that bucked the national trend. Looking at Republican gains in Alabama in 2008 compared to four years earlier, David Bositis, a senior research associate at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C., for example came to the conclusion that “[t]here's no other explanation than race”. With regards to Arkansas, Jay Barth expressed the belief that “there's a clear indication that racial conservatism was a component of that shift away from the Democrat.” Quoted in: Nossiter 2008: “For South, a Waning Hold on National Politics.” *New York Times*, November 10.

at the same time just one element of a broader assessment that seeks to gauge contemporary Southern exceptionalism. Southerners still stand out for their views on race and their increased Republican affiliation over the past few years has actually gone hand in hand with increasingly high levels of conservatism as well (shown in more detail in chapter II.1.5). The aforementioned recent partisan changes in the South are therefore not just the result of a sorting of the electorate but part of a distinctively Southern trend as the region's white population has become both more Republican and more conservative as many parts of the rest of the nation appear to have moved to the left both ideologically and from a partisan perspective.<sup>787</sup> More so than in other conservative and traditionally Republican parts of the nation, we are apparently witnessing a "white backlash" in the South, as its voters appear to have responded to the broader national trends (including the increasing minority clout within the Democratic Party) by hardening their own policy and partisan preferences.

#### Making life difficult for the party

Being dependent on such a uniquely conservative and deeply partisan region that is increasingly out of tune with the partisan and ideological preferences of the rest of the nation comes with notable disadvantages for candidates who recognize the importance of broadening the party's (geographical) electoral coalition. Up until now we have become more accustomed to some of the positive features the South brings to the table in presidential election, such as a safe and secure base that can provide a Republican candidate with roughly half of the necessary total of electoral votes to get a past 270. The 2012 presidential election showcases a different side of the South though that goes to the core of what is being explored in this book. The eventual Republican nominee Mitt Romney failed to gain any sort of traction in the region during the primaries which ultimately served to drag out the primary season unnecessarily. Having been forced to prove his conservative credentials time and again in an electoral environment that heavily tilted the playing field against anyone perceived as too moderate, the former governor looked less and less trustworthy with some of his attempts to win over the confidence of conservative voters bordering on the laughable – Romney's description of himself as "severely conservative" was a choice of words that appeared to describe conservatism as a disease.<sup>788</sup> Political

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787 This leftward trend is especially pronounced among the youngest generation of voting age Americans as will be illustrated in the demographics chapters.

788 Cf. Ball 2012: "A 'Severely Conservative' Romney Tries to Woo CPAC." *The Atlantic*, February 10.

analyst Charlie Cook likened the candidate to a piece of pastry to explain why the Republican failed to oust Barack Obama. Romney – a “very smart and rational guy”<sup>789</sup> according to the author – was essentially forced to mangle himself into a pretzel during the nominating process in order to please the primary crowd, twisting and turning his own views and goals to such an extent that the general electorate grew increasingly distrustful of him.<sup>790</sup>

The impact the South had on the 2012 primary season was twofold: First of all, decades of focusing on the South and its voters have left the party with a group of core voters that is rabidly conservative with a thirst to purge any elements that dare to question conservative orthodoxy. While Romney’s track record as governor in one of the most liberal states of the U.S. with fine examples of carving out bipartisan compromises might have worked to his advantage during an era of a less southernized Republican Party, it no longer did so in 2012. Instead the governor was scolded as a “Massachusetts Moderate” who had provided President Obama with a blueprint for his health care reform. Secondly, the decision of the South to more often than not side with his opponents, primarily Rick Santorum, unnecessarily prolonged the primary campaign, draining Romney’s camp of financial resources and providing President Obama with ample time to prepare for the subsequent presidential campaign. Considering the current regional composition of the GOP, those trends are unlikely to abate.

Mitt Romney’s less than stellar showing in the South should probably not have come as much of a surprise considering his past track record as a candidate from one of the most liberal regions of the nation. Almost two decades before his presidential campaign, he for example sought to win Ted Kennedy’s Senate seat by promising to do more for gay rights than his Democratic opponent while also failing to endorse Newt Gingrich’s small government *Contract with America*.<sup>791</sup> The therefore unsurprisingly rather frigid attitude towards Romney emanating from the South became blatantly apparent in 2012. During that year’s primary season, Mitt Romney won just two of the eight Southern states that had held their primaries before Rick Santorum decided to suspend his campaign on April 10<sup>th</sup> (see table II.1.3.j) Those two Southern states – Florida and Virginia – can also hardly be described as representing the soul of today’s Republican South. Located at the periphery they were the only two southern states to vote for President Obama twice. Furthermore, neither Rick Santorum nor Newt Gingrich (the two candidates to best Romney in most of the South) were on the ballot in Virginia. Romney’s lack of success in the region in general and among white

789 C. Cook 2012b: “Romney’s Defeat Exposes Inconvenient Truths of the Republican Party.” *National Journal*, November 12.

790 Cf. *ibid.*

791 Cf. Balz 2013: *Collision 2012: Obama vs. Romney and the Future of Elections in America*, p. 30.

Evangelicals in particular (with the latter making up a larger segment of the GOP primary electorate in 2012 than at any point before)<sup>792</sup> serve as a prime example for highlighting the detrimental effect the party's *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* have had on the GOP and its chances of nominating candidates that can establish broad majorities to take back the White House, seeing as the two groups played an integral role in both Rick Santorum's sweep through the South and – if we limit our analysis to white Evangelicals – in bringing his campaign back from the dead with a strong showing in the Iowa caucuses in the first place.

**Table II.1.3.j:** Romney's performance in the 2012 Southern Republican presidential primaries before the suspension of Rick Santorum's campaign, share of the vote in percent.<sup>793</sup>

State	Romney	Santorum	Gingrich	Paul
South Carolina	27.85	16.97	<b>40.42</b>	12.98
Florida	<b>46.40</b>	13.35	31.93	7.02
Georgia	25.91	19.55	<b>47.19</b>	6.56
Tennessee	28.06	<b>37.11</b>	23.96	9.04
Virginia	<b>59.54</b>	-	-	40.46
Alabama	28.99	<b>34.50</b>	29.30	4.98
Mississippi	30.66	<b>32.73</b>	31.15	4.40
Louisiana	26.69	<b>48.99</b>	15.91	6.15

Perhaps the most notable Southern interference with a quick Romney coronation came in January of 2012. Coming off two consecutive victories in Iowa (which would later be awarded to Santorum) and New Hampshire – providing Romney with the favorable headline of having become the first Republican non-incumbent to ever achieve this feat<sup>794</sup> – the momentum was clearly on the governor's side. Next up on the campaign schedule was the South Carolina primary where a Romney victory would for all intents and purpose have ended the Republican primary season in late January and provided Romney with sufficient time to prepare for the battle against President Obama. South Carolina's white Evangelicals had other ideas though. Representing two-thirds of the primary electorate, they preferred Newt Gingrich over Mitt Romney by a margin of 45 to 21 percent while Romney managed to win among the rest of the electorate by a margin of 37 to 32 percent over the former House speaker.<sup>795</sup> Although not

792 Cf. D. Gibson 2012: "Evangelicals voting in record numbers in GOP primaries." *Religion News Service*, March 16.

793 For data cf. Leip 2012: *Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections: 2012 Presidential Republican Primary Election Data – National*.

794 Cf. Barabak, West 2012: "Mitt Romney wins New Hampshire GOP primary." *Los Angeles Times*, January 10.

795 Cf. CNN 2012e: *South Carolina Exit/Entrance Polls*, January 21.



located in the South, Santorum's eventual victory in Iowa was also largely attributable to the dominance of white evangelical Protestants among the state's caucus electorate and their weak support for Governor Romney.<sup>796</sup>

2012 was not the first time though that Mitt Romney's presidential hopes were dashed by the South and white evangelical Protestants. Four years earlier his campaign also made little headway in no small part due to poor results among religious conservative voters, prompting Mark J. Rozell and Mark Caleb Smith to conclude that the governor's "ultimate defeat [came] at the hands of southern evangelicals."<sup>797</sup> Possibly one of the key impediments in both 2008 and 2012 were his religious beliefs. Mormonism has long been approached with differing degrees of caution or sometimes outright disdain by other Christian denominations but evangelical Protestants in particular admitted that they were less likely to vote for a Mormon candidate.<sup>798</sup>

The animosity shown towards Mormons by white evangelical Protestants is primarily rooted in the latter's widely held position that members of the Church of Latter-day Saints (LDS) cannot be considered as Christians, with the LDS instead representing something akin to a "cult."<sup>799</sup> Together with the high degree of importance placed on a candidate's religious beliefs and background by white evangelical Christians in particular,<sup>800</sup> one can see why the South represented a less than favorable environment for Romney and his presidential bid. Enmity towards Mormons emanating from the South is nothing new. In 1998, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) even decided to hold its annual conference in the heartland of Mormonism, Salt Lake City, as 3,000 of its members went door to door in an effort to evangelize the local population.<sup>801</sup> During the convention, the SBC also distributed a scathing book on the faith to its members – provocatively called *Mormonism Unmasked* – written by the director of the church's Interfaith Witness Division, R. Philip Roberts. The book left little doubt about

796 Santorum won white evangelical Protestants, who made up 56 percent of the caucus electorate, by a margin of 33 to 14 percent over Romney. The numbers were reversed among the rest of the electorate which Romney won by 38 to 14 percent over Santorum. Cf. CNN 2012c: *Iowa Exit/Entrance Polls*, January 3.

797 Rozell, Smith 2012, p. 146.

798 Cf. *ibid.*

799 The *Billy Graham Evangelistic Association* used this term to refer to Mormonism before removing it from its website after a meeting between Billy Graham, his son Franklin, and Mitt Romney in October of 2012. Cf. Marrapodi 2012: "Billy Graham site removes Mormon 'cult' reference after Romney meeting." *CNN Belief Blog*, October 16.

800 Exit polls conducted among Republican primary voters through March of 2012 showed that for around four in ten evangelical Protestants a candidate sharing their religious beliefs was deeply important to them. Cf. Zoll, Agiesta 2012: "Mitt Romney Campaigns In South, Tries To Appeal To Evangelicals." *Associated Press / Huffington Post*, March 9.

801 Cf. Merritt 2012: "The unexpected evangelical silence on Mitt's Mormonism." *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 12.

where Southern white Evangelicals stood (or ought to stand) on Mormonism, describing the Mormon church and its set of beliefs as “one of the greatest deceptions in the history of religion” while accusing Mormons of “propagat[ing] a non-Christian view of God” and “a non-Christian view of Jesus.”<sup>802</sup> On their part, SBC leaders had no qualms about publicly referring to Mormonism as “a counterfeit Christianity,”<sup>803</sup> a view also put forth by *Mormonism Unmasked* which designated the faith as “a fabricated and artificial form of Christianity” and referred to the church’s founder Joseph Smith as a “false prophet.”<sup>804</sup> Evangelicals across the country were therefore called upon to “witness to Mormons regarding the true gospel and urge them to believe in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.”<sup>805</sup> The issue also came to the fore again in the run-up to the 2012 presidential election. After introducing Texas Governor Rick Perry to a gathering of Christian conservatives as “a genuine follower of Jesus Christ,” Robert Jeffress, a prominent Southern Baptist preacher, laid into Perry’s primary opponent, expressing the view that Mitt Romney was “not a Christian” due to his denominational allegiance, pointing out that the “idea that Mormonism is a theological cult is not news either. That has been the historical position of Christianity for a long time.”<sup>806</sup>

There can be little doubt that Romney’s religious background and the disproportionate impact and clout white evangelical Protestants wield in Republican primaries – particularly in the South – served to drag out the primary process unnecessarily by causing a number of defeats for the Mormon governor.<sup>807</sup> In South Carolina for example, 60 percent of voters in the Republican primary answered that the religious beliefs of the candidates mattered a “great deal” or “somewhat.” Among these voters, Newt Gingrich won by 26 points over Romney with the former Massachusetts governor winning the remaining less religious voters by seven points, margins akin to those among the white evan-

802 All quotes: Roberts 1998: *Mormonism Unmasked*, back cover.

803 Quoted in: P. Mason 2011: *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South*, p. 192.

804 Both: Roberts 1998, p. 155.

805 Ibid.

806 All quoted in: Oppel, Eckholm 2011: “Prominent Pastor Calls Romney’s Church a Cult.” *New York Times*, October 7.

807 A fact which Romney’s campaign manager Matt Rhoades felt hurt his candidate’s chances against President Obama: “[A]t the end of the day, we had to spend \$87 million and came out in April against an incumbent candidate that just had so much money.” In this instance, Rhoades also referred to the proportional allocation of delegates in primaries held before April but the fact remains that the drawn out primary process – regardless of the particular reasons behind it – did little to help Romney in his quest to defeat an incumbent with deep pockets. Quoted in: The Institute of Politics at the Harvard Kennedy School 2013: *Campaign for President: The Managers Look at 2012*, p. 50.

gical electorate in the Palmetto State mentioned previously.<sup>808</sup> In Tennessee, a remarkable 76 percent of Republican primary voters also cared a great deal or somewhat about the candidates' religious beliefs with Rick Santorum carrying this demographic by a margin of 45 to 23 percent. Among the remaining voters, the margins were reversed as Romney won the less religious Tennessean electorate by 42 to 23 percent over Santorum.<sup>809</sup> Even though the exit poll data does not tell us which voters in particular cared to such a large extent about the religious denomination and stance of the candidates, there is a remarkable overlap if we compare the data of white evangelical Protestants to this group. 73 percent of voters in Tennessee's GOP primary were white evangelical or born-again Christians which Santorum won by 18 points, quite close to his 22-point margin among the 76 percent of Tennessean Republicans who profoundly cared about the religious backgrounds of the primary field.<sup>810</sup>

Of course the likelihood of seeing another Republican Mormon candidate in future election cycles is relatively low, meaning that the historical aversion to the Church of Latter-day Saints by white evangelical Protestants will probably remain a phenomenon of the 2008 and 2012 races. Nonetheless Mitt Romney's candidacy serves to highlight the tendency of the white evangelical community to disapprove of anyone who does not share their religion or is perceived to have differing religious values. Candidates wishing to gain the trust of this key voter bloc therefore have to turn into the aforementioned pretzel to please the GOP's base voters while keeping an eye on the general election and its substantially more moderate electorate. Democratic candidates undoubtedly have to bridge this gap as well but the existence of a continued *Southern exceptionalism* and the still increasing influence white Southerners and Evangelicals enjoy within the GOP means that Republicans are faced with a far more challenging task. The growing strength of the former Confederacy in the GOP's presidential selection process is also illustrated by the size of regional delegations to Republican presidential conventions. Between 1976 and 2012, the South increased its share among all Republican delegates by over four percentage points, rising from 23.6 to 28 percent. While the total number of Republican delegates increased by 27 between 1976 and 2012 (a rise of just 1.2 percent), the South added 107 delegates (an increase of over 20 percent), primarily at the expense of the Northeast and Midwest which lost a combined 221 members of their delegations.<sup>811</sup> A look at

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808 Cf. CNN 2012e.

809 Cf. CNN 2012i: *Tennessee Exit/Entrance Polls*, March 6.

810 Cf. *ibid.*

811 Losses of seats in Northeast and Midwest as well as data for total number of delegates from R. Cook 2012: "First to the Dance Wins: Lengthy Nominating Campaigns and Electability." *Sabato's Crystal Ball*, University of Virginia Center for Politics, March 8. If Kentucky and Oklahoma are included in the South's tally – an approach chosen by Cook – the region's

presidential history reveals the potential impact of these shifts. Had the 2012 composition been in place in 1976, Ronald Reagan might have won his party's nomination over President Ford that year.<sup>812</sup>

## II.1.4 Southernization of the GOP – Polarization of the nation

Few works on contemporary American politics can do without addressing the elephant in the room: Polarization. Expanding in great detail upon the myriad of factors behind recent increases in polarization and its specific traits would serve to break the already extensive scope of this book. There is a reason though why this particular topic area does fit into a work on the *Southernization* of the GOP; after all one of the primary driving forces behind the rift that has emerged in American national politics can be found in the realignment of the South.<sup>813</sup> The defection of white Southerners into the Republican Party along with the accompanying shift of moderate whites in the rest of the nation towards their Democratic opponents<sup>814</sup> has created two distinct, ideologically cohesive and clearly defined parties that have become synonymous with a dominant ideological strain (i. e. *liberalism* or *conservatism*). Assessing the repercussions of this trend – namely the impact a polarized electorate has on future presidential and congressional majorities – therefore helps answer the question to what extent the nation has been lost by gaining the South.

While delving into the phenomenon of polarization too deeply is not possible,

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share of 2012 delegates rises to 32 percent in 2012, up from around 27 percent in 1976. For data on delegate allocation in 2012 cf. The Green Papers 2014: *Republican Detailed Delegate Allocation – 2012*. January 25. For 1976 data cf. Wikipedia 2013: *1976 Republican National Convention: First Ballot Vote for the Presidential Nomination by State Delegation*. June 24.

812 Cf. R. Cook 2012.

813 As Christopher Hare and Keith T. Poole state, “[t]he roots of the modern trend to greater polarization can in part be found in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act” – two events which played an instrumental role in putting both Republicans and Democrats on the path towards becoming ideologically cohesive parties. Hare, Poole 2014: “The Polarization of Contemporary American Politics.” *Polity* 46(3), pp. 411–429, here p. 415. Richard Pildes reaches the same conclusion, stating that “the end of the twentieth-century one-party monopoly on the American South, which began with the 1965 enactment of the Voting Rights Act” represents a if not *the* seminal component of the “large-scale historical and transformative forces in American politics [that] account for the modern structure, coherence, and polarization of the Democratic and Republican parties of today.” Or, more directly stated, “the major cause of the extreme polarization of our era is the historical transformation of American democracy and America’s political parties set into motion by the 1965 Voting Rights Act,” an act whose passage and implementation “began what might be considered the ‘purification’ or ‘maturation’ of the American political system.” Pildes 2011: “Why the Center Does Not Hold: The Causes of Hyperpolarized Democracy in America.” *California Law Review* 99(2), pp. 273–334, here pp. 274 and 290.

814 Cf. data provided by Abramowitz, Knotts 2006, p. 105.

a short introduction into what exactly constitutes polarization is nonetheless a necessary prerequisite for truly understanding its extent, seeing as scholarly debate on the topic and the scale of polarization hinges on how exactly the matter is defined by the researchers in question. Scholars such as Morris Fiorina in particular argue that because there is scant evidence of Americans at the mass level having moved towards the extremities of the ideological spectrum, they have not become genuinely more polarized in their positions.<sup>815</sup> The past 40 years have after all seen few if any changes in the distribution of moderates and liberals/conservatives among Americans, with moderates still representing a plurality of the population to this day despite widespread claims of ever increasing ideological extremism among the general public. If Americans were indeed more polarized – Fiorina and his colleague Samuel Abrams contend – then the share of liberals and conservatives within the electorate should have seen a substantial increase in recent decades at the expense of the moderate group.<sup>816</sup> Fiorina does acknowledge that both parties are now more ideologically cohesive (or consistent) at both the elite and mass levels while pointing out that this development by itself does not denote an upsurge in ideological extremism though.<sup>817</sup> This cohesiveness found in both parties has materialized not by members within the parties moving further to the right or left but primarily through the process of the electorate sorting itself into two parties full of like-minded conservatives and liberals. Such a transformation is either achieved through a modification of inconsistent ideological preferences based on partisan affiliation (with mass level party members adjusting their own ideological positions to match those of the more consistent party elites) or an ideology driven realignment (as exemplified by white Southerners who held onto their conservative ideology while changing their partisan affiliation accordingly).<sup>818</sup> The

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815 Such a theoretical approach of using the ideological fringes as a measuring stick builds upon the most basic definition of polarization given by Paul DiMaggio, John Evans, and Bethany Bryson in their 1996 article “Have Americans’ Social Attitudes Become More Polarized?” Polarization as a “state” is – according to the authors – “the extent to which opinions on an issue are opposed in relation to some theoretical maximum.” As a process, polarization “refers to the increase in such opposition over time.” DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996: “Have Americans’ Social Attitudes Become More Polarized?” *American Journal of Sociology* 102(3), pp. 690–755, here p. 693.

816 Cf. Fiorina, Abrams 2014: “Americans aren’t polarized, just better sorted.” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, January 21.

817 Cf. Fiorina 2014: “Americans have not become more politically polarized.” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, June 23. As he notes, “[t]he confusion of the two concepts is fundamental,” with a misunderstanding of them leading to political commentators claiming that the wider public has become more extremist in its ideological positions when they actually mean to point out increases in ideological consistency.

818 Cf. Levendusky 2009: *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*, pp. 109–119.

former entails partisans adopting more ideologically consistent (but not necessarily more extremist) positions while the latter would involve few changes in terms of policy preferences at all – in neither case members of the American public are necessarily moving to the far fringes of the ideological spectrum though, thus indicating a lack of increasing polarization per Fiorina’s definition.<sup>819</sup>

Other scholars and analysts on the other hand reject this rather narrow definition of polarization as a phenomenon solely measured by gauging the width of the ideological gap between particular groups. According to a more encompassing conceptual approach, partisan-ideological sorting is by itself already an example of polarization through its repercussion of creating two distinct parties with little to no ideological overlap between them across a broad array of policy matters.<sup>820</sup> This process of Americans forming ideologically homogeneous parties by defecting their former political homes or altering their own specific ideological positions has undoubtedly played a central role in creating a political landscape (specifically in but not limited to presidential contests) consisting of a vast majority of either deeply blue or deeply red states

819 Cf. Fiorina 2014. For a more extensive exposition of this position cf. Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011: *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

820 Columnist Ezra Klein for example argues that “[p]olarization is a measure of how political actors sort themselves, not how extreme they are.” Klein 2014: “The single most important fact about American politics.” *Vox*, June 13. Hans Noel – who has written extensively about the topic – also contends that the increased ideological cohesiveness of both major American parties that has emerged in recent decades ought to be referred to as “sorting,” but as he points out, “it’s still polarization.” Noel 2014: “Polarization is about more than just sorting, but sorting is polarization anyway.” *The Mischiefs of Faction*, June 25. Specifically addressing Morris Fiorina, Alan Abramowitz on his part argues that “‘sorting’ has been one of the most important sources of polarization in American politics” because these changes in partisan allegiances have made it more difficult for moderates within both parties to gain elected office as the parties’ bases have been purged of centrist elements due to sorting. See Abramowitz rejoinder to Fiorina, Levendusky 2006: “Disconnected: The Political Class versus the People.” In: Nivola, Brady (eds.): *Red and Blue Nation? Volume One: Characteristics and Causes of America’s Polarized Politics*, pp. 49–71 (comments and rejoinders pp. 72–114), here p. 111 (for quote) and p. 114 for role of sorting in creating less moderate parties. In a similar vein, while also taking on the narrow definition of polarization preferred by Fiorina, Gary C. Jacobson contends that “sorting alone may foster polarized politics by generating distributions of opinion summed across sets of issues that are *in aggregate* more polarized and more extreme.” Jacobson 2012: “The Electoral Origins of Polarized Politics: Evidence From the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 56(12), pp. 1612–1630, here p. 1614. Sean Theriault also arrives at the conclusion that the sorting of the electorate has created an alignment in which both the party leadership and the wider electorate of different members of Congress are on the same page ideologically. Gone are the days when members of Congress were torn between what the national party leadership and their constituents wanted. This “dilemma [...] has dissipated as the preferences of a member’s party and her constituency have increasingly aligned.” Theriault 2008: *Party Polarization in Congress*, p. 5.

(and districts) with a handful of battleground states in the middle as will be illustrated in this chapter. Moreover, ideological consistency by itself can play just as important a role in the increasing gulf between both parties as a growth in ideological extremism does. As Dalia Baldassarri and Andrew Gelman note, “[f]rom a substantive viewpoint, if people aligned along multiple, potentially divisive issues, even if they did not take extreme positions on each of them, the end result would be a polarized society.”<sup>821</sup> In a similar vein, Alan Abramowitz contends that “[f]or elites as well as for the mass public, ideological polarization is defined by *consistency* across issues [emphasis added].”<sup>822</sup>

It therefore makes sense to discard the narrower definition preferred by Fiorina and consider the partisan-ideological sorting precipitated by the realignment of white Southerners to be an integral part of the phenomenon of polarization, making it a relevant topic to discuss within this book. As one can point out to Fiorina, this realignment has after all created the current political environment devoid of centrist politicians and shifting bipartisan legislative coalitions, a stark difference from the political party system in place before the Southern defection into the Republican camp. Moreover, a significant amount of scholarly analysis and academic work does bolster the assertion that aside from the voter sorting triggered and driven by the realignment of the South, elite and to a lesser extent mass level polarization (in terms of moving towards the ideological fringes)<sup>823</sup> has indeed seen an increase over the past few decades<sup>824</sup>

821 Baldassarri, Gelman 2008: “Partisans without Constraint: Political Polarization and Trends in American Public Opinion.” *American Journal of Sociology* 114(2), pp. 408–446, here p. 409.

822 Abramowitz 2010: *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy*, p. 35.

823 The most prominent example of elite level polarization would be Congress. As the DW-Nominate scores we will see later on in this chapter illustrate, “the level of polarization in Congress is” – in the words of Christopher Hare and Keith T. Poole – “now the highest since the end of the Civil War and shows no sign that it will abate.” Hare, Poole 2014, p. 413.

824 Cf. for example Abramowitz, Saunders 2008: “Is Polarization a Myth?” *The Journal of Politics* 70(2), pp. 542–555. An overview regarding the literature on polarization can be found in Hetherington 2009: “Putting Polarization in Perspective.” *British Journal of Political Science* 39(2), pp. 413–448 and Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006: “Party Polarization in American Politics: Characteristics, Causes, and Consequences.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, pp. 83–110. Hetherington for example concludes that at the elite level polarization exists no matter what kind of definition one chooses to employ. At the mass level it appears that “sorting” is the primary culprit behind what is commonly considered to be “polarization” with mass attitudes by and large not polarized. Layman, Carsey and Horowitz on their part find that while clear divisions between the parties have been commonplace in American politics for quite a while, “the parties’ elites, mass coalitions, and activist bases have become sharply divided along the lines of multiple policy dimensions,” (p. 104) a development that constitutes a relatively recent phenomenon. For an analysis on what may be driving the growing polarization of the American public cf. e.g. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008: *Polarized America – The Dance of Ideology and*

while the share of Americans who hold consistently liberal or conservative issue positions across a broad spectrum of economic and social policy questions has also grown substantially as the GOP has become more *southernized*.<sup>825</sup> Regardless of the specific details and theoretical approaches, bridging a partisan gap that today largely overlaps with its ideological cousin is an endeavor that appears to become increasingly difficult with each passing election.

The Southern centrality on this matter is demonstrated by studies on public opinion that indeed reveal an acceleration in party polarization as the Republican Party's Southern wing has increased its sway over the party. The year the GOP gained control of the U.S. House for the first time in over 40 years (1994), 64 percent of Republicans were more conservative than the median Democrat. A decade later this share had risen to 70 percent before leaping to 92 percent another ten years later.<sup>826</sup> As both parties have become synonymous with a certain ideological outlook, animus towards the political opponents has also risen in a remarkable manner, making it increasingly difficult for politicians to find bipartisan agreement as this does little to endear them to their party's base. In 1994 for example, 16 percent of Democrats and 17 percent of Republicans had a "very unfavorable" view towards the other party. As of 2014, those respective shares stood at 38 and 43 percent.<sup>827</sup> These developments have unsurprisingly gone hand in hand with a substantial decrease in the share of Americans who feel comfortable with switching their partisan allegiance. One of the more notable examples of this trend is the demise of the split-ticket voter. While 44 percent of all congressional districts split their vote in 1984 – meaning that their congressional representative did not share the same partisan affiliation as the presidential candidate preferred by the district – just six percent of all districts in the 2012 elections were in the split ticket column.<sup>828</sup>

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*Unequal Riches*. The authors find a "common trajectory of polarization and inequality" (p. 6), in other words a kind of vicious circle in which growth of the latter leads to increases in the former – in turn these higher levels of political polarization then lead to the passage of policies which facilitate even higher levels of inequality.

825 In 1994, three and seven percent of Americans held "consistently" liberal or conservative positions respectively (based on responses to ten political values questions). Twenty years later those shares had risen to twelve and nine percent respectively, meaning that the overall share of ideologically consistent Americans had more than doubled from ten to twenty-one percent. The share of Americans possessing "mixed" views dropped by ten percentage points during the same period, from 49 to 39 percent. As the authors of the report do point out though, "being ideologically consistent does not equate to being politically 'extreme.'" Respondents may for example have consistently liberal views across the entire policy range spectrum but their positions within those policy realms may not necessarily be extremely liberal. Cf. Pew Research Center 2014e: *Political Polarization in the American Public*, June 12, p. 21.

826 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 9.

827 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 6.

828 For 1984 data cf. Paulson 2007, p. 124. For 2012 data cf. Wasserman 2012.



A significant decline in partisan overlap is also reflected within the halls of Congress. The earlier mentioned congressional vote ratings by the National Journal highlight the widening rift between both parties quite well. In 1982, when the National Journal first published its congressional voting records, 58 Senators and 344 members of the House compiled records that were located between the most liberal Republican and most conservative Democrat in each chamber.<sup>829</sup> The 2012 National Journal voting records showed that even the most conservative Democrat in the Senate compiled a more liberal voting record than that of the most liberal Republican while in the House just 13 members (nine Democrats and four Republicans) compiled a rating within that centrist section.<sup>830</sup> At the mass level we encounter an electorate that reflects these strong divisions, appearing relatively set in its partisan preferences because they dovetail with their ideological ones, leaving as we will see in this chapter few openings for either party to for example poach states from each other in presidential elections. This rigidity of the voting public along with the conservatizing trend of the GOP that has gone hand in hand with its *Southernization* appears to be good news for the Democratic Party at least. If we assume that America's future electorate leans left – as the data in subsequent demographics chapters will demonstrate – then the immense influx of Southern white conservatives and the simultaneous exodus of moderates has put the Republican Party in a precarious position seeing as there are now few non-conservatives left within the party who can possibly nudge it back in a more centrist direction.

A wide range of scholarly analysis also supports the assertion that the influx of white Southerners has brought about today's polarized politics at whose center stands a "confluence of party and ideology"<sup>831</sup> in which the liberal label is synonymous with the Democratic Party while the GOP's brand is unashamedly and virtually exclusively conservative. Jeffrey Stonecash for example contends that "today's polarization is the product of today's issues and yesterday's political realignment."<sup>832</sup> Explicitly mentioning the South, M.V. Hood III, Quentin Kidd and Irwin Morris conclude that "Southern political dynamics enabled the development of whatever ideological polarization exists in the modern party system,"<sup>833</sup> while John Aldrich also believes "[t]he eventual emergence of a two-

829 Cf. J.A. Farrell 2012: "Divided We Stand." *National Journal*, February 23.

830 Cf. National Journal 2013a: *National Journal Vote Ratings: 2012 House Ratings* and National Journal 2013b: *National Journal Vote Ratings: 2012 Senate Ratings*.

831 Masket 2014b: "What the Decline of Partisanship Would Look Like." *Pacific Standard*, April 28.

832 Stonecash 2014: "The two key factors behind our polarized politics." *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, January 24.

833 Hood III, Kidd, and Morris 2012, p. 187.

party South [...] re-polarized the two parties in Washington.”<sup>834</sup> Matthew Levendusky adds weight to the hypothesis that the South has been one of the primary driving forces behind the changes the American party and broader political systems have undergone over the past half a century when he argues that “the South [...] played a crucial role in the sorting process”<sup>835</sup> of voters across the nation into two clearly separated parties. According to Levendusky, the desertion of the Southern Democratic Party by its conservative elites and their entry into the GOP triggered the elite polarization which precipitated the subsequent sorting of the general electorate throughout the United States.<sup>836</sup> As has been argued and shown in the book in front of you as well, Levendusky notes that the civil rights revolution and the response of both parties to this policy issue – which ultimately established the foundation for today’s Republican *Solid South* – “helped to shape their destinies for the next generation, not only in the South but throughout the nation.”<sup>837</sup>

Seeing as the Republican conquest of the South is widely seen as a key catalyst for today’s polarized politics, the lion’s share for the polarization phenomenon is therefore unsurprisingly placed squarely on the shoulders of the Republican Party. Paul Street and Anthony DiMaggio argue that “the rightward shift of the Republican Party is the main cause of such polarization as exists,”<sup>838</sup> while other notable scholars (Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal) who have spent decades examining the widening rift between both parties consider polarization to be a “Republican-led phenomenon.”<sup>839</sup> Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein (the latter a resident scholar at the conservative *American Enterprise Institute*) do not hold back on their criticism of the GOP either, referring to the party as an “insurgent outlier”<sup>840</sup> whose elected officials “have driven both the widening of the ideological gap between the parties and the strategic hyper-partisanship”<sup>841</sup> on a variety of key issues that have in recent years dominated American public and political discourse. On his part, Seth Masket arrives at the conclusion that “the bulk of recent polarization is one-sided, stemming largely

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834 Aldrich 2015: “Did Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison ‘Cause’ the U.S. Government Shut-down? The Institutional Path from an Eighteenth Century Republic to a Twenty-first Century Democracy.” *Perspectives on Politics* 13(1), pp. 7–23, here p. 9.

835 Levendusky 2009, p. 63.

836 Cf. *ibid.*

837 *Ibid.*

838 Street, DiMaggio 2012: “Beyond the Tea Party: Dismal Democrats, Radical Republicans, Debt Ceiling Drama, and the Long Right Tilt in the Age of Obama.” *Critical Sociology* 38(4), pp. 549–563, here p. 557.

839 Hare, McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2012: “Polarization is Real (and Asymmetric).” *Vo-view*, May 16.

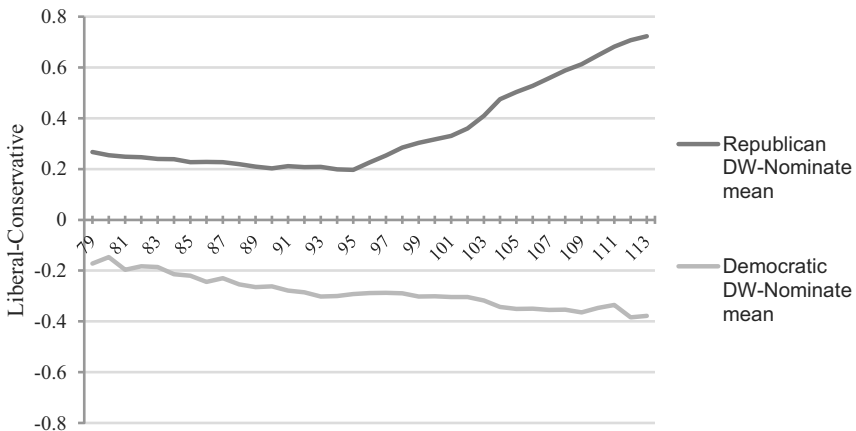
840 Mann, Ornstein 2012: *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*, p. 185.

841 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

from the rightward movement of Republicans,” meaning that therefore “[o]ne is tempted to conclude that a large part of the polarization problem is the modern Republican Party.”<sup>842</sup> The increasing polarization of the nation is thus closely tied to the *Southernization* of the Republican Party, a development that has shifted the party’s center of gravity far more to the right than that of its Democratic counterpart has moved to the left.

### The repercussions

The immense changes brought about by the Southern realignment are made evident by the ideological shifts that have transpired within the Republican House Conference in particular. In this case, we once again turn to the DW-Nominate scores, specifically the (first dimension) mean scores of the Republican and Democratic caucuses in the U.S. House since World War II as assembled by Keith Poole and his colleagues. The scores provide an overview of the attitude by both congressional parties towards the government’s role in the economic sphere and are as such “a good measure of the level of political polarization.”<sup>843</sup>



**Figure II.1.4:** DW-Nominate Party means in House of Representatives on liberal-conservative dimension, 79<sup>th</sup> (1945) through 113<sup>th</sup> (2013) Congress.<sup>844</sup>

842 Masket 2014a: “Mitigating Extreme Partisanship in an Era of Networked Parties: An Examination of Various Reform Strategies.” *Brookings Institution – Center for Effective Public Management*, March, p. 15.

843 Poole 2015b.

844 For data cf. Poole 2015a: *House Polarization 1<sup>st</sup> to 113<sup>th</sup> Congresses*. Data as of March 21, 2015.

The data shows quite clearly just how momentous the GOP's shift to the right in the House of Representatives has been, starting in the late 1970s (96<sup>th</sup> Congress onward) and accelerating even more when the South finally began to vote Republican in congressional elections in the early 1990s, a trend leading to the conclusion that the atrophy of moderate positions within Republican congressional ranks is a corollary of both the Southernization of the GOP and the measures that laid the foundations for this development. What the DW-Nominate mean scores also show is that scholars who place the blame for today's polarization on the Republican Party appear to have identified the right culprit. Between 1975 (94<sup>th</sup> Congress) and 2013/15 (113<sup>th</sup> Congress), the Democratic House caucus moved to the left by 0.078 points (from a DW-Nominate mean score of -0.3 on the liberal-conservative [i. e. first] dimension to -0.378). During the same period, the GOP House Conference on its part moved to the right by 0.523 points (from 0.199 to 0.722). In other words, the Republican caucus in the House moved almost 6.7 times more to the right (i. e. in a more conservative direction) than Democrats moved towards a more liberal position – the latter shift to some extent being an artifact of the demise of the conservative white Southern Democrat. This asymmetry is therefore even more pronounced if the DW-Nominate mean scores of non-Southern Democrats by themselves are assessed in more detail. This particular group moved only marginally to the left during the period in question (from -0.369 in 1975 to -0.384 at the conclusion of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, a change of 0.015 points). Compared to the Republican data, this means that the GOP House Conference has moved a stunning 35 times more to the right than non-Southern Democrats have shifted to the left over the past 40 years.

A comparison of the Republican House conferences during the last two shutdowns in 1995/96 and 2013 also provides a remarkable insight into how far the GOP has moved to the right over the course of a mere two decades. Using DW-Nominate scores once again, we can see that the ideological positions held by those in the 90<sup>th</sup> conservative percentile of the Republican House conference during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (during which the 95/96 shutdown occurred) were found among those in the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile of the GOP caucus in 2013 (a DW-Nominate score of 0.67; see table II.1.4.a).<sup>845</sup> In other words, positions held by just the ten most conservative percent of the GOP House caucus during the mid-1990s shutdown were held by 60 percent of the party's House members during the most recent one. At the same time, the ideological stance that would have placed a Republican House legislator near the median of his caucus during the mid-90s would yield a place at around the 10<sup>th</sup> conservative percentile of the 2013 Republican House conference.

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845 Cf. T. Hall 2013.

**Table II.1.4.a:** *DW-Nominate scores of percentiles in Republican House caucus, 104<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.*<sup>846</sup>

Percentile of GOP House caucus	104 <sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress (1995–97)	113 <sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress (2013–15)
10	0.25	0.48
20	0.32	0.53
30	0.37	0.61
40	0.42	0.67
50	0.46	0.72
60	0.50	0.76
70	0.54	0.80
80	0.60	0.86
90	0.67	0.95

Hardly any changes could be detected on the Democratic side on the other hand. The median member of the Democratic caucus of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress would still be near the median of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress caucus as well while the DW-Nominate scores of the most liberal Democrats (from the 80<sup>th</sup> to the 100<sup>th</sup> percentile) have also largely remained unchanged. Only the most conservative Democrats (from 0 to the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile) possessed a noticeably more liberal DW-Nominate score in 2013,<sup>847</sup> not much of surprise considering the exodus of the remaining white Southerners from the ranks of the Democratic Party in the years since the Republican Revolution of 1994.

The data above as well as additional numbers concerning presidential elections that will be elaborated upon over the coming pages, most certainly appear to indicate that America's polarization has grown both at the congressional as well as the public level, having had a profound effect on the Republican Party in particular. The sorting of the electorate precipitated by the white Southern realignment into the GOP has created two ideologically cohesive parties deeply divided by an ideological rift. For the remaining Republican moderates this means adjusting to a changing base. In such an environment, conservative activists after all see little reason for continuing to be represented by what they perceive to be RINOs (an acronym for "Republican in name only"); an attitude driving internecine Republican feuding that is not as widespread on the Democratic side.<sup>848</sup> The Tea Party's activism (analyzed in more detail in chapter II.3.2) and its threats of *primarying* congressional Republicans deemed to be too

846 Cf. *ibid.*

847 Cf. *ibid.*

848 Cf. Boatright 2009: "Getting Primaried: The Growth and Consequences of Ideological Primaries." *Paper prepared for the "State of the Parties" Conference at the University of Akron, October 14–16 2009.*

moderate appear to have yielded a fair degree of success in pushing former moderates further to the right as they attempt to protect themselves against conservative primary challengers. The following data in table II.1.4.b comes from the conservative Club for Growth's congressional scorecard which rates members of congress according to their legislative track records. The higher the number, the more in line members of Congress are with the Club for Growth's views and agenda. Even though this manner of measuring increasing conservatism is more inexact than the aforementioned GOP House DW-Nominate scores, they nonetheless present us with a rather similar picture.

**Table II.1.4.b:** *Club for Growth Congressional Scorecard, 2005–2012 (shading indicates a score above the lifetime average [LTA]):*<sup>849</sup>

Senator	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	LTA
McCain (AZ)	76	76	94	54	100	97	92	91	85
Graham (SC)	72	86	80	52	81	85	72	86	77
Hatch (UT)	74	66	53	69	88	97	99	93	80
Shelby (AL)	73	55	69	81	83	90	91	66	76
Corker (TN)	-	-	61	73	84	94	93	84	81
Thune (SD)	61	80	74	82	99	94	89	62	80
Sessions (AL)	92	79	70	84	100	94	91	78	86
Lugar (IN)	69	52	57	54	76	70	80	52	64
Snowe (ME)	18	9	12	12	53	49	55	50	32

As the increase in shaded brackets indicates, quite a few Republican senators have moved to the right in recent years. Looking at the first four years (2005 through 2008) on the scorecard, we see just six out of 34 instances in which the GOP senators in question received a score above their lifetime average (constituting a share of 17.6 percent). The second four-year period provides a stark contrast: 31 of 36 annual scores are above the senators' lifetime averages, a remarkably high percentage of 86.1 percent.

Senator Richard Lugar's experience in particular highlights how the changing partisan and congressional environment within the GOP has put moderates at risk. During the Indiana senator's more than 30-year career on the Hill, his DW-Nominate scores indicate that Lugar did indeed move slightly to the center, from a score of 0.348 to 0.241, a nonetheless rather small change of just five percent on the liberal-conservative dimension used to calculate DW-Nominate scores.<sup>850</sup> During his first term in the Senate, Richard Lugar was the 23<sup>rd</sup> most moderate Republican; by 2011 he had moved into 5<sup>th</sup> place though. Had he maintained his slightly more conservative score, he would still have been the 12<sup>th</sup> most moderate

849 Cf. Club for Growth 2013a: *The Club's Congressional Scorecard*.

850 Cf. Hare, McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2012.

Republican in the Senate.<sup>851</sup> Lugar's fate of moving to the left by simple virtue of the fact that the Republican Party around him shifted to the right in such a substantial manner and his primary defeat at the hands of Richard Mourdock in 2012 symbolize the extent to which the GOP has changed in recent decades, a trend that has not gone unnoticed. "If Dick Lugar [...] is seriously challenged by anybody in the Republican Party, we have gone so far overboard that we are beyond redemption,"<sup>852</sup> is how former U.S. Senator John Danforth described the intertwined fate of Richard Lugar and his party in 2010. The fact that Lugar was not only challenged but defeated comfortably by over 20 points by a fellow Republican is a testament to the immense rightward shift that has taken place within the GOP.

### The future quest for presidential majorities

Looking at some of the most recent presidential elections, one is tempted to conclude that we are living in one of the most competitive political eras in a long while, indicating that Republicans should perhaps not be overly worried about returning to the White House. Three of the past four elections saw popular vote winning margins below four points with President Obama's election in 2008 providing the sole exception. This is a stark contrast to the previous five presidential elections that were on average decided by a winning margin of 9.9 points. Once we delve deeper we see that far from presidential contests becoming more competitive, states are now actually increasingly staunchly Republican or Democratic, leaving fewer and fewer battleground states for the candidates to vie over. The 1976, 2004, and 2012 elections provide a good way of gauging these changes since they were won by relatively similar popular vote margins at the national level. Jimmy Carter won by 2.1, George W. Bush by 2.5 and Barack Obama by 3.9 points. Focusing on the state level data on the other hand provides a revealing look at the state of hyperpolarization the nation is in right now. In 1976, 20 states were won with a winning margin below five percentage points – states that the losing candidate's party could conceivably have hoped to potentially carry four years later. By 2004 that number had decreased to just eleven while dropping to four by the time Barack Obama was re-elected. The bad news for the Republican side is that even if Mitt Romney had won all of the closely contested states in question – he wound up losing Florida, Ohio, and Virginia

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851 Cf. *ibid.*

852 Quoted in: Kabaservice 2012b: "Who Ever Said Dick Lugar Was a Moderate?" *The New Republic*, May 10.

while carrying North Carolina – he would still have been four electoral votes short of the necessary 270 to win the presidency.

Unsurprisingly we see a similar development at the other end of the spectrum. Both Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford won a combined 20 states (including Washington, D.C.) by ten points or more. That number had expanded to 30 by 2004 and 36 in 2012.<sup>853</sup> The average winning margin across the 50 states provides a similar picture. In 1976 that number stood at 8.9 percentage points.<sup>854</sup> The contest between George W. Bush and John Kerry – which just to remember was decided by virtually the same national winning margin as the 1976 race – saw an average state winning margin of 14.8 points though while it had expanded to 17.2 points another eight years later.<sup>855</sup> The increasing polarization and division of the country into two solidly red and blue state blocs that leaves fewer openings for each party becomes glaringly obvious if one takes into consideration that the 1988 win by George H. W. Bush over Michael Dukakis (a blowout by today's standards with a 7.7 point national lead for Bush) came with an average state margin of "just" 12.7 percentage points, constituting a difference of merely five points vis-à-vis the national popular vote margin and a stark contrast to the 13.3 point divergence seen in the 2012 presidential election.<sup>856</sup> Data from the county level shows a similar development. While 26.8 percent of all Americans lived in so called "landslide counties" in which the margin of victory by a presidential candidate exceeded 20 points in 1976, that share had gone up to 45.3 percent by 2000 (despite the fact that the election was actually closer) and 52 percent in 2012, therefore almost double what it was back in 1976.<sup>857</sup>

If we turn our attention to the six presidential elections between 1992 and 2012, we see how rigid American's current majorities and the nation's regional polarization appear to be.<sup>858</sup> Overall, 39 states (and Washington, D.C.) were won by either party five times or more during that two-decade period, leaving just 11 states in the more competitive column. Even among those latter states we see a particular group that is rather unlikely to switch allegiance anytime soon, namely six states that were carried by Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 but voted

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853 Own calculations based on data from Leip 2014.

854 Cf. Abramowitz, Saunders 2005: "Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America." *The Forum* 3(2), pp. 1–22, here p. 11.

855 Own calculations based on data from Leip. 2014.

856 Own calculations based on data from Leip. 2014.

857 Cf. Edsall 2013b: "How Fragile Is the New Democratic Coalition?" *New York Times*, September 3.

858 Note that William Galston and Elaine Kamarck make a similar point along with the same calculations in their article "The New Politics of Evasion" (2013, in: *Democracy* 30, pp. 8–24, in particular pp. 18–19). The calculations in this book were made completely independently though.



Republican in the four subsequent presidential elections since.<sup>859</sup> This leaves Colorado, Florida (the sole two states that evenly split their vote between 1992 and 2012), Nevada, Ohio, and Virginia as the sole true battleground states according to this calculation. This trend provides Republicans with a mixed bag of hope and despair. The solidly leaning Republican states (won five or six times by the GOP between 1992 and 2012)<sup>860</sup> along with the aforementioned six Clinton states add up to a combined total of 206 electoral votes according to the latest census reapportionment – exactly the amount Mitt Romney won in 2012. Most certainly a solid base from which to launch a quest for the 270 electoral votes necessary to win the presidency. There is a flip side to this story though as Democrats have established a blue fortress of their own. All of the staunchly Democratic states (i. e. the ones won five or six times which includes Washington, D.C. and its three electoral votes)<sup>861</sup> add up to a stunning 257 electoral votes, just 13 shy of the magic 270-mark. Any Democratic candidate who wins this group of states only has to add a recently Democratic trending state like Virginia – or the Mountain West combo of Colorado and Nevada – to their total and they end election night as winners. As we will see in the chapters on demographic changes, a degree of the partisan shifts in the aforementioned three states as well as Florida can be put down to the shrinking weight the white electorate carries in those states as they have become more Hispanic, a voter group that finds little attraction in the GOP's vehement anti-statism in the economic sphere.<sup>862</sup> Being the party of white Southern conservatism is therefore paying ever smaller dividends in these four key states that were all carried by a Republican candidate in both 2000 and 2004 and that any GOP presidential hopeful can ill afford to lose if they want to stand a chance of moving into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

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859 Those states are: Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Louisiana, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

860 Those states are: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming.

861 Those states are: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, Washington, D.C., and Wisconsin.

862 It is worth remembering that in all four states (CO, FL, NV, and VA) Mitt Romney managed to fare better than John McCain among white voters. In Florida and Nevada, he even exceeded President Bush's 2004 winning margins among whites which nonetheless was not enough to replicate the former president's wins in those states though. For data cf. New York Times 2012d: *President Exit Polls*.

## The future quest for congressional majorities

At the congressional level the situation does look somewhat different regarding the GOP's majority prospects. Overall, we are seeing a growing trend of the rigid partisan allegiances that have emerged at the presidential level being replicated in both House and Senate elections as well, as the electorate appears to be increasingly following national cues in these state contests. At least in the House this provides the Republican Party with an easier path to victory. As already indicated earlier, Southern success has allowed the GOP to be in a position in which roughly 40 to 41 percent of all non-Southern seats suffice in providing the party with a House majority if it replicates its 70 percent winning percentage in the South. Furthermore, similar to the widening state margins in presidential elections we are seeing a substantial decrease in competitive House races. According to the earlier mentioned Cook Partisan Voting Index which measures the partisan lean of a district compared to the national lean, the number of "competitive-range districts"<sup>863</sup> has dropped by 45 percent from a total of 164 to 90 between 1998 and 2013.<sup>864</sup> Potential openings for a party to pick up a seat from their opponents are therefore few and far in between. Just 63 of the 435 House races (14.5 percent) in 2012 saw a winning margin below ten percentage points.<sup>865</sup> That the playing field is tilted in the Republican favor in House races was made abundantly clear in this very same election which saw the GOP gain their second largest majority in the House since the late 1940s despite losing the popular House vote by almost 1.4 million votes.<sup>866</sup> Some of this may be down to some of the more brazen redistricting techniques employed by Republican state legislatures.<sup>867</sup> At the same time though, the Democratic base is primarily found bunched up in urban districts with Democratic candidates often running up huge margins in these population centers while Republicans on the other hand have fewer wasted votes in their rural districts. In their extensive research incorporating data from across the U.S., Jowei Chen and Jonathan Rodden for example arrived at the conclusion that in many states Democrats can be expected

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863 Defined as being in the range between R+5 to D+5, in other words districts that lean five percentage points or less to the right or left compared to the nation as a whole.

864 Cf. Wasserman 2013a: "Introducing the 2014 Cook Political Report Partisan Voter Index." *The Cook Political Report*, April 4.

865 Cf. Ballotpedia 2012b.

866 Cf. Wasserman 2012 for data on House elections.

867 In their assessment of the 2012 House elections, the *Brennan Center for Justice* for example reached the conclusion that redrawn district lines added a net of six seats to the Republican total. While the Democrats are guilty of gerrymandering themselves, Republicans redrew district borders for four times as many districts ahead of the 2012 congressional contest as the Democrats did. Cf. Iyer 2012: "Redistricting and Congressional Control Following the 2012 Election." *Brennan Center for Justice*, November 20, p. 1.

to win fewer than 50 percent of all seats while winning 50 percent of the vote even without any partisan gerrymandering efforts because Democratic voters tend to be “inefficiently clustered in urban areas.”<sup>868</sup>

The combination of what we could call “natural” – or in the words of Chen and Rodden “unintentional” – gerrymandering and its partisan “intentional” counterpart has led to some remarkable results in recent congressional elections. Despite winning the 2012 popular House vote in Pennsylvania, Democrats won just five of the state’s 18 U.S. House seats. Three of the five carried 75 percent of their largely urban districts as two actually won upwards of 85 percent of the vote. Nine of the 13 Republicans elected to the House from the Keystone State on the other hand won less than 60 percent of the vote in their respective districts, with the highest Republican share in the state coming in Pennsylvania’s 10<sup>th</sup> Congressional District with 65.9 percent.<sup>869</sup> Expanding the scope of the analysis a bit and incorporating a number of key battleground states reveals a large rift between the 2012 House popular vote and the actual allocation of seats which favors the GOP. Aforementioned Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin were all won by President Obama while Democratic House candidates overall won a majority of the popular vote in Michigan (D: 50.89 % – R: 45.62 %), Pennsylvania (D: 50.28 % – R: 48.77 %), and Wisconsin (D: 50.42 % – R: 48.92 %). Ohio’s Democrats trailed their GOP counterparts by just a couple of percentage points (D: 46.91 % – R: 50.96 %). Yet Republicans managed to win 39 of the 56 seats (69.6 percent) these four states hold in the House of Representatives, all of this despite losing the overall popular vote in the states in question by close to a percentage point (D: 49.5 % – R: 48.6 %).<sup>870</sup>

Factors like the strong and safe Southern Republican base along with the large amount of wasted votes compared to their Republican counterparts has made the Democratic goal of retaking the U.S. House a rather herculean task. Theodore Arrington of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte estimates that Democrats would have to win at least 53 percent of the two-party popular vote if they want to obtain a majority in the House of Representatives in this decade. An even 50–50 split would yield just 45 to 46 percent of all House seats in the Democratic camp.<sup>871</sup> Calculations made by Alan Abramowitz paint an even

868 Chen, Rodden 2013: “Unintentional Gerrymandering: Political Geography and Electoral Bias in Legislatures.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 8(3), pp. 239–269, here p. 261.

869 For data cf. New York Times 2012c: *Election 2012 – Pennsylvania House of Representatives Results*.

870 Own calculations based on data obtained from Haas 2013. The Republican/Democratic House seat split in these states looked like this: Michigan: 9–5, Ohio: 12–4, Pennsylvania 13–5, Wisconsin 5–3.

871 Cf. Arrington 2013: “The Republicans’ Built-in House Advantage.” *Sabato’s Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, October 3.

gloomier picture for the Democrats. His forecasting model for the 2014 mid-terms estimated that in order to gain the 17 seats necessary for retaking the House, Democrats would have had to win the nationwide ballot by at least 13 percentage points. In case of a tie in the popular vote, Abramowitz's model actually predicted a six seat gain for the GOP.<sup>872</sup> The final result gave Republicans a 59 seat lead, as the party gained 13 seats and thus obtained their largest majority since the late 1920s despite only winning the popular House vote by 5.7 points.<sup>873</sup> As political analyst Charlie Cook states quite bluntly, "Republicans would need to mess up pretty badly to lose their House majority in the near future."<sup>874</sup>

Control over the Senate is far more uncertain, not least because the South carries notably less weight in this congressional chamber. Similar to the House we are nonetheless also seeing a trend towards an apparent nationalization of Senate contests as voters bring their senate vote in line with their presidential preferences.<sup>875</sup> After Bill Clinton's 1996 re-election, Democrats held 60.3 percent of all Senate seats in the 29 states he had won twice (35 out of 58 seats). When President Obama began his second term in 2013 that share had risen to 78.8 percent as Democrats held 41 out of the 52 seats in the 26 states he carried both in 2008 and 2012. If we include the two independent Senators Angus King of Maine and Bernie Sanders of Vermont who caucused with the Democrats during the 113<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress the share increases even further, rising to 82.7 percent.<sup>876</sup> A similar story has transpired on the Republican side. George H. W. Bush won just 18 states in 1992, with those eighteen also representing the states that he won twice. Even though one can most certainly contend that the states in question represented the Republican core back in 1992 (seeing as no Republican presi-

872 Cf. Abramowitz 2013a: "Midterm Forecast: Democrats May Gain House Seats in 2014 but Majority Probably Out of Reach." *Sabato's Crystal Ball*, University of Virginia Center for Politics, February 7.

873 A result roughly in line with Abramowitz's model which called for a 16 seat gain for the GOP in case of a six-point Republican lead in the generic house ballot. For 2014 House election results cf. Wasserman, Fulton, and Barry 2014: "2014 National House Popular Vote Tracker." *The Cook Political Report*. Data as of December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

874 C. Cook 2012a: "Wave Bye-Bye." *National Journal*, June 21.

875 As Alan Abramowitz points out, the correlation between presidential approval ratings and the vote for a candidate of the presidential party in senate elections has increased quite substantially in recent decades. During the period from 1972 through 1980 for example, an average of 61 percent of Americans who approved of the president also voted for a candidate of his party in senate elections. By 2012, 90 percent of voters who approved of the job President Obama was doing also voted for a Democratic candidate in that year's senate contests. Cf. Abramowitz 2014a.

876 The National Journal's Ronald Brownstein inspired these calculations with data of his own that does not specify the percentages though (cf. Brownstein 2014: "Why the Senate Will Only Get More Polarized." *National Journal*, January 3.). Own calculations are based on data obtained from Leip 2014 and United States Senate 2014b: *Senate State Information*.

dential candidate has won fewer states since), the GOP actually only controlled 63.9 percent of the 36 Senate seats from these states as the 103<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Congress convened in January of 1993.<sup>877</sup> More than twenty years later, we can note a stronger correlation between presidential and senate preferences on the Republican side as well. If we have a look at the 22 states that were won both by John McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012, we see that the GOP controlled 77.3 percent (34 out of 44) of the Senate seats in those states after the 2012 elections.<sup>878</sup> One of the key reasons why the GOP took back the Senate in 2014 was the fact that it won six seats in a number of deeply red states that had previously sent Democrats to Washington, D.C. but had also voted Republican both in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections (those states being: Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Montana, South Dakota, and West Virginia). Once those newly elected Senators are added to the Republican tally, the share of Senate seats controlled by the GOP in the states won by both John McCain and Mitt Romney rises to 90.9 percent (40 out of 44), a remarkable increase over the share in place during the early 90s.<sup>879</sup> If we use the 24 states Mitt Romney won in 2012 as a baseline and assume that the party will have a decent chance of controlling the vast majority of U.S. Senate seats in the states in question in future years we see that while the Democrats may appear to have a slight advantage in the Senate as well, the Republican Party nonetheless is within striking distance, indicating that any predictions about the party fading into irrelevance appear to be premature, particularly when focusing on the legislative level.

#### Conclusion: The aftershocks of *Southernization*

The variety of data included in this chapter buttresses the assertion that an avalanche of polarization has been triggered by the Republican Party's strategy to conquer the South and its eventual success in the region both at the presidential *and* congressional levels. The *Southern Strategy* and subsequent *Southernization* of the GOP have also created a Republican Party that is far more removed from the political center than its Democratic counterpart is, making it more difficult for Republicans to appeal to moderates. Furthermore, today's

877 23 Senators. Later changes in partisan affiliation are not included. Alabama's Richard Shelby for example joined the Republican Party in November of 1994 after having been a Democrat for 30 years. Own calculations based on data obtained from Leip 2014 and United States Senate 2014b.

878 Own calculations based on data obtained from Leip 2014 and United States Senate 2014b.

879 At the same time, the share of Senate seats controlled by the Democrats in states won by President Obama twice decreased from 78.9 to 75 percent due to the losses incurred in Iowa and Colorado.

polarization appears to have pervaded every political level as fewer and fewer states and House districts remain in the competitive column. Contrary to previous decades, both parties and its set of supporters are now not just divided along partisan but also along neatly separated ideological lines – partisanship and ideology have by and large become synonymous in the early twenty-first century. In the process we have seen the creation of an electoral environment whose constitution appears almost petrified. Particularly at the presidential level elections are now won along a narrow strip of battleground states whose number has been in broad decline for the past few decades. This change has largely benefitted the Democrats. Despite the fact that Mitt Romney appeared within striking distance in 2012, the data reveals an environment in which the odds were always heavily stacked against the former Massachusetts governor. While President Obama could essentially pick and choose the swing states he was going to focus on, providing him with an opportunity to shift armies of activists and funds, Mitt Romney had to essentially run the table and win most if not all of these states in order to stand a chance – and even then he might not have won the electoral college.<sup>880</sup> As long as the GOP remains the party of Southern conservatism there is little reason to believe that this dynamic will change substantially. For the time being we are living in an era in which each Democratic candidate enjoys a substantial head start to 270 electoral votes.

At the congressional level we have also seen a steady move to the right by the congressional Republican conferences, not just because of an influx of deeply conservative Southerners but also because moderates are increasingly finding themselves in an environment in which their centrist views are a threat to their electoral survival. Particularly Keith Poole's data on the DW-Nominate scores of House Republicans over the past few decades appears to provide support for the hypothesis that the demise of moderate positions within Republican congressional ranks is a direct result of the different topics related to the *Southernization* of the GOP that have been addressed throughout this work. The relative safety of many congressional members that has emerged in recent years has also proven to be a burden for the wider political process. On the Republican side in particular, elections are often won not by appealing to the centrist electorate but by winning the support of the base. Data from the Cook Partisan Vote Index (PVI) from the two recent government shutdowns reveals the extent to which Republican House districts have changed over the past two decades. In 1995, the average House district controlled by the GOP had a Cook PVI of R+6.6, meaning it was around seven points more Republican than the nation as a whole. By 2013

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880 This of course refers to the scenario in which Governor Romney would have won the four states whose winning margins were below five percentage points.

that number had increased by almost 70 percent, standing at R+11.1.<sup>881</sup> The specific number of Republicans hailing from competitive or safe districts highlights those changes in an even more detailed and vivid manner. While 105 House Republicans came from districts with a Cook PVI of R+5 or less in 1995 – in other words districts that could be described as competitive – that number had halved to 53 close to two decades later. The story has been the exact opposite on the deeply partisan side. A mere 25 House Republicans represented a district that leaned Republican by 15 points or more in 1995, a number that more than doubled over the next twenty years to 61.<sup>882</sup> Shifts in the partisan landscape like these indicate that for many elected Republicans there now is virtually no incentive to appeal to moderates. It would be wrong to blame the South for all of these wider developments but the picture drawn by the data does demonstrate that the eventual switch of white Southern conservatives into the (congressional) Republican camp in the early 1990s and the deep congressional rift that has emerged since have created a political environment in which finding bipartisan agreement is more difficult than ever. The *Southernization* of the GOP both at the base and in congress has created a state of constant combativeness in Washington, D.C. that the public appears to dislike and largely blames the Republican Party for<sup>883</sup> – adding weight to the thesis that the *Southernization* of the GOP has harmed its national electoral chances.

### II.1.5 Conclusion: The continued exceptionalism of Southern whites and its impact on the GOP

To some, decades of in-migration, out-migration (primarily of African Americans), political as well as economic upheaval have turned the South into a region that no longer stands out among its other American cousins.<sup>884</sup> To be sure there is ample evidence to illustrate that economic changes in particular have transformed the South over a relatively short period of time. The Democratic Solid South after all was one of abject poverty. Per capita income in the region for

881 Cf. Brownstein, Wasserman, and Terris 2013: “Republicans More Insulated Against Backlash.” *National Journal*, October 1.

882 Cf. *ibid.*

883 See the polls taken in the wake of the fiscal cliff and government shutdown discussions as depicted in chapter II.1.2 which highlighted that Republican leaders in Congress bore the brunt of the blame for the lack of agreement between both sides. This will also be elaborated upon in chapter II.2.3 on the *culture of non-compromise*.

884 Cf. e.g. Shafer, Johnston 2006. *The End of Southern Exceptionalism: Class, Race, and Partisan Change in the Postwar South*.

example stood at a mere 52 percent of the national average in the 1930s.<sup>885</sup> For the first half of the twentieth century the South essentially lacked a middle class. Instead, the region's society was made up of a few land-owners at the very top and a huge population of "have nots" comprised of poor whites and even poorer blacks.<sup>886</sup> Another factor that made the South exceptional was its agrarian nature and the distinct lack of an industrial base. In 1940, 42.0 percent of all Southerners lived on a farm, compared to just 17.1 percent outside of the South.<sup>887</sup> As a large number of defense companies and other industrial employers began to move into the region after World War II, its composition began to resemble that of the rest of the country as well: During the 1950s alone, the share of Southerners living in urban areas increased from 44 percent to 58 percent.<sup>888</sup> By the 1980s, the South had left behind its former distinctive agrarian character completely and was on par with the rest of the nation. Just 2.8 percent of Southerners continued to live on a farm, compared to 2.7 percent in the non-South. A decade later the region had actually become less agrarian than the rest of the country as the respective regional shares stood at 1.3 and 1.7 percent.<sup>889</sup> Coinciding with these trends came a remarkable economic boom. In 1940, Alabama's per capita income stood at 47.2 percent of the national average – by 2010 it had increased to 84.7 percent. States throughout the region replicated similar success stories. In the peripheral South, North Carolina saw its per capita income rise from a share of 54.5 percent of the national average in 1940 to 87 percent 70 years later.<sup>890</sup>

Despite these momentous changes, this chapter (along with chapters I.1.5 and I.2.1 on the continued racial conservatism and strong religiosity of white Southerners) has illustrated though that the white South does continue to stand out. Its representatives are more conservative even when controlling for the partisan lean of their districts; its electorate has continued to move into the Republican camp even in presidential elections, bucking national trends and illustrating that the process of Southern realignment appears to have continued unabated over the past two decades not just at the state and substate levels. The data in other words paints a picture of a region that is still unique in its views and partisan shifts. The reasons for these trends lie in the continued strong conservatism – of the racial, social, and economic varieties – that remains the

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885 Cf. Williams 2010b, p. 128.

886 Cf. Black, Black 2002, pp. 259–260.

887 Cf. Polsby 2004: *How Congress Evolves: Social Bases of Institutional Change*, p. 83.

888 Cf. Williams 2010b, p. 128.

889 Cf. Polsby 2004, p. 83.

890 For 1940 data cf. Cf. United States Census Bureau 2003: *No. HS-35. Personal Income and Personal Income Per Capita by State: 1929 to 2001*, p.2. For 2010 data cf. Bureau of Business & Economic Research, University of New Mexico 2013: *Per Capita Personal Income by State*. April 2.



dominant ideological outlook among most white Southerners and which has, if anything, become more entrenched over the past few years, leading some scholars like D. Sunshine Hillygus and Todd Shields to conclude that contrary to the South having become just another American region, “the voting calculus of Southern voters remains distinct from the rest of the electorate.”<sup>891</sup>

### Conservatism and its continued growth in the South

Speaking to Nicol C. Rae in 1996, Republican Congressman Zach Wamp of Tennessee made the point that “[t]he South is still different. The South is to the right of the country.”<sup>892</sup> Using data from the 2004 and 2008 National Annenberg Election Surveys, Steven White confirms this assertion, arriving at the conclusion that “the white South remains distinct in the twenty-first century, but the Deep South especially so.”<sup>893</sup> On a wide variety of issues, from social, to economic and foreign policy matters, the data indicates that Southern whites continue to harbor more conservative sentiments than whites in the rest of the nation with the gap particularly pronounced when whites from the Deep South are compared to their white counterparts outside the South.<sup>894</sup> Some of this may be explained by the unique religiosity of the region. On social issues for example this rift appears to be primarily in place due to the higher concentration of white evangelical Protestants in the region. Concerning a number of other key policy areas though (for example economic matters or the question whether it was sensible to go into Iraq), White’s analysis revealed a South that remains distinctive even when controlling for its pervasive Christianity, meaning that other factors appear to drive Southern exceptionalism on those policy matters.<sup>895</sup> Other scholars have replicated these findings. Drawing on data of General Social Surveys from 1972 through 2000, Tom Rice, William McLean, and Amy Larsen found “little evidence that southern distinctiveness has declined over the last quarter century.”<sup>896</sup> If anything, the authors contended, “southern distinctiveness flourishes today,”<sup>897</sup> due to a number of factors rooted in the region’s

891 Hillygus, Shields 2008a: “Southern *Discomfort?* Regional Differences in Voter Decision Making in the 2000 Presidential Election” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38(3), pp. 506–520, here p. 518.

892 Quoted in: Rae 2001, p. 139.

893 S. White 2013: “The Heterogeneity of Southern White Distinctiveness.” Forthcoming at *American Politics Research*, p. 2.

894 Cf. *ibid.*, in particular pp. 14–17.

895 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 20–22.

896 Rice, McLean, and Larsen 2002: “Southern Distinctiveness Over Time, 1972–2000.” *The American Review of Politics* 23, pp. 193–220, here pp. 213–214.

897 *Ibid.*, p. 213.

distinct cultural background as well as structural ones pertaining to education and wealth.

The aforementioned Tennessee Representative Wamp also rightfully predicted in the mid-1990s that “the greatest Republican gains in the future are still going to be in the South.”<sup>898</sup> These gains – which have been quite remarkable both at the congressional as well as presidential levels – did not just come about thanks to the fact that the Republican Party still had a lot of room to grow. After almost four decades of realignment in presidential elections, one might have expected the South to follow the lead of the rest of the country and move to the left. But, as was illustrated earlier, the twelve-year period between 2000 and 2012 saw significant increases in Republican lean in a number of Southern states with the Republican vote expanding remarkably among white Southerners, a trend not replicated in similar regions outside of the Old Confederacy. Perhaps more importantly than increases in Republican affiliation is the simple fact that Southern Republicans – and Southerners in general – appear to also have become more conservative in recent years, a trend that also puts them and by extension the party they shape today at odds with the wider nation. Data from the American National Election Studies shows that the share of Southerners who self-identified as conservative rose by ten points over the 20-year period between 1988 and 2008, going from 28 to 38 percent. During the same period the share of conservatives in the rest of the nation decreased from 33 to 27 percent.<sup>899</sup> This apparent rightward drift is also reflected in the ideological positions of Southern party activists. While 37 and 48 percent of Southern Republican party activists described themselves as “very” and “somewhat conservative” respectively in 1991, those shares had shifted to 54 and 38 percent ten years later. With little to no liberals and moderates to be found in the GOP state branches in either year, the numbers indicate that any moves to the right by southern Republican state parties were not due to an exodus of non-conservatives but rather due to the changes in distribution within the conservative camp.<sup>900</sup> The data indicates that Republican activists became more conservative in the region in virtually every issue area while also having a generally more conservative mean score in 2001 than they did in 1991:

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898 Quoted in: Rae 2001, p. 139.

899 Cf. American National Election Studies 2010: *The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior. Liberal-Conservative Self-Identification 1972–2008*.

900 Cf. Cotter, Fisher III 2004: “A Growing Divide: Issue Opinions of Southern Party Activists.” In: Clark, Prysby (eds.): *Southern Political Party Activists: Patterns of Conflict and Change, 1991–2001*, pp. 59–72, here pp. 62–63.

**Table II.1.5:** *Mean Score for Self-described Political Ideology among Southern Republican Party Activists by State, 1991 and 2001. Scores based on a five-point scale with 1 representing the most liberal position:*<sup>901</sup>

State	1991	2001
Alabama	4.21	4.44
Arkansas	4.21	4.64
Florida	4.08	4.18
Georgia	4.22	4.56
Louisiana	4.27	4.38
Mississippi	4.19	4.45
North Carolina	4.25	4.44
South Carolina	4.30	4.54
Tennessee	4.14	4.43
Texas	4.23	4.42
Virginia	4.01	4.52

In every state except Florida, a majority of Republican activists described themselves as “very conservative” in 2001 while in three states – Arkansas (67 percent), Georgia (63 percent) and South Carolina (60 percent) – at least 60 percent of all Republican activists were in the “very conservative” camp.<sup>902</sup> An increase in conservatism is just one part of the story though. These Southern Republican activists were also shown to be far more purist<sup>903</sup> in their ideological views than their Democratic counterparts in the region. On a four-point scale, with four indicating the highest preference for purist sentiments in politics, 36 percent of Southern Republican party activists had a purism index of 3.0 or higher in 2001 while only about a quarter of their Democratic counterparts had a similar taste for purism.<sup>904</sup> These results were not just a mere side-effect of (very) conservative party activists carrying more weight within the local Republican Party than (very) liberal activists did in the Democratic camp. The correlation between ideological extremism and purist sentiments was far stronger on the Republican side as GOP activists in the “very conservative” group also held exceptionally purist views (reaching a mean purism index of 2.74 compared to 2.51 among moderate Republicans). Such a relationship was not to the same

901 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 70.

902 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 69.

903 In this survey (the 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists Project), purism was gauged by the reaction of respondents to propositions such as “broad electoral appeal is more important than a consistent ideology” or “controversial positions should be avoided in party platforms to ensure party unity.” Cf. Prysby 2004: “Purist versus Pragmatist Orientations among Southern Political Party Activists.” In: Clark, Prysby (eds.): *Southern Political Party Activists: Patterns of Conflict and Change, 1991–2001*, pp. 133–148, here p. 136.

904 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 137.

extent present among the “very liberal” Southern Democrats though whose responses gave them a mean purism index of 2.50 – just marginally above moderate Democrats who accrued a mean score of 2.44.<sup>905</sup> What we can conclude then from looking at Southern GOP activists is that they are exceptionally conservative and exceptionally concerned with ideological and political purity even vis-à-vis their similarly ideologically extreme liberal counterparts. These findings have a notable relevance in the context of this book in particular since they highlight both the ideological brotherhood between the South and the Tea Party which both put a premium on ideological purity while also indicating that today’s principled and purist stance within the national Republican Party appears to be at least partially driven by an increasingly conservative and disproportionately purist Southern base that has increased its clout within the national party in recent decades.

## Conclusion

The South of the twenty-first century is undoubtedly different from the one that Republican figures like Senators Karl Mundt and Barry Goldwater sought to first conquer in the 1950s and ’60s. Institutionalized segregation is a thing of the past and African Americans have obtained a significant degree of political representation, albeit it within the minority party which ultimately does beg the question to what extent black political progress in the region has been achieved, considering that they were a vital part of the *majority* party between the late 1960s and early 1990s. Data from the Alabama constitutional interracial marriage ban referendum in 2000 along with the continued high levels of racial resentment found in the region (see chapter I.1.5), the continued high degree of religiosity (see chapter I.2.1) and a variety of other statistics nonetheless illustrate the extent to which Southern whites remain distinct both from their white counterparts in the rest of the nation as well as the nation at-large, particularly when it comes to religious and racial matters and policies related to these divisive topics. The broader conservatism of Southern whites is also reflected in the representatives they send to Washington, D.C. – congressional representatives who are notably more conservative even than their non-Southern Republican counterparts who hail from districts with a similar partisan composition. Moreover, as the nation has become more Democratic, the white South has responded by becoming both more Republican and conservative, demonstrating the region’s continued exceptionalism and in the process creating an ideological

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905 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 138–139.

and partisan gulf between the South and non-South that has grown substantially in recent years.

This growing rift has presented the GOP with a sizeable challenge as the Republican Party is more *southernized* than at any point in its history. In both congressional as well as presidential elections, Republican candidates increasingly rely on the white electorate of the former Confederacy to win elected office – with few if any signs indicating that the process is set to reverse in the near future. The share of Southerners within Republican ranks in both houses of congress has doubled between the late 1980s and today with Southern Republicans enjoying a degree of safety not found in many other parts of the country. The remarkable realignment of the region has most certainly provided the GOP with a solid base from which to launch presidential campaigns as well as vie for control over both the U.S. House and Senate. As a matter of fact, the only reason why Republicans enjoyed their most comfortable majority in the House in over 80 years after the 2014 election was due to the party's strength inside of the South, considering that GOP candidates only won around 49 percent of all non-Southern districts that year. If Republicans can hold onto their Southern gains, that non-Southern winning percentage can be slashed by almost another ten percentage points, making a Democratic takeover of the House in the near future rather unlikely. These power shifts within the party have pulled it ever further to the right though as Southern conservatives have filled the seats left behind by non-Southern moderates. One of the basic and underlying realities of American politics of the past two decades therefore is the conclusion that as the GOP has become more *southernized* its House caucus has moved substantially to the right.<sup>906</sup> A similar picture presents itself at the presidential level. Southern success indeed delivered the presidency to George W. Bush on two occasions. The past two decades have revealed though that it is increasingly difficult to win the South *and* obtain a sufficient percentage of the non-Southern electorate to move into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue – additional evidence of the growing ideological rift between both regions.

Being reliant on a region so uniquely conservative has by extension made the Republican Party uniquely conservative as well – with far-reaching repercussions for the latter. Data like the relatively weak showings in non-Southern House districts highlight that the slow but steady move by Southern conservatives – across all levels of political society, from regular supporters to activists and elected officials – into the Republican Party and its subsequent ideological *Southernization* appear to indeed have come at a price in the rest of

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906 As illustrated in chapter II.1.4, in particular figure II.1.4 (“DW-Nominate Party means in House of Representatives on liberal-conservative dimension, 79<sup>th</sup> [1945] through 113<sup>th</sup> [2013] Congress” by Poole 2015b).

the nation. While Republican partisan identification among southern white conservatives for example doubled from 39 percent in 1972 to 78 percent in 2000, Republican fortunes outside the region have not been as impressive.<sup>907</sup> Among non-southern conservative whites, partisan identification stood at 72 percent Republican in 2000, largely stagnant since 1984 when 75 percent identified as Republicans.<sup>908</sup> The real impact of the GOP's *Southernization* has been among moderate whites outside of the South though. While Democrats enjoyed a seven point advantage over their Republican opposites in this demographic group in 1972, the gap had more than doubled to 16 points by 2000.<sup>909</sup> For Alan Abramowitz and Gibbs Knotts the picture painted by this data was clear: the increasing dominance of the South and its politicians – such as Newt Gingrich, Dick Armey, or Tom DeLay – within the Republican Party “was likely driving many moderate-to-liberal northern whites into the arms of the Democrats.”<sup>910</sup> The future prospects did not look particularly promising either with the authors concluding that “[t]he increasingly southern and conservative image of the Republican Party may limit its potential for future gains and has the potential to alienate large portions of the electorate outside of the South.”<sup>911</sup> The data observed in the preceding chapters demonstrates that this alienation of non-Southerners has materialized as the GOP has increasingly found itself in the grip of a vicious circle: With each election Southern elected officials (or Southern states in presidential elections) have played a bigger role within the Republican Party and its strategy for obtaining majorities, shifting the GOP's ideological mean in Congress to the right and in the process making the Republican Party a more popular option among white Southerners (and likeminded staunchly conservative voters in the rest of the nation) while decreasing its appeal among many other former voters who may hold fiscally conservative values but do not share the racial and social conservative tastes of the South. This invariably creates a Republican base even more devoid of centrist elements and therefore more likely to send Southerners as well as non-Southerners that strictly subscribe to the region's core values to Congress in the next election<sup>912</sup> – a development that once again increases the weight of the white South's anti-statist and racially conservative ideology within the Republican House and Senate Conferences and shifts the party's ideological center of gravity ever further away from moderates across the country.

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907 Cf. Abramowitz, Knotts 2006, p. 102.

908 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 104.

909 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 105.

910 *Ibid.*

911 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

912 See chapter II.3.2 on Tea Party activism as an illustration of what this process has brought about.

If anything this process has only accelerated even further over the past decade as Southern Republicans have without a doubt become *the* dominant force on the conservative side of the political divide in Washington, D.C. At the 2013 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) – the primary annual get-together of conservatives from across the country – one rather well-known Republican operative summed up under the cover of anonymity that “there has not been another point in memory where the base of Republicans is so far from where a majority of the electorate is.”<sup>913</sup> There can be little doubt that this rift, whose specific contents and size will be addressed in more detail in subsequent chapters on the views of white evangelical Protestants, the Tea Party, and throughout the demographics bloc, is in place because of the continued exceptionalism of white Southerners and their burgeoning sway over the Republican Party.

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913 Quoted in: Martin, Haberman 2013: “CPAC muddle mirrors GOP mess.” *Politico*, March 13.

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## II.2 The Evangelicalization of the Republican Party across all levels

*“These hate groups have now tasted blood. Step out of line one time, and they’ll chop your head off.”*

Senator Birch Bayh (D-IN), referring to the threat posed by the Christian Right and its supporters towards liberal politicians after the 1980 elections.<sup>914</sup>

*“When you say ‘radical right’ today, I think of these moneymaking ventures by fellows like Pat Robertson and others who are trying to take the Republican Party away from the Republican Party, and make a religious organization out of it. If that ever happens, kiss politics goodbye.”*

Barry Goldwater.<sup>915</sup>

*“[Y]ou don’t change policies on abortion by changing politicians’ minds, you change policy by changing politicians.”*

Chuck Cunningham, former voter mobilization head of the Christian Coalition.<sup>916</sup>

In 1990 Pat Robertson told his audience at a convention of the Christian Coalition in the nation’s capital that his goal was to elect a pro-family congress by 1994 and a pro-family president by 2000.<sup>917</sup> Three years later Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox assessed that “[t]o the casual observer, the Christian right may appear to have entered a period of decline,” adding though “that writing the obituary of the New Christian Right may be premature.”<sup>918</sup> Premature it was indeed. Looking

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914 Quoted in: Williams 2010a, p. 193.

915 Quoted in: Grove 1994: “Barry Goldwater’s Left Turn.” *Washington Post*, July 28.

916 Quoted in: Wilcox 2005: “The Christian Right in American Politics: Conquering Force or Exploited Faction?” In: *Understanding the “God Gap”: Religion, Politics, and Policy in the United States and Germany*. Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies – The Johns Hopkins University, pp. 16–21, here p. 17.

917 Cf. Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2003: “The Christian Right’s Long Political March.” In: Green, Rozell, and Wilcox (eds.): *The Christian Right in American Politics: Marching to the Millennium*, pp. 1–20, here p. 2.

918 Jelen, Wilcox 1993: “The Christian Right in the 1990s.” *The Public Perspective* 4(3), pp. 10–12, here p. 11. In a similar manner Michael Lienesch notes that by the late 1980s, the New Christian Right had “almost as suddenly as it had risen to prominence [...] [fallen] into oblivion, battered by scandal and disarmed by its own success. By the close of the decade, it



back at what some might have at the time considered to be a rather ambitious goal, more than two decades later we can conclude that Robertson managed to exceed his own objectives in a number of ways. The Republican Party did take over congress in 1994, to a large extent thanks to the gains in the religiously conservative South. In 2000, George W. Bush also obtained the presidency in no small part due to his sweep across the South and the backing he received by Christian conservative voters as he fended off Senator McCain during the 2000 Republican primaries. Once in office, the Texas governor would continue to be guided by his born-again beliefs,<sup>919</sup> leading to what historian Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr. has dubbed the first “faith-based administration in American history.”<sup>920</sup>

There can be little doubt that even after the election and re-election of a Democratic president, the Christian Right and its core supporters of white evangelical Protestants continue to wield considerable power in the nation’s capital through the clout they possess within the Republican Party, both within the GOP’s ideological and legislative corridors. The movement’s influence has allowed core sentiments espoused by the Christian Right to seep into the general political realm, an augmentation of evangelical influence and power that has led scholars like David Domke and Kevin Coe to conclude that at the onset of the twenty-first century “it is hard to know where religion ends and politics begins. Or where politics ends and religion begins,”<sup>921</sup> a shift intricately tied to the developments addressed in the first part of this book. While the foundations for this shift were primarily laid during the Reagan years, the *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party did not truly blossom into full bloom until the mid-1990s as the large influx of Southern white Evangelicals and those Southerners who depended on their votes<sup>922</sup> into the party’s congressional ranks turned the GOP House Conference into a vehicle for the introduction of legislation that could essentially have been authored by some of the leading religious conservatives in

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had all but disappeared, and many were declaring its demise.” Lienesch 1993: *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right*, p. 247.

919 The president for example “made opposition to abortion a litmus test for Supreme Court appointees” while backing or adopting a variety of other positions championed by Christian conservatives (such as an amendment to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman or the teaching of “intelligent design”). For quote and additional information cf. Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 224.

920 Schlesinger, Jr. 2005: “A Faith-Based Presidency” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 22(1), pp. 20–23, here p. 21.

921 Domke, Coe 2010, p. 138.

922 As Mark Silk and Andrew Walsh note, “Southern politicians ignored [white Evangelicals] at their peril” as the group’s political involvement increased substantially beginning in the late 1970s (Silk, Walsh 2008, p. 78.) Through the GOP’s Southernization an increasing share of congressional Republicans has thus become highly dependent on not falling out of favor with Southern Evangelicals.

the country themselves. A key reason behind the accelerated *Evangelicalization* was the Christian Right's decision to alter its approach to political engagement. As the quote by Chuck Cunningham at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, after years of meeting with the president in the White House and receiving rhetorical support but not much in the way of actual legislative results, Christian conservative leaders like Pat Robertson began to realize that the best way of influencing public policy was not through sitting on a sofa in the Oval Office but by filling the ranks of the GOP with social conservative office holders.<sup>923</sup>

By the early and mid-1990s the creeping appropriation of the party by members of the religious right was well under way as former fringe elements like Pat Buchanan and the aforementioned Pat Robertson were given primetime speaking slots at the 1992 Republican National Convention, allowing them to carry the message of an approaching culture war for the soul of America into the homes of millions of Americans. Religiously conservative organizations like the Christian Coalition – which by that point already “dominated”<sup>924</sup> GOP state parties in the South according to historian Daniel Williams – began to not just attempt to influence public policy but also to expand their political influence over party organizational structures and the nomination process of candidates. This new approach bore fruit quite quickly: While only around half of all Republican senatorial and gubernatorial candidates had been social conservatives during the early 1980s, that percentage reached 74 percent by the mid-1990s.<sup>925</sup>

The following chapters will ascertain the extent to which the positions and views of the Christian Right have pervaded the Republican Party and make the case that this *Evangelicalization* (itself intricately connected to the party's *Southernization*) has driven the party ever further away from the mainstream, with a substantial number of contemporary Republican supporters and activists apparently “hell-bent on destroying the party's libertarian antecedents in the name of values.”<sup>926</sup> We will assess in detail how fundamentalist and “high-commitment” white evangelical Protestants – who represent the overwhelming majority of the Christian Right – now constitute a segment of the electorate that many Republican politicians can ill afford to disregard; how these conservative Christians possess an inherent unwillingness to compromise and how their extremely conservative and to some extent quite antiquated values on a variety of issues even in policy areas that on the face appear to be unrelated to social matters (such as the economy) alienate moderates within the party while ex-

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923 Cf. Marley 2006, p. 852.

924 Williams 2010a, p. 233.

925 Cf. *ibid.*

926 J. White 2003: *The Values Divide: American Politics and Culture in Transition*, p. 85.

acerbating the already precarious position the GOP finds itself in among moderates within the wider electorate.

By having a closer look at the *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party we will also obtain a deeper and better understanding of how and why increasing electoral fortunes in the South have coincided with a drop in the national appeal of the Republican Party. As was illustrated in chapters I.2 and I.3, disentangling the South and the Christian Right is not always the easiest task. When we assess the not infrequently detrimental impact white evangelical Protestants have had on the popularity of the Republican Party in the non-South it therefore always warrants remembering that the coalition between this group of staunchly conservative Christian voters and the GOP is in place because of past decisions by Republican leaders that were aimed at winning over the South and the subsequent increase in Southern influence over the party in a variety of issue areas, ranging from moral and traditionalist to economic policies. As Mark Rozell and Mark Smith point out, white traditionalist evangelical Protestants are today's "unquestioned leaders of the Republican coalition"<sup>927</sup> in the South. It therefore comes as little surprise that the sway these traditionalist (or "high-commitment") Evangelicals have held over the wider Republican Party has increased as the GOP has become ever increasingly dependent on the South for majorities in presidential and congressional elections. Without the past decisions of Republican leaders that sought to enable the party to conquer the South, it is highly doubtful that white evangelical Protestants – after all the "target audience"<sup>928</sup> of the Christian Right – and their views would have ever been able to obtain the prominent role they possess within the Republican Party at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Assessing this religious group's views on a myriad of issues therefore provides us with an indispensable and integral ingredient in the attempt to understand the far-reaching impact the GOP's *Southernization* has had and will continue to have particularly regarding the party's national fortunes.

Starting off, we will have a closer look at the data which demonstrates the extent to which white Evangelicals have become the backbone of today's Republican electoral coalition. Over the course of roughly three decades this voting bloc has steadily increased its share within the Republican Party, both at the ballot box and within its activist core. The subsequent chapter will address in closer detail just how much influence the Christian Right and religious conservatives in general hold over the Republican Party at the state level. Non-federal politics have in recent years become a central focus for evangelical activism as the nation at-large has moved in a more progressive direction on key socio-cultural questions. While attempts to outlaw abortion and introduce anti-

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927 Rozell, Smith 2012, p. 149.

928 Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 55.

gay marriage amendments have failed to gain significant traction in the nation's capital, the socially conservative agenda that has been a staple of the Christian Right since its inception has fallen on much more fertile soil across a number of states, many of which are located in the South. This is where access to abortion can be restricted to a level that for all intents and purposes outlaws the practice and additional measures can be taken to curtail gay rights. A special emphasis will therefore be placed on the extent to which state parties largely under the influence of the Christian Right and its supporters have been able to successfully implement their pro-life positions at the state level.

The influence religious conservatives have obtained over the years has also had a profound impact on the GOP's willingness to compromise with political opponents both within and without congress. This substantial change has led to the establishment of what I refer to as the *culture of non-compromise* that has become a staple of contemporary Republican politics and policies. As we will see in chapter II.2.3 on this *culture*, the Christian Right's basic agenda that was initially primarily based on socio-cultural matters (but has since branched out into the economic realm as well) has never really left much room for compromise, seeing as the ideological foundations of the movement are usually regarded as being based on the word of God which, to put it bluntly, means compromise is tantamount to heresy.<sup>929</sup> An increasingly evangelical Republican Party has therefore also become increasingly hostile to the notion of compromise – not just on social matters though as virtually every political conflict (including questions pertaining to economic policies) is now perceived as a battle within a larger culture war for the soul of the nation. Such intransigent positions do little to endear the party to more moderate voters.

After having established the extent to which Christian conservatives now determine the GOP's ideological path we will assess the ideological tenets of white evangelical Protestants in closer detail while contrasting these views with those of the wider nation. By focusing on two important ideological and partisan battlegrounds in recent years – economics and gay rights – we will see the extent to which white evangelicals differ in their opinions from the wider electorate, displaying a kind of *white evangelical exceptionalism* akin to the *Southern exceptionalism* we have seen time and again throughout this book. Part of this conservatism is a vehement anti-statism that despises liberal legislators interfering with the Christian way of life, an approach not dissimilar to the anti-federal government views propagated by George Wallace. These sentiments are deeply rooted in the Protestant mindset with few if any signs of evangelical

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929 Or as Barry Goldwater observed in 1994, “these Christians believe they are acting in the name of God, so they can’t and won’t compromise.” Quoted in: Dyken 2013: *The Divine Default: Why Faith is Not the Answer*, p. 55.

Protestants in particular mellowing on these matters. One should not forget just how deeply embedded this wariness (and sometimes outright hostility) towards an activist state is; a trait that some scholars like Seymour Martin Lipset see rooted in the fact that American religious movements have since before the founding of the nation been in conflict with the power of the state that often, at least in the Old World, sought to persecute them, fostering a severe distrust among those denominations towards an expansion of any and all government power.<sup>930</sup> This facet of evangelical Christian conservatism and the increasing *Evangelicalization* of the GOP have had dire consequences for Republican electoral fortunes as the electorate has become more open to the government acting in a more proactive manner, both in the economic realm as well as in the defense of sexual minorities. As will be shown later on in this book (when addressing the demographic changes the U.S. has undergone and will undergo in the coming years), growing segments of the electorate – young voters and minorities in particular – often subscribe to ideological beliefs that substantially differ from those espoused by white Evangelicals particularly when it comes to the role and size of government, indicating that the detrimental impact this group of white evangelical voters has had on national Republican fortunes will in all likelihood continue and potentially even increase in future decades.

### II.2.1 White evangelical Protestants as the backbone of the contemporary Republican electorate

There can be little doubt that today's Republican Party is notably more religious than it was even 15 to 20 years ago thanks to the overwhelming shift in partisan affiliation among religious white voters across the country. Republican attempts to win the vote of the Christian Right's key demographic of white evangelical Protestants have most certainly achieved their aim: While 55 percent of churchgoing Evangelicals were Democrats in 1960, this share had more than halved to 21 percent by 1992.<sup>931</sup> By today this group is arguably the most reliably Republican demographic, voting for party candidates even when they fail to espouse support for evangelical concerns. Both John McCain and Mitt Romney – candidates who elicited a less than enthusiastic response from this segment of the electorate – for example nonetheless won 73 and 79 percent of white born-again/evangelical voters respectively in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elec-

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930 Cf. Lipset 2000: "The American Anti-Statist Tradition." *Cato Policy Report* 22(6), pp. 7–10, here p. 7. Lipset contrasts this with the religious traditions in Europe and to a lesser extent Canada which have usually been in support of the state.

931 Cf. Williams 2010a, p. 232.

tions.<sup>932</sup> The share won by the former Massachusetts governor even equaled President Bush's 2004 result among white Evangelicals, a rather remarkable feat considering George W. Bush's born-again Southern background made him a far more attractive option for white Evangelicals than Mitt Romney and his Mormon beliefs were.

What this data does not tell us though is to what extent white evangelical Protestants represent the base of the contemporary GOP, in other words the size of white Evangelicals within the party and the influence they possess thanks to their strength in numbers. Virtually all of the numbers back the assertion that this group of highly religious voters has now obtained a disproportionate influence within the GOP (as we will also see in the following chapter on the influence of Christian conservatives within Republican state parties). Data from the Pew Research Center from 2012 for example showed that 34 percent of all Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents were white evangelical Protestants even though they made up just 21 percent of the general sample and a mere nine percent of all Democrats and Democrat-leaners. If Independents that lean Republican are taken out of the equation, the share of white Evangelicals actually increases to 39 percent.<sup>933</sup> Weekly church attendance also helps us gauge the religiosity of today's Republicans while demonstrating that if anything, the strength of the religiously devout camp within the GOP is increasing. While 47 percent of all Republicans reported to attending religious services on a weekly or even more frequent basis in 2009 this share had increased to 51 percent by 2013,<sup>934</sup> admittedly a statistically insignificant change which nonetheless reveals the weight religious beliefs and the faithful behind them carry in today's Republican Party.

Such trends are also replicated in presidential elections, with the shifting sands of electoral coalitions particularly evident when focusing on some of the most devoted evangelical Protestants, commonly referred to as *traditionalist* or *high-commitment* Evangelicals; a group that has in recent decades developed into the single largest subgroup within the entire Protestant movement and espouses many of the views and values that are at the heart of the Christian Right agenda.<sup>935</sup> This orthodox group for example places a particular emphasis on

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932 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012i.

933 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012f: *A Closer Look at the Parties in 2012: Detailed Party Identification Tables*, August 23, p. 11.

934 Cf. Funk 2014: "Republicans' views on evolution." *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, January 3.

935 Cf. Smidt, Kellstedt, and Guth 2009: "The Role of Religion in American Politics: Explanatory Theories and Associated Analytical and Measurement Issues." In: Smidt, Kellstedt, and Guth (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics*, pp. 3–42, here p. 27. According to the authors' data, *traditionalist evangelical Protestants* made up

social issues like abortion and gay marriage, sometimes considering them to be a more pressing concern than economic or foreign policy questions, a stark difference to the primary concerns of virtually all other Americans.<sup>936</sup> The move of this staunchly conservative group of evangelical voters into the Republican camp has been particularly pronounced, making one of the most devout religious denominations the most devout Republican voter group by the early twenty-first century. Data from the South in particular serves to highlight this development: In the 1970s, 65 percent of white *high-commitment* evangelical Protestants in the region voted Republican in presidential elections; by 2008 that share had increased by over 20 percentage points to 86 percent, even though that year's presidential election was contested by a Republican candidate possessing a less than stellar rapport with Christian conservative activists. Among white *low-commitment* Southern Evangelicals Republican gains were virtually nonexistent though as their Republican vote increased from 67 to 69 percent during the same period. This influx of Southern white Evangelicals into the Republican Party on the other hand coincided with the desertion of the party by white *mainline* Protestants in the region as the Republican share of the *high-* and *low-commitment* presidential vote among this religious group decreased by 17 and 10 percentage points respectively during this timeframe (standing at 59 and 48 percent in 2008).<sup>937</sup>

This profound shift into the Republican camp among the most orthodox white Evangelicals has also had a profound impact on the weight they carry within the Republican electoral alliance. While the most religious voters only comprised around one in ten of all Reagan voters in the 1980 presidential election,<sup>938</sup> *traditionalist* white evangelical Protestants made up 27 percent of George W. Bush's total vote in 2004, even though they represented only 15 percent of the entire electorate.<sup>939</sup> Combined with *traditionalist* Catholics (eight percent of Bush's vote and six percent of the overall electorate) and *traditionalist* mainline Protestants (also eight percent of Bush's vote and six percent of the overall electorate), the total share of the "traditionalist" vote within George W. Bush's

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18.1 percent of all respondents in the 2004 National Survey of Religion and Politics. In comparison, the entire mainline Protestant bloc constituted just 16.4 percent.

936 In the 2004 National Survey of Religion and Politics, *traditionalist* evangelical Protestants were the only religious group to rank issue areas like abortion, stem cell research, or same-sex marriage above domestic as well as foreign policy issues as the most important problems facing the nation. Cf. Steinfels 2004: "Religion and Political Attitudes." *New York Times*, October 9.

937 Cf. Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2010, p. 291.

938 Cf. R. Mason 2012: *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan*, p. 257.

939 Cf. Green, Smidt, Guth and Kellstedt 2005: "Religion and the 2004 Election: A Post-election Analysis." *Pew Research Center*, February 3, p. 6.

tally stood at 43 percent compared to the 11 percent these voters made up in the Kerry coalition (overall, the three *traditionalist* camps constituted 27 percent of the general electorate).<sup>940</sup> As table II.2.1.a shows, these strongly religious groups overwhelmingly voted for President Bush with some notable and important discrepancies found even within the evangelical Protestant camp if this demographic is divided up into different factions according to their degrees of orthodoxy, with a majority of modernist white evangelical Protestants for example even supporting Senator Kerry.

**Table II.2.1.a:** 2004 two-party presidential vote arranged by religious tradition and size of denomination as part of overall electorate (in percent).<sup>941</sup>

	Bush	Kerry	Size
<b>All wh. evang. Protestants</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>
Traditionalist	88	12	15
Centrist	64	36	9
Modernist	48	52	2
<b>All wh. mainline Protestants</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>20</b>
Traditionalist	68	32	6
Centrist	58	42	8
Modernist	22	78	6
<b>All non-Latino Catholic</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>19</b>
Traditionalist	72	28	6
Centrist	55	45	7
Modernist	31	69	6

Doing this well among the most devoted Christians in the land did help President Bush retain the presidency that year. Clyde Wilcox notes that while President Bush won 82 percent of “white, frequently-attending evangelical Christians,” he actually lost the rest of the nation by the considerable margin of 54 to 46 percent to John Kerry.<sup>942</sup> Part of the reason why so many Republican candidates have been able to use wide winning margins among evangelical Protestants (of the *high-commitment* variety in particular) to win elected office is the simple fact that this white group of voters has bucked the nationwide trend that has seen a substantial decrease in the white vote in recent decades (see chapter II.6 on demographics). The growth of evangelical Protestantism has unsurprisingly been particularly pronounced in the South. While the share of white Protestants among all voters in the region decreased from 70 percent in the 1960s to roughly 50 percent by 2008, white *high-commitment* evangelical Protestants actually increased their share of

940 Cf. *ibid.*

941 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 2 and 6.

942 Cf. Wilcox 2005, p. 18.



the electorate from 20 to 30 percent during the same period. Substantial decreases could instead be seen among white mainline Protestants, whose share of the overall electorate dropped from 37 percent in the 1960s to just 13 percent in 2008.<sup>943</sup> A similar development of the devout Protestant core increasing in size at the expense of the periphery can be seen at the national stage as well. In 1960, 40 percent of all white adults in the United States were members of a mainline Protestant church while 27 percent of whites belonged to an evangelical Protestant denomination.<sup>944</sup> By the advent of the twenty-first century though, the evangelical group had overtaken their mainline counterparts with the trend showing little signs of abating. Between 2004 and 2012, the share of white born-again/evangelical Protestants in the electorate actually increased from 21 to 23 percent while the percentage of whites among all voters decreased from 77 to 72 during the same period.<sup>945</sup> Losses could be noted among non-evangelical white Protestants instead whose share of the overall electorate dropped by four points over eight years, decreasing from 20 to 16 percent.<sup>946</sup>

Such demographic trends and the embrace of the basic views and wishes of the Christian Right by the GOP has also allowed religious conservatives to expand their influence where it matters, that is to say within the organizational framework of the Republican Party and in the halls of Congress. Exit polls in March of 2012 showed that for the first time ever evangelical Christians represented a majority of Republican primary voters (50.5 percent, up from 44 percent in 2008), causing Ralph Reed, former executive director of the *Christian Coalition* and chairman of the Republican Party in Georgia between 2001 and 2003, to proclaim that white evangelical Protestants had had a larger impact on the Republican presidential nominating process in 2012 than at any time since they entered the world of politics in the late 1970s.<sup>947</sup> As was illustrated by the results of the 2012 contests, any Republican candidate wishing to get off to a good start in the GOP primaries can ill-afford to neglect the white evangelical electorate, which constituted 56 and 64 percent respectively in two of the early key primaries in Iowa and South Carolina. A closer look at some of the 2012 primary exit polls (table II.2.1.b) reveals two important traits about the Republican Party's contemporary primary electorate: First of all, religiosity matters a great deal to the GOP's primary voters; and secondly, this can put the party at a distinct disadvantage in general election contests in November, particularly in national or statewide ones.

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943 Cf. Green, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Guth 2010, p. 288.

944 Cf. Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and den Dulk 2014, p. 95.

945 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012i. For data of entire electorate cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.

946 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012i.

947 Cf. D. Gibson 2012.

**Table II.2.1.b:** *Abortion and religion related views among the 2012 Republican primary electorate and the share of white Evangelicals within this group of voters (only primaries in which at least two of the three questions were asked are included):*<sup>948</sup>

	Abortion should be mostly/always illegal	Religious beliefs of candidate matter a great deal/some-what	Percentage of voters white Evangelical/ Born-Again
Oklahoma	71 %	69 %	72 %
Mississippi	70 %	78 %	80 %
Alabama	70 %	75 %	75 %
Tennessee	69 %	76 %	73 %
Ohio	64 %	62 %	47 %
South Carolina	64 %	60 %	64 %
Georgia	60 %	72 %	64 %
Michigan	59 %	56 %	39 %
Florida	59 %	-	40 %
Arizona	55 %	48 %	36 %
Virginia	54 %	51 %	46 %
Louisiana	-	73 %	57 %
Wisconsin	-	59 %	37 %
Illinois	-	56 %	42 %

As a comparison, CNN's 2012 presidential election exit poll showed just 36 percent of respondents answering that abortion should be mostly/always illegal while 21 percent of all voters were white born-again or evangelical Christians.<sup>949</sup> A different poll conducted just weeks ahead of the 2012 election also revealed less than half of the electorate considering a candidate's religious beliefs to be an important factor in their electoral decision making process.<sup>950</sup> It also comes as no surprise that – as demonstrated by table II.2.1.b – a higher share of born-again/evangelical white voters by and large correlates with a stronger importance being placed on a candidate's religious beliefs along with a more vehement pro-life position, making the South particularly hazardous territory for any Republican candidate keeping an eye on the general election and the more secular electorate he or she will encounter there.

This increasing influence also extends beyond the primaries into the Republican convention halls. Between 1976 and 1992 for example, the share of Evangelicals who reported to regularly attending church among first-time GOP convention delegates rose from 6 to 12.7 percent while the share of less com-

948 All data from CNN 2012b: *Election Center: Republican Primaries & Caucuses*.

949 Cf. CNN 2012l.

950 Cf. Rasmussen Reports 2012: *48 % Rate A Candidate's Religious Faith Important to Their Vote*. October 11.

mitted mainline Protestants – in other words those who less regularly attended church and had up until the early 1980s undeniably been the strongest faction among Republican Party activists – dropped from 35 to 20.6 percent.<sup>951</sup> All in all, over those 16 years the share of first-time Republican delegates who regularly attended church rose from 42.1 to 56.8 percent<sup>952</sup> while first-time delegates who reported to receiving “a great deal of guidance” from their religious beliefs saw their share increase from 35.2 to 49.0 percent.<sup>953</sup> Developments like these have made it more difficult for less religious Republicans to leave a mark on the party’s ideological foundations. As Bob Dole sought to moderate the Republican Party’s platform on abortion in 1996 in order to present a more appealing choice to moderate voters, the aforementioned Ralph Reed boasted that the senator’s attempts would achieve little seeing as a third of all convention delegates were in one way or another associated with the religious right. It was ultimately up to them and not Senator Dole, according to Reed, to determine the specific contents of the document<sup>954</sup> – a document which as we saw in chapter 1.2.2 has become significantly more religiously conservative as the party has increasingly embraced the religious right.<sup>955</sup> Other scholarly analysis also attests to this remarkable move to the right on issues close to the hearts of Christian conservatives: Between 1988 and 2004, the word count of what David Domke and Kevin Coe regard as “morality politics issues”<sup>956</sup> for example saw an almost fourfold increase from 300 to over 1,100 words in Republican platforms.<sup>957</sup>

Bob Dole’s dilemma serves to showcase the problems a moderate Republican can encounter in this altered environment which has since become if anything even more conservative. The Kansas senator’s doomed last second attempt of moving to the center on the salient issue of abortion through adjusting the platform<sup>958</sup> had come after the senator had chosen the primary season strategy of moving to the right on cultural issues in an attempt to stave off more conservative challengers, even returning a \$1,000 donation from the Log Cabin

951 Cf. Layman 1999, p. 100.

952 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 99.

953 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 101.

954 Cf. Hough 2006, p. 235.

955 See the differences in wording on abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment in GOP platforms over the years.

956 These are five issue areas that are extremely important to the Christian Right: School prayer, abortion, stem cell research, the Equal Rights Amendment, and homosexual relationships. Cf. Domke, Coe 2010, p. 104.

957 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 105.

958 Senator Dole intended to add a line to the party’s platform that “recognize[d] [that] the members of our own party have deeply held convictions and sometimes differing views on issues of personal conscience,” a stance that even Ronald Reagan had once supported and could thus – at least in the eyes of Senator Dole – not be rejected by the party. Cf. J. White 2003, p. 87.

Republicans, a GOP gay rights group.<sup>959</sup> Recognizing that the base alone would probably not carry him into the White House, Dole thus sought to straddle the lines and forge some sort of rather uneasy alliance between the party's increasingly conservative base and centrist voters. Four years later there were few questions though about where the allegiances of the Republican nominee lay as George W. Bush won the nomination in no small part thanks to the support of Christian conservative values voters who turned out to be "critical to his primary election victory."<sup>960</sup> Bush's campaign strategists and the Texas governor himself – a born-again Christian who named Jesus Christ as his favorite philosopher and the Bible as his favorite book<sup>961</sup> while moreover arguing that Jesus' teachings represented the "foundation for how I live my life"<sup>962</sup> – used voters close to the religious right to good effect during the primary season. That his primary opponent John McCain did little to hide his disdain for leading figures of the Christian conservative movement only made this task easier. As soon as the Arizona senator crystallized as Governor Bush's most promising opponent, pro-life groups duly began to launch scathing attacks on McCain, urging voters for example to cast their ballot for George W. Bush "for the children's sake,"<sup>963</sup> wording used because the senator supposedly possessed an overly lenient position on abortion. It was a strategy that paid off because of the extent to which the party in general and its base in particular had already been *evangelized* by 2000. Throughout the primary season, McCain continually outperformed Bush among non-religious conservative voters<sup>964</sup> – the Texan's strong performance among Christian conservatives and their clout within the GOP ultimately tilted the scales in his favor though as "[t]he Religious Right component of the GOP [...] carried the Texas governor to the presidential nomination,"<sup>965</sup> according to Mark Rozell and Mark Caleb Smith. The authors' assessment that "[i]t was in the key states in the South, especially the critical contests in South Carolina"<sup>966</sup> and

959 Cf. Hough 2006, p. 235.

960 Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 111.

961 Cf. *ibid.*

962 Quoted in: J. White 2003, p. 89.

963 This quote was used in a telephone message by the National Right-to-Life Committee. In: J. White 2003, p. 89.

964 According to exit poll data. Cf. Rozell, Smith 2012, p. 145.

965 *Ibid.*

966 Where members of the religious right constituted 34 percent of the GOP primary electorate and gave 67 percent of their vote to then Governor Bush (compared to 24 percent for Senator McCain). Among voters who did not consider themselves to be part of the religious right, McCain won by 52 to 46 percent. Cf. Apple, Jr. 2000: "Bush Redefined McCain and Retained the Right." *New York Times*, February 21 and Rozell 2003: "The Christian Right: Evolution, Expansion, Contraction." In: Cromartie (ed.): *A Public Faith: Evangelicals and Civic Engagement*, pp. 31–49, here p. 40.

Virginia,<sup>967</sup> where Bush made his move toward certain nomination<sup>968</sup> most certainly also serves to once again illustrate the intricate interplay between the dual processes of *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization*. It was in the former Confederacy (particularly in South Carolina) that Bush's strategy of unashamedly courting Christian Right voters offered the largest windfall as the electoral muscle of the region's white Evangelicals allowed him to pursue such a course without fear of potentially alienating a fatally large amount of moderates or more secular minded conservatives. Once in office the president set about strengthening the role and position of faith-based organizations while also vetoing embryonic stem cell-research legislation on religious grounds. In a sense then, President Bush's time in office represented a pinnacle of Christian conservative strength at the national level, after all "the religious right constitute[d] President Bush's political base," whose vital support in getting the 43<sup>rd</sup> president elected resulted in "the first faith-based presidency in American history"<sup>969</sup> according to historian Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr. Even though social conservatives have since expanded their weight within the Republican primaries even further, they have failed to lift one of their own onto the Republican presidential candidate throne let alone been able to get a social conservative figure into the White House.

The presidency is not the only political realm where Christian conservatives have gained a foothold though. We have already looked at the role the South has played in providing the GOP with a rather comfortable majority in the U.S. House that is set to remain in place for at least the foreseeable future. This has also provided the Christian Right with a venue for its ideas and policies which have seen a remarkable rise in prominence since the GOP reclaimed a majority of Southern seats in 1994. The congressional session following the Republican takeover of the House that same year saw the largest number of abortion-related roll call votes in a single session: 30 in the House and 23 in the Senate. The House actually saw another increase in the following congress (the 105<sup>th</sup> one), climbing to a high of 35.<sup>970</sup> This shift to the right on the prime issue of abortion becomes

967 In the *Old Dominion*, Bush won 80 percent of the Christian Right vote as voters associated with the movement made up around a fifth of the Republican primary electorate. McCain won the remaining electorate by a margin of 51 to 46 percent. Cf. Tackett 2000: "Bush Coasts To Big Victory In Virginia Vote." *Chicago Tribune*, March 1. Rozell 2003 (p. 44) mentions slightly different numbers which nonetheless draw a similar picture. McCain won "non-religious-right" voters by a margin of 52 to 45 percent (77 percent of total Virginia GOP primary electorate) while Bush won among the 19 percent that considered themselves part of the movement by a margin of 80 to 14 percent.

968 Rozell, Smith 2012, p. 145.

969 Schlesinger, Jr. 2005, p. 22.

970 Cf. D'Antonio, Tuch, and Baker 2013: *Religion, Politics, and Polarization: How Religiopolitical Conflict Is Changing Congress and American Democracy*, p. 48.

particularly evident if one compares contemporary views adopted on the matter by Republican U.S. senators to the preferences held by their predecessors before the alliance with the Christian Right took off. During the 95<sup>th</sup> Congress (1977–79), Republican senators took pro-choice positions on votes related to the matter 52 percent of the time; 30 years later that share had dropped to a mere ten percent though (110<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2007–09).<sup>971</sup> Even though the prospects for success at the national level for an outright ban on abortions are rather limited – leading to a shift of the focus for the anti-abortion fight to the state level as we will discuss in the following chapter – the national GOP has time and again provided Christian conservatives with pieces of legislation that are to their liking. In 2013, the House for example passed the “Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act” that banned abortion after 20 weeks, representing the first time Congress had actually voted to redefine the point at which a fetus is considered viable which is generally deemed to be the 24-week mark.<sup>972</sup> Around half a year later, in January of 2014, the House also voted to bar federal funding for abortions (not the first time it had done so) with then House Majority Leader Eric Cantor promising supporters that Republicans in the nation’s capital “[would] do everything in our power to make sure that our values on the sanctity of life will be reflected.”<sup>973</sup>

This strategy of relying on the most religiously observant voters for a majority is not without its drawbacks though. As we will discuss in chapter II.4.6 on the *secularization of America*, the country’s future religious composition will tilt the playing field against candidates favored by white evangelical Protestants. As we have seen over the previous pages, growth in some of the more devoted evangelical denominations along with their high rates of political activity have been able to compensate for some of the longer term secularization trends. In light of the fact that the growth in religiously unaffiliated Americans has accelerated substantially over the last decade though, the future outlook for Republican majorities based primarily on running up the margins among religious conservatives looks rather grim.

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971 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 50.

972 The 1973 Supreme Court ruling of *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortions up until the point of fetal viability, making its definition and exact time an important point of contention. Cf. Eilperin 2013: “House votes to ban abortion after 20 weeks.” *Washington Post*, June 19.

973 Quoted in: Dumain 2014: “House to Vote Next Week on Abortion Ban Bill.” *Roll Call*, January 22.

## II.2.2 The Christian Right's power within Republican state parties

Linking the downfall of the Roman Empire to the “invasion” of the GOP by Christian conservatives, Clyde Wilcox observed that “[b]arbarian armies generally invade cities that are vulnerable, and which have resources that are worth exploiting.”<sup>974</sup> The Christian Right’s considerable army has taken this approach to heart over the last twenty odd years, focusing its resources on conquering GOP state parties in settings that play to the movement’s strength while simultaneously toning down the movement’s national ambitions, a shift that has also led to the development of a cadre of Christian conservative leaders who have little longing to play a significant role on the national political stage.<sup>975</sup> The results of this approach have been, as we will see in this chapter, rather remarkable and evidence that any assessment which seeks to gauge the success and extent of the Christian Right’s influence on the GOP (i. e. its *Evangelicalization*) has to take American state politics into consideration. While the Christian Right has had little success in overturning abortion on the national level or bringing back school prayers, the movement has had “significant policy victories at the state and local level”<sup>976</sup> with state legislatures proving to be more and more of a bulwark for social conservatives as the national mindset has shifted in a more liberal direction on a number of key socio-cultural topics such as gay marriage and to a somewhat lesser extent abortion. The Republican Party has recognized the potential this limited retreat offers. In the wake of the Supreme Court ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act in June of 2013 that bestowed federal benefits upon same-sex couples, Rand Paul called on his fellow conservatives to move the debate from the federal to the local level while Speaker Boehner voiced his “hope that states will define marriage as the union between one man and one woman,”<sup>977</sup> as Senator Marco Rubio also touted the “brilliance of our constitutional system” that provided Americans with the opportunity “through their state legislatures and referendums [...] to decide the definition of marriage.”<sup>978</sup> Sam Brownback, Kansas’ deeply conservative governor and hero of anti-statists of both the social and economic variety across the nation, probably provided the most succinct explanation of this political path when he proclaimed that “you don’t change America by changing Washington. You change America by

974 Wilcox 2009, p. 335.

975 Cf. Conger 2010: “A Matter of Context: Christian Right Influence in U.S. State Republican Politics.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 10(3), pp. 248–269, here pp. 262–263.

976 Rozell, Smith 2012, p. 147.

977 Quoted in: Burns, Haberman 2013: “Conservatives at crossroads on gay marriage.” *Politico*, June 26.

978 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

changing the states.”<sup>979</sup> The inherent advantages provided by a state environment to a movement like the Christian Right are quite clear. First of all, the state level in the U.S. offers a high level of autonomy to the local administrations, meaning a takeover of power provides one with tangible powers across a broad range of issue areas ranging from access to abortion to the extent of the welfare state. And secondly such an appropriation of political power is easier to achieve in a setting inherently more favorable to the Christian Right's electoral base. In any low(er) turnout elections, an easily galvanized group of supporters will have a disproportionate weight and state elections tend to draw even less of a crowd than their federal counterparts. Moreover, in such a local setting – such as the staunchly conservative South – Christian conservative legislators will not run into the same problems that those in the U.S. House face, namely a Democratic senate and presidency that are sure to halt any advances intended to curtail abortion rights. As we will see over the following paragraphs, numerous restrictions have been introduced in several states where the Republican Party holds all the reins of power.

There are differing accounts of the extent to which the Christian Right has been able to absorb Republican state parties but most of the data confirms the notable relationship between the Christian Right and the South as the movement's base of power tends to lie in the former Confederacy. Aside from the obvious reason for this being the high share of white Evangelicals in the region, Clyde Wilcox notes that the still nascent state of local GOP state committees in the late 1980s and early 1990s made them an easy target for a Christian conservative takeover.<sup>980</sup> Overall, Green, Guth, and Wilcox (1998) came to the conclusion that the Christian Right had a “great organizational presence” in seven of the eleven Republican state parties in the South in the early 1990s: Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South as well as North Carolina. In both Arkansas and Mississippi it wielded “strong influence” while Christian conservatives had “contested influence” in Virginia and “weak influence” in Tennessee.<sup>981</sup> It should be noted that outside of the South the movement had no “great influence” within any Republican state parties with “strong influence” only extending into Kansas, Nebraska, and Utah.<sup>982</sup> By the early 2000s, the Christian Right had expanded its base of control to eighteen states in which the movement and its associates controlled at least 50 percent of a Republican state

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979 In this instance, Brownback referred to the economic problems the country was facing, arguing that solutions found in Republican states provided a better hope for future economic growth. His conclusion can nonetheless be applied to socio-cultural issues as well. Quoted in: Wallace 2013: “GOP: Look to the states.” *CNN*, April 6.

980 Cf. Wilcox 2009, p. 335.

981 Cf. Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998, pp. 118–119.

982 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 119.



committee, even in some perhaps more unexpected places such as Minnesota, Iowa, or Oregon.<sup>983</sup> Towards the tail end of the first decade of the twenty-first century it appeared that Christian conservatives had lost some of that political clout though as the Christian conservative movement now exerted “high influence” (once again representing control of 50 percent or more of a GOP state committee) in fifteen states while exerting “moderate influence” (control over 25 to 49 percent of a GOP state committee) in another 26 states. Seven of the South’s eleven states were in the “high influence” camp while in the remaining four Christian conservatives possessed “moderate influence.”<sup>984</sup> Some of the GOP state branches outside the traditional Republican realm (this being the South and Midwest) with high degrees of Christian Right power tend to also have a rather strong Tea Party wing, evidence of the significant overlap that is in place between both conservative movements that we will assess in closer detail in chapter II.3.1.2. Some of the states that might not strike one as the Christian Right’s traditional territory where they nonetheless maintained a *high* degree of influence – Michigan, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin – have in recent years all elected Republican governors that are usually touted as supporters and sometimes even figureheads of the Tea Party movement.<sup>985</sup>

The motivations behind using political tools at the state level to further the Christian Right’s pro-life agenda often extend well beyond the states in question. First and foremost, the recent increase in abortion restrictions “is an underhanded strategy to essentially do by the back door what they can’t do through the front,”<sup>986</sup> in the eyes of Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, meaning that the state authorities in question are trying to circumvent the rules laid down by *Roe v. Wade*. Many politicians do little to hide the intentions behind their actions. After adding his signature to an unashamedly pro-life bill in 2012, Mississippi’s Republican governor Phil Bryant announced that this was merely “the first step in a movement [...] to try to end abortion in Mississippi”<sup>987</sup> while the state’s lieutenant governor Tate Reeves expressed the belief that the provisions of the law would “effectively close the only abortion clinic in Mississippi” which would therefore “effectively end abortion in Mississippi.”<sup>988</sup> Had the law not been struck down by the courts, it

983 Cf. Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 230.

984 Cf. Wilcox, Robinson 2011, pp. 104–105.

985 The three governors in question, Rick Snyder in Michigan, Paul LePage in New Hampshire, and most notably Scott Walker in Wisconsin, have all been referred to as “Tea Party governors” by various media outlets.

986 Quoted in: Reitman 2014: “The Stealth War on Abortion.” *Rolling Stone*, January 15.

987 Quoted in: Benson Gold, Nash 2013: “TRAP Laws Gain Political Traction While Abortion Clinics – And the Women They Serve – Pay the Price.” In: *Gutmacher Policy Review* 16(2), pp. 7–12, here p. 10.

988 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

would have forced the closure of the sole remaining abortion clinic in the state, in which case Mississippi would have become the first state without an abortion clinic in the 41 years since the *Roe v. Wade* ruling was passed down.<sup>989</sup> Another important reason behind these measures though – aside from the obvious goal of making it more difficult for women to obtain abortions – is the hope that one of these pieces of legislation will eventually find its way to the Supreme Court, forcing the justices to once again issue a ruling on this contentious matter. When Republican North Dakota governor Jack Dalrymple signed one of the nation's toughest abortion laws in 2013, he argued that the bill was “a legitimate attempt by a state legislature to discover the boundaries of *Roe v. Wade*,” knowing full well that “the constitutionality of this measure is an open question.”<sup>990</sup>

Both North Dakota and Mississippi are but two of a large group of states that has over the last decade revived legislative actions against abortion with the number of laws being passed by Republican state political bodies accelerating at breakneck speed over the last few years. As of September 2013, 13 states had banned abortion at no later than 22 weeks, with some of them setting the cutoff point at an even earlier point.<sup>991</sup> All of these states were carried by Mitt Romney in the 2012 presidential election and the sole remaining Democratic political actor at the state government level in these states in 2013 was Arkansas governor Mike Beebe<sup>992</sup> who vetoed a state ban on abortions after 12 weeks in 2013; a veto that was subsequently overridden by the Republican state senate and House of Representatives though.<sup>993</sup> In seven of the thirteen states that have passed these highly restrictive abortion restrictions, the Christian Right exerted a “high influence” on the local GOP state committee according to data stemming from 2008 with the remaining six states residing in the “moderate influence” column.<sup>994</sup>

Banning abortions is merely one of many steps state governments can take to make life worse for those women attempting to obtain an abortion. Another less obvious approach are so called “TRAP” laws (*Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers*) which use a variety of means to ensure the closure of abortion clinics such as specifying room or corridor width and other standards that are other-

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989 Cf. Stampler 2014: “Lone Mississippi Abortion Clinic Fights Closure.” *Time*, April 29.

990 Quoted in: Kliff 2013: “The landscape of abortion bans, in one must-see map.” *Washington Post*, March 28.

991 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013j: *Widening Regional Divide over Abortion Laws*, July 29, p. 1. These states are: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas.

992 This means the GOP controlled all other levers of state power in the states in question (governorships as well as state legislative bodies). For an overview of the composition of state governments cf. Berman 2013: *Political Control of State Governments*. August 8.

993 CNN 2013a: *Arkansas legislature overrides veto of ban on early abortions*, March 7.

994 For data on Christian Right influence cf. Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 104–105.

wise applied to regular hospitals and surgical centers and are usually deemed unnecessary in a setting in which only abortions are performed.<sup>995</sup> Less than 0.3 percent of all abortion patients in the United States for example experience complications that actually require hospitalization.<sup>996</sup> The mortality rate for abortions is also significantly lower than the one for colonoscopies which are usually also performed in outpatient clinic settings similar to those of abortion clinics without these medical centers having to abide by the same stringent rules that are now being placed on any medical facility related to abortions though<sup>997</sup> – further evidence that many of these *TRAP laws* are politically motivated instead of merely keeping a patient's health in mind. A different tool at the disposal of the pro-life movement within state governments is the option of severely curtailing access to abortions in health care plans offered in any given state or prohibiting insurance coverage of abortion for government employees.<sup>998</sup> President Obama's landmark health care reform has allowed states (and through them the Christian Right) to further their pro-life agenda even further. By October of 2012, 17 states had made use of an opt-out provision in the Affordable Care Act that allows states to restrict coverage to abortion in any health care plans offered through the newly established health care exchanges set up in their state.<sup>999</sup> By early 2014 that number had increased to 24 with nine of these states restricting insurance coverage of abortion in plans offered outside of the exchange marketplace as well with these laws often only allowing abortions to be performed in cases of life endangerment or sometimes instances of rape and incest as well.<sup>1000</sup> A particularly restrictive law was passed in late 2013 when Michigan's Republican controlled state legislature<sup>1001</sup> gave its approval to the *Abortion Insurance Opt-Out Act* whose provisions prohibit insurers in the state from paying for abortions unless the woman previously purchased abortion coverage through a separate amendment (rider) to her health care plan. Furthermore, the state's opt-out act fails to include most of the aforementioned exceptions, such as for cases of rape or incest with abortion only to be used as a last case resort in case the

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995 Cf. Guttmacher Institute 2014b: *State Policies in Brief: Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers*, April 1, p. 1.

996 Cf. Benson Gold, Nash 2013, p. 7.

997 Cf. Reitman 2014.

998 For an overview of the steps states can take in this field cf. Guttmacher Institute 2014a: *State Policies in Brief: Restricting Insurance Coverage of Abortion*, April 1, p. 1.

999 Cf. National Conference of State Legislatures 2012: *Health Reform and Abortion Coverage in the Insurance Exchanges*.

1000 Cf. Guttmacher Institute 2014a, p. 1.

1001 As already mentioned, Michigan is one of the few states outside traditional Republican territories where the Christian Right has exerted a high level of influence on the GOP state party.

mother's death is imminent.<sup>1002</sup> These provisions have led to the macabre christening of separate abortion riders for Michigan women as "rape insurance."<sup>1003</sup>

The last few years have overall seen a remarkable increase in anti-abortion legislation across the country. In the three-year period between 2011 and 2013 alone, states introduced more restrictions on abortion than they had done during the entire previous decade – 205 compared to 189 between 2001 and 2010. Each of the three years saw an annual tally of restrictive measures that was higher than in any previous year before 2011.<sup>1004</sup> According to the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute, 27 states were considered to be "hostile to abortion rights" in 2013, up from 13 in 2000.<sup>1005</sup> Unsurprisingly, all Southern states were part of this group in 2013. In virtually all of the states in question, Republicans were able to set the abortion agenda unimpeded, highlighting the distinct advantage the state level offers. Based on the state level data from 2013, Republicans exerted unified control over the state government – meaning they controlled the governorship as well as both legislative chambers – in 23 of the aforementioned 27 "hostile" states while controlling two governmental levers of power in another two states (those being Arkansas and Missouri which both had Democratic governors in 2013). The sole majority Democratic exceptions on the list were Kentucky and Rhode Island, although the former – despite its Democratic governor and state house of representatives – can hardly be considered a Democratic stronghold.<sup>1006</sup>

The NARAL foundation, which also fights for reproductive rights, comes up with slightly different yet similar numbers which serve to illustrate the extent to which pro-life legislation has outpaced its pro-choice counterpart in recent years. According to the foundation's data, a cumulative number of 807 anti-choice measures had been enacted at the state level between 1995 and 2013 compared to 351 pro-choice measures (a ratio of 2.3 pro-life per every pro-choice measure). The difference has been particularly stark over the past few years: While just 43 pro-choice measures were enacted between 2009 and 2013, the number of pro-life measures passed during the same period was more than four and a half times as high (197).<sup>1007</sup> The impact the Christian Right's crusade

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1002 Cf. Oosting 2013: "Michigan Legislature approves controversial abortion insurance bill." *MLive*, December 11.

1003 Cf. Reitman 2014.

1004 The yearly totals for the three-year period were: 92 (2011), 43 (2012), and 70 (2013). Cf. E. Nash, Benson Gold, Rowan, Rathbun, and Vierboom 2014: "Laws Affecting Reproductive Health and Rights: 2013 State Policy Review." *Guttmacher Institute*, January.

1005 This means these states had four to ten major restrictions on abortion in place. For a list cf. *ibid.*

1006 All data obtained from Berman 2013.

1007 Cf. NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation 2014: *Who Decides? The Status of Women's Reproductive Rights in the United States*, 23<sup>rd</sup> edition, January, pp. 3–4.

against abortion has had is also seen by the substantial drop in abortion clinics over the past few decades, particularly in the movement's Southern homeland. In 1982, the number of facilities providing women with the ability to receive an abortion reached a national peak of around 2,900. By 2011 it had decreased by roughly 40 percent, dropping to 1,720. While there were around 800 abortion facilities in the South in 1981, there were just 352 left by 2011, a contraction of 56 percent. In the Midwest, another Republican stronghold in recent years, the number decreased by 54 percent between 1982 and 2011, dropping from a peak of 383 to 178 providers.<sup>1008</sup> A recent example of this trend that gained worldwide notoriety and serves to demonstrate the far-reaching impact these pieces of legislation possess can be found in the battle over a controversial anti-abortion law in Texas that transpired during the summer of 2013. Passed in a second attempt after a filibuster by Democratic state senator Wendy Davis had delayed its initial passage, the state's new anti-abortion law – garnering opposition from the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists as well as the Texas Medical Association among others<sup>1009</sup> – managed to shut down around half of the 40 abortion clinics in Texas by early 2014. Eventually only six will in all likelihood remain open with the ones that have been closed expected to remain so even if judicial institutions were to strike down certain provisions of the law.<sup>1010</sup> As a result of this, abortion clinics are now simply out of range for many women: while only around 10,000 Texan women aged between 15 and 44 lived more than 200 miles away from an abortion clinic before the passage of the law, that number had risen to nearly 800,000 by October of 2014.<sup>1011</sup> Unsurprisingly then, the law appears to have had its intended affect as the abortion rate in the state dropped by 13 percent between the law going into effect in November of 2013 and the summer of 2014.<sup>1012</sup> Conservative Republicans have therefore presented women

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1008 Note that this data does not provide a detailed breakdown of the states included in each region. We can assume though that they largely correspond to the regions used by the U.S. Census Bureau. For data cf. *The New Yorker* 2014: *Interactive Chart: America's Vanishing Abortion Providers*. January 31.

1009 Cf. Schwartz 2013: "Texas Senate Approves Strict Abortion Measure." *New York Times*, July 13.

1010 Cf. Novack 2014: "Texas Is Permanently Shutting Abortion Clinics and the Supreme Court Can't Do Anything About It." *National Journal*, May 5.

1011 Cf. Munguia 2014: "How Abortion Access Has Changed In Texas." *FiveThirtyEight*, October 4.

1012 Cf. Texas Policy Evaluation Project 2014: "Texas State Abortion Rate Decreases 13 Percent Since Implementation of Restrictive Law." *The University of Texas at Austin*, July 23. There are nonetheless some factors to keep in mind when trying to assess the impact of the law. The data is not able to demonstrate if women that would otherwise have received an abortion in Texas have carried their children to term, received an abortion in another state, or even induced one themselves. The 13 percent figure is nonetheless both above the national and Texan averages in recent abortion reductions (around 5 to 6 percent an-

in the Lone Star state with a *fait accompli* which highlights that far from seeing a decline in influence, Christian conservatives are able to shape public policy as they see fit in a number of states with hardly any federal institutions capable of reining them in.

Changes like these have coincided with a significant decrease in the number of abortions conducted in the United States in recent decades, although the extent of the Christian Right's impact in bringing these numbers down is up for debate. Abortions in the U.S. peaked at 1.61 million in 1990 before decreasing to roughly 1.21 million by 2005.<sup>1013</sup> After remaining stagnant for a few years, abortions further decreased to 1.06 million by 2011.<sup>1014</sup> While the rate of abortions, defined as abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44, stood at a high of 29.3 in 1980, it had dropped to 16.9 by 2011.<sup>1015</sup> It would be wrong to infer though that these decreases are primarily due to the anti-abortion crusade the Christian Right has fought over the past 40 years. Some of the largest decreases in abortions have for example been seen in some of the most liberal states of the U.S. which have taken few if any steps to restrict access to abortions, pointing towards the fact that increased access to contraceptives in recent decades has led to fewer unwanted pregnancies which in turn obviously has the effect of reducing the number of abortions.<sup>1016</sup> Moreover, as the information in this chapter has shown, most of the *TRAP laws* and other impediments placed in front of women who might be trying to receive an abortion were not introduced until the tail end of the timeframe that the data accounts for, meaning we will have to wait for future numbers to gauge what effect these measures may have on the number of abortions in the U.S. and particular states. One thing is for sure though: The Christian Right's anti-abortion movement's crusade "has been very successful at stigmatizing abortion,"<sup>1017</sup> according to sociologist and abortion historian Carole Joffe of the University of California (San Francisco), a strategy that has allowed Christian conservatives to have an impact in this issue area that extends well beyond their own base as the large scale negative branding of abortion and the women who have decided to terminate their pregnancy "can create a climate

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nally). Cf. Thomson-DeVeaux 2014: "It's Really Hard To Measure The Effects Of Abortion Restrictions In Texas." *FiveThirtyEight*, August 28.

1013 Cf. Jones, Kooistra 2011: "Abortion Incidence and Access to Services In the United States, 2008." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 43(1), pp. 41–50, here p. 43.

1014 Cf. Jones, Jerman 2014: "Abortion Incidence and Service Availability In the United States, 2011." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 46(1), pp. 3–14, here p. 6.

1015 Cf. Jones, Kooistra 2011, p. 43 and Jones, Jerman 2014, p. 6.

1016 Cf. Jones, Jerman 2014, p. 8.

1017 Quoted in: Eckholm 2014: "Abortions Declining in U.S., Study Finds." *New York Times*, February 2.

of fear and hostility”<sup>1018</sup> in states where neither new regulations have been introduced nor where the religious right is particularly powerful.

The attitude of the Christian Right – and therefore the stance of a number of Republican state parties – on abortion is unlikely to moderate in the near future due to the position of the movement’s primary support group, white evangelical Protestants. A multitude of data shows that if anything, younger evangelical Christians hold more conservative positions than their elders, creating a significant opinion gap on the matter between white Evangelicals (and by extension the GOP) and other demographic groups.<sup>1019</sup> Close to 9 in 10 white evangelical college-age Millennials (18–24 year olds) for example expressed the position in a recent survey that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, compared to an average of 44 percent among all Millennials in this age bracket.<sup>1020</sup> The explanation for younger evangelicals being more conservative on the matter can best be found in two factors that have set this denominational group apart in recent years. First of all, contrary to what we tend to see across most of the western world, young evangelical Protestants are actually attending church more frequently than their elders, providing church and opinion leaders with more opportunities to reach this crop of young adults and instill the views and values on this contentious matter into them.<sup>1021</sup> And secondly, evangelical cohort groups born in the 1970s and later on have grown up in an environment in which abortion is being presented to them as an immoral and wrong practice in all cases, regardless of the circumstances – not infrequently leading to an opposition to exceptions even in cases of rape that we just witnessed in various state abortion laws.<sup>1022</sup> John Hoffmann and Sherrie Mills Johnson therefore reach the conclusion that for many younger white Evangelicals, abortion has become a “monolithic issue”<sup>1023</sup> that leaves little room for doubts and dissent. Another remarkable feature present in this group of religious conservatives is the lack of internal polarization on the matter. Even more highly educated evangelical

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1018 Jones, Jerman 2014, p. 12.

1019 For an overview and the changes we can note among evangelical Protestants that often distinguish them from other demographic groups cf. Hoffman, Mills Johnson 2005: “Attitudes toward Abortion among Religious Traditions in the United States: Change or Continuity?” *Sociology of Religion* 66(2), pp. 161–182, in particular pp. 174–177 and Smidt 2013: *American Evangelicals Today*, p. 206.

1020 Cf. Jones, Cox, and Banchoff 2012: “A Generation in Transition: Religion, Values, and Politics among College-Age Millennials – Findings from the 2012 Millennial Values Survey.” *Public Religion Research Institute / Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs*, April 19, pp. 25–26.

1021 Cf. Jelen, Wilcox 2003: “Causes and Consequences of Public Attitudes toward Abortion: A Review and Research Agenda.” *Political Research Quarterly* 56(4), pp. 489–500, here p. 492.

1022 Cf. Hoffmann, Mills Johnson 2005, p. 178.

1023 Ibid.

Protestants show high levels of opposition to abortion, a finding that runs counter to the usual correlation between higher education and a more liberal stance on abortion that can be found in virtually all other denominational groups.<sup>1024</sup> During the 1970s and 80s, education for example was one of the strongest predictors of pro-choice positions, a correlation that subsequently decreased significantly during the 1990s but only did so almost exclusively among Republicans; a shift that Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox attribute to the influx of white Evangelicals into the party whose activism and interaction with more moderate members of the Republican Party on the matter may very well have caused the latter to also re-evaluate their own views on abortion.<sup>1025</sup>

These societal fault lines also materialize when we turn our attention to the regional attitudes on abortion. As a matter of fact, John Hoffmann and Sherrie Mills Johnson see the underlying reason behind white evangelical exceptionalism on abortion in the extremely restrictive views held by native Southerners which as we have discussed time and again make up a disproportionate share of white evangelical Protestants. When the authors introduced a set of control variables (such as gender, income, or whether respondents were native Southerners) into their abortion attitudes analysis, the difference in opinion between evangelical Protestants and Catholics on elective abortions became virtually non-existent. The authors therefore concluded that the fact that evangelical Protestants – more so than other religious denominations – are more likely to be native Southerners “explains the general association between Evangelicals and abortion attitudes.”<sup>1026</sup> Data from the Pew Research Center also reveals the distinctly Southern opposition to abortion and the fact that attitudes in the region have hardened in recent years. While the data does not provide a state by state breakdown, it does group the states into a set of regions that demonstrates the discrepancy in attitudes. While the national breakdown on abortion in 2013 saw a split of 54 to 40 percent in favor of keeping abortion legal in all or most cases,<sup>1027</sup> figure II.2.2 reveals that the most vehement opposition came from the *South Central* U.S. Census region, made up of Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas, states that to a certain extent represent the heart of today's Republican South. This was the only region in 2012/2013<sup>1028</sup> in which a majority (52 percent) favored the pro-life position that abortion should be illegal in most or all cases while just 40 percent voiced support for the pro-life option. Less than 20 years earlier these shares had

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1024 Cf. Evans 2002: “Polarization in Abortion Attitudes in U.S. Religious Traditions, 1972–1998.” *Sociological Forum* 17(3), pp. 397–422, here p. 418.

1025 Cf. Jelen, Wilcox 2003, pp. 491 and 495.

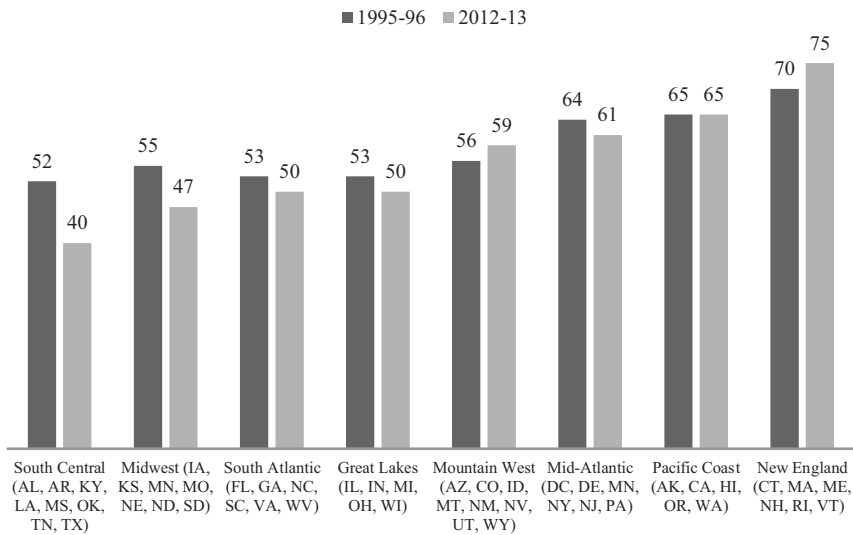
1026 Hoffmann, Mills Johnson 2005, p. 173.

1027 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013j, p. 1.

1028 These numbers are based on three Pew surveys conducted over the two year span.



essentially been reversed, as only 45 percent of respondents in the region argued for abortion to be illegal in a composite of five surveys conducted in 1995 and 1996 while a majority of 52 percent felt abortions should be legal.<sup>1029</sup>



**Figure II.2.2:** Regional views on abortion, percentage answering “abortion should be legal in all or most cases” in 1995–96 and 2012–2013.<sup>1030</sup>

## Conclusion

The Christian Right and its social conservative values have in a significant number of states become the ideological foundation for the local Republican outfit with the party’s agenda in those states frequently being set by adherents to the movement, often allowing Christian conservatives to legislate morality as they see fit. Far from being “dormant,”<sup>1031</sup> the Christian Right has been reinvigorated by its recent focus on shaping state politics and policies, providing the movement with the perfect platform to introduce legislation that will not be impeded by liberal opponents. The impact extends beyond the borders of these states for a variety of reasons though. Sooner or later the abortion debate may

1029 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013j, p. 3.

1030 Cf. *ibid.*

1031 A claim about the current state of the Christian Right made by Graham G. Dodds in Dodds 2012: “Crusade or Charade?: The Religious Right and the Culture Wars.” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 42(3), pp.274–300, here p. 295.

once again find itself in front of the justices of the Supreme Court, possibly providing the Christian Right with a victory at the national level as well. In the immediate future though, the impact of various states introducing restrictions on abortion may prove to have disastrous consequences for the wider Republican Party. The actions taken by GOP state parties often controlled by the Christian Right have created an image of the average Republican as a staunch culture warrior who will outlaw abortion even in cases of rape or incest while objecting to any and all gay rights (see chapter II.2.5) which puts the entire Republican movement at odds with younger voters in particular as we will see in chapter II.4.5.

We do not necessarily have to look into the future though to find support for the argument that white Evangelicals and their views represent an impediment to national Republican majorities. Even today a significant majority of Americans already believes *Roe v. Wade* should *not* be overturned<sup>1032</sup> while the contemporary female electorate in particular also appears put off by the GOP's increasingly evangelical positions on the issue of female reproductive rights. Asked which party's position on abortion they preferred ahead of the 2012 election, women overwhelmingly chose the Democratic Party over their Republican counterparts (by a margin of 20 percentage points). Almost three quarters of women also responded in the same survey that the matter of abortion played a *very important* (44 percent) or *somewhat important* (27 percent) role in their electoral decision making process that year compared to a share of just 57 percent among men.<sup>1033</sup> The restrictive attitudes put on public display by *evangelized* Republican state parties that call for mandatory vaginal ultrasounds ahead of an abortion<sup>1034</sup> while forcing women to take out "rape insurance" do little to improve the party's appeal among the country's female population which has in recent presidential elections strongly favored Democratic candidates.<sup>1035</sup> Taking into account demographic shifts within the Democratic Party that have seen it become more liberal with its voters increasingly religiously unaffiliated or even agnostic and atheist, we can expect to see a continued pushback by the Christian conservative movement at the state level as they attempt to curtail the perceived moral depredation of America that if anything appears to be accel-

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1032 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013c: *Roe v. Wade at 40: Most Oppose Overturning Abortion Decision*, January 16, p. 3.

1033 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012e: *The Complicated Politics of Abortion*, August 22.

1034 Mandatory vaginal ultrasounds for women wishing to obtain an abortion were proposed by the Virginia GOP in early 2012. After a public outcry the measure was eventually watered down, instead making regular non-invasive ultrasounds mandatory. Cf. Kumar, Vozzella 2012: "McDonnell, Virginia Republicans back off mandatory invasive ultrasounds." *Washington Post*, February 22.

1035 See presidential exit poll data at Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.

erating as gay marriage is being legalized across the land. The *Evangelicalization* of the GOP – both at the national as well as the state level – therefore appears to not have run its course just yet.

### II.2.3 The Republican culture of non-compromise and its evangelical roots

*“Our soul is at stake in this election. This campaign is a fight for our country, our values, and the freedom we believe in. [...] [A]ll of the rights we’ve worked so hard to defend, all of what we know is good and right about America – all of it could be lost if Barack Obama is reelected. It’s all or nothing.”*

Wayne LaPierre, Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association, speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in 2012.<sup>1036</sup>

*“You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We’ll preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we’ll sentence them to take the last step into a thousand years of darkness.”*

Ronald Reagan, talking about the stakes of the 1964 presidential election.<sup>1037</sup>

*“In my party, compromise cannot be seen as analogous to treason, which it has been recently.”*

Jon Huntsman, Jr., former governor of Utah and candidate for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, commenting on the future of his party after the 2012 presidential election.<sup>1038</sup>

That the defining feature of the most prominent Republican popular movement at the onset of the twenty-first century – the Tea Party – is a distinct abhorrence of compromise should come as little surprise considering the developments undergone by the Republican Party over the last half a century as it has become increasingly *southernized* and, as seen in the previous two chapters, *evangelized*. The lasting legacy of the latter process extends beyond anti-abortion legislation and an objection to the legalization of same-sex marriage though. The Republican Party’s focus on divisive cultural issues to win votes that began in the mid-1960s and accelerated even further after Reagan’s increased attention to the *values vote* along with the wider political trends of polarization and a strict separation of political supporters into two clearly separated partisan camps across a wide array of policy matters has created what I refer to here as a *culture of non-compromise* within the Republican Party. It is a culture that scorns me-

1036 Quoted in: Balz 2013, p. 104.

1037 Reagan 1964.

1038 Quoted in: Stein 2012: “Jon Huntsman: GOP Primary Barriers To Entry Were ‘Pretty Damn Low.’” *Huffington Post*, November 28.

diation and moderation with its adherents purging anyone who is perceived as having strayed from conservative orthodoxy. As a result of this, the party's position has become more rigid not just on matters pertaining to the Christian Right's ideological core concern of moral values. Instead this inflexibility has spread to the entire ideological foundation of the party, highlighted by the increased lack of willingness to compromise on the part of the wider contemporary Republican Party across a broad range of issues, spanning health care reform to gun and gay rights as well as budgetary negotiations. What we are witnessing today is an interconnectedness of various issue and policy areas, interlocked with one another like the internal workings of a clock. In this political environment changes related to a particular issue inevitably and invariably affect another one and no one single policy matter can be isolated. It is nourished by politicians and activists both within the Christian Right and the Republican Party who, as we will see time and again over the next pages, argue that a retreat on a single particular issue has wider and disastrous consequences not just for conservatives but for the entire nation. As we will also see later on in this chapter, this change in attitude makes it harder for Republicans to obtain broad, nationwide majorities as the American public is increasingly infuriated by the partisan gridlock in Congress.

Within the context of this book and the question to what extent recent developments have hurt and sometimes helped the GOP, it is always important to remember that the seeds for this *culture of non-compromise* lie in the South, in particular in the fertile grounds of the Christian Right. Ever since its first appearance on the political stage, this movement has made the case that its policy positions rest on the ultimate moral authority: God. The conflation of God and politics and depiction of legislative battles as fights between ultimate good and ultimate evil are of course nothing new and have been a central feature of American politics in general and Southern politics in particular for centuries. As was illustrated in chapter I.2, both slavery and segregation were for example presented as divinely ordained ways of life by many Southern religious leaders as they sought to defend both institutions. The emergence of the (Southern rooted) Christian Right in the 1970s as a response to the perceived decline of morality in the United States bestowed a newfound salience upon moral and values related discussions and policies, turning them into a key ideological pillar that the Republican alliance has coalesced around ever since. As this chapter will argue, social issues and the trademark uncompromising approach of any battle pertaining to them that is rooted in the absolute truths the stance on these matters is based upon have expanded beyond their traditional territorial range. Just as race has spilled over into the economic realm, seemingly non-socio-cultural policy questions – such as the Affordable Care Act or the general size and role of the government – have on the political right been fused with the basic positions held

on social matters into a single coherent ideological outlook that causes any disagreement on matters that have in the past allowed for compromises to be reached (such as budgetary negotiations) to now be subject to the same sort of non-negotiable positions that were initially encountered among social conservatives on their bread and butter issues of abortion, school prayer, and any supposed liberal attempts to redefine the traditional composition and constitution of the family. More often than not these days, those very same basic positions on said social issues and the religious values these views are based upon represent the beacon that all other Republican specific issue positions are guided by – outwardly unrelated policy areas are thus increasingly seen through the prism of that initial socio-cultural and most elementary ideological viewpoint. A tug of war over government spending limits is therefore in the eyes of many Republicans no longer centered on the question of what sort of levels of taxation and expenditure are sensible and possible but has instead become a cultural battle for the heart and soul of America and what it means to be an American today; a significant shift that can ultimately be traced back to the white evangelical population of the South and its burgeoning role in the Republican Party.

The problem this merger presents for any party that is overly reliant on social conservative voters in particular and the smooth running of a country in general is made obvious if we take a glance at some of the defining traits of socio-cultural issue areas. “Social issues are arguably not as amenable to easy compromise as economic ones,”<sup>1039</sup> is how David Lublin presents the basic conundrum America’s political system faces when debates are framed in a manner that invariably incorporates and injects socio-cultural views into any discussion. Why is this being done in the first place though? Primarily because these social battles represent such an irresistible temptation for Republican candidates who wish to bring the base to the ballot box. Social issues can be a useful tool in galvanizing support because they go to the core of a person’s *weltanschauung*, impacting their most basic set of beliefs; as the late Christian conservative politician Howard Phillips pointed out, “people who are motivated by issues are far more reliable than people who are merely motivated by the lust for power or the desire for patronage.”<sup>1040</sup> Even the slightest encroachments on the aforementioned bread and butter issues cause a serious backlash among members of the religious right in general and evangelical Protestants in particular who have always tended to view these fights against liberal policies (initially in the social issue realm) as crusades for the defense of non-negotiable Christian values and their own way of

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1039 Lublin 2004, p. 182.

1040 Quoted in: Lienesch 1982: “Right-Wing Religion: Christian Conservatism as a Political Movement.” *Political Science Quarterly* 97(3), pp. 403–425, here p. 412.

life,<sup>1041</sup> being driven by a “fundamentally Manichean psychology”<sup>1042</sup> that renders virtually no gray area between good and evil – an approach that can wreak havoc with intraparty harmony and unity as well. In 1996, the Texan delegation to that year’s Republican National Convention for example drew up a pledge to support a strict anti-abortion platform while promising to oppose any potential vice-presidential candidate who did not share their fervent pro-life stance. Those members of the delegation who refused to sign this pledge were sent home instead with one expelled and exasperated member venting his anger and frustration by arguing that “[t]hese people don’t understand and don’t care about traditional politics.”<sup>1043</sup> As we will see later on in this chapter and when we talk about the Tea Party and its impact on and within the GOP, similarly ruthless methods that leave no room for dissent are today no longer limited to the socio-cultural sphere.

Few if any scholarly articles do a better job of describing the roots behind the Christian Right’s – and that of other right-wing movements throughout the history of the United States – aversion to compromise than Richard Hofstadter’s “*The Paranoid Style in American Politics*,” penned around a decade before the Christian Right burst onto the political scene. For Hofstadter, members of society, such as supporters of the Christian Right, who are in a constant struggle with the forces of evil seeking to undermine their way of life, “[do] not see social conflict as something to be mediated and compromised, in the manner of the working politician.”<sup>1044</sup> Because the conflicts waged across the nation, in the parliamentary chambers, and the town halls are “between absolute good and absolute evil” (see the comments by Wayne LaPierre and Ronald Reagan at the top of this chapter), the main characteristic required to prevail in this battle is not the ability to find a compromise “but the will to fight things out to a finish.”<sup>1045</sup> As Hofstadter explains, “[n]othing but complete victory will do.”<sup>1046</sup> The religious right and its members have always matched those descriptions in a remarkable manner. “For any self-respecting person, any person who loves his

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1041 Cf. Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 208 as well as Liscio, Stonecash 2009: “Unintended Consequences: Republican Strategy and Winning and Losing Voters.” *Prepared for the 2009 State of the Parties Conference, the University of Akron, October*, pp. 13–14.

1042 This is how Richard Hofstadter described the state of mind of formerly Communist converts in American right-wing movements in the early to mid-1960s, a trait undoubtedly also present within the Christian Right community. Hofstadter 1965: “The Paranoid Style in American Politics.” In: *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. First Harvard University Paperback edition, 1996, pp. 3–40, here p. 35.

1043 Quoted in: J. White 2003, p. 87.

1044 Hofstadter 1965, p. 31.

1045 Ibid.

1046 Ibid.

country and fears God, there is no such thing as the middle of the road,”<sup>1047</sup> is how Evangelical minister David Noebel (one of the leading figures within the Christian conservative community for a number of decades despite not having the same name recognition as Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell) put it to his parishioners in a sermon delivered in the 1960s. To make sure everybody understood what was at stake, Noebel warned those in the audience that “[a] special place in hell is being reserved for people who believe in walking down the middle of the political and religious road.”<sup>1048</sup>

Contemporary leaders of the Christian Right continue to pursue a similar path with equally frightful rhetoric directed towards their followers. Take James Dobson, founder of the influential social conservative interest group *Focus on the Family*, and his comments on the topic of homosexuality for example. In a letter sent to his followers urging them to lend support to a federal amendment banning gay marriage in 2003, Dobson made good use of the language of the *paranoid spokesman* who “expresses the anxiety of those who are living through the last days”<sup>1049</sup> when he proclaimed that the “homosexual activist movement” was set to deliver a “potentially *fatal* blow to the traditional family [emphasis added].”<sup>1050</sup> This fight against gay marriage was going to be “the big one,” and the movement’s “D-Day, or Gettysburg, or Stalingrad.”<sup>1051</sup> As we will see later on, the Tea Party and politicians associated with it employ virtually the same “end of days” hyperbole that has been a staple of the Christian Right – with candidates of this most recent incarnation of the American populist radical right not infrequently placing their religiosity front and center as well. Dean Young, a Tea Party backed Republican real estate developer who failed to win his party’s 2012 and 2013 candidacy for Alabama’s first congressional district, argued on the campaign trail that “[w]e are witnessing the end of a Western Christian empire”<sup>1052</sup> vowing to return the country “to the Constitution and the godly principles that made this nation great”<sup>1053</sup> if he was elected to the House while also referring to Republicans who dared to express a willingness to compromise with people from across the political aisle as “spineless.”<sup>1054</sup> The same sort of ominous

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1047 Quoted in: Pierard 1970: *The Unequal Yoke: Evangelical Christianity and Political Conservatism*, p. 41.

1048 Quoted in: Ibid.

1049 Hofstadter 1965, p. 30.

1050 Quoted in: Edsall 2006: *Building Red America: The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for Permanent Power*, p. 89.

1051 Quoted in: Ibid., p. 90.

1052 Quoted in: Robertson 2013: “Alabama Primary Puts a Wide Spectrum of Republican Views on Display.” *New York Times*, September 21.

1053 Quoted in: Sullivan 2013a: “In Alabama election, a showdown between the GOP establishment and the tea party.” *Washington Post*, November 4.

1054 Quoted in: Robertson 2013.

worldview is widespread at the right-wing populist base as well. Speaking to journalist John B. Judis, one Texan Tea Party supporter described in bleak terms that “I and other Tea Party members can see the day of destruction coming just on the horizon.”<sup>1055</sup> It always warrants remembering that such rhetoric is far from confined to the fringes of the party. In the *evangelized* GOP of the twenty-first century even leading political figures paint political battles in diction reminiscent of Baptist preachers. Tom DeLay, House Majority Leader between 2003 and 2005, for example described the 2000 presidential election as a “battle for souls”<sup>1056</sup> while making the case that America’s entire societal system was crumbling in front of our very eyes because the country had “started denying God.”<sup>1057</sup> The former Texas congressman’s own purpose in the political realm therefore was to bring “us back to the Constitution and to Absolute Truth that has been manipulated and destroyed by a liberal world view.”<sup>1058</sup>

### The *interconnectedness* of various policy realms

This sort of mindset driven by an eternal and unrelenting fear of losing your country and way of life to those who do not share your high moral standards is no longer just limited to the socio-cultural realm that is so central to the ideological tenets of the Christian Right. Instead, thanks to the implicit linkage of socio-cultural issues with financial and economic questions the dividing line between the two policy spheres has been increasingly diluted. This phenomenon is of course intricately linked with the coded language used by leading political figures such as George Wallace, Ronald Reagan, and many other notable Republicans since the 1960s that ensured economic matters invariably also have a degree of racial connotations.

Made particularly evident by the Tea Party and its manner of framing central political questions, the *interconnectedness* between different policy matters that one can recognize in the political philosophy of the South’s right-wing populists has now been expanded to include deeper questions about the ideological origins and soul of the United States, its history, greatness, and future path as well. Questions pertaining to the size of government have never been just a mere economic matter in the eyes of many white Southerners; instead these concerns also pertained to the perceived redistribution of white wealth to the minority underclass, an attitude that is now widespread within the entire Republican

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1055 Quoted in: Judis 2013b: “Right-wing Populism Could Hobble America for Decades.” *The New Republic*, October 27.

1056 Quoted in: J. White 2003, pp. 89–91.

1057 Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 91.

1058 Quoted in: *Ibid.*



Party. Adding to this conflation with a racial component is the broader issue area of “values” which of course are also intricately linked to the former: Economic aid to the less fortunate is in the eyes of GOP conservatives increasingly seen as a violation of America’s basic foundations – which are individualist, anti-statist, and Protestant (with a significant degree of overlap between the three of course). Fights over the budget are therefore no longer just seen through the prism of trying to keep the deficit in check. Now they are part of the wider culture war between those in the free market enterprise camp that stand for what the Founding Fathers fought for and believed in and the adherents and supporters of “big government” who seek to essentially undermine quintessentially American values while imposing the un-American ones of their own. As Benjamin Knoll and Jordan Shewmaker for example point out in their analysis of nativist opposition to the Affordable Care Act, “the 20<sup>th</sup> century New Deal model of the expansion of the welfare state is increasingly becoming associated with ‘foreign’ political values and practices in the minds of many Americans.”<sup>1059</sup> Just as is the case with traditional *social* culture war issues (such as abortion) these expanded culture wars require the same sort of steadfastness and resolute opposition to compromise that Hofstadter found in the paranoid spokesman. As Arthur Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute, a leading conservative think tank, plainly states: “These competing visions [*in the author’s words* “*free enterprise*” against “*European-style statism*”] are not reconcilable.”<sup>1060</sup>

There are of course other scholarly theories that help explain how this merger of both conservative strains has come about. To a significant extent the development of an all-encompassing brand of conservatism is directly tied to the polarization trends addressed in chapter II.1.4. As Matthew Levendusky contends in *The Partisan Sort*, today’s ideologically homogeneous parties are primarily a result of voters bringing their ideological positions in line with the party positions prescribed from the top. As the Republican Party in particular has become more ideologically consistent across the policy spectrum at the elite level, its members have followed suit.<sup>1061</sup> Geoffrey Layman and Thomas Carsey find a similar explanation for the increasing issue interconnectedness. The two authors note the development of a “conflict extension” within the electorate in recent years that has been driven by an increasing level of polarization between both parties on a variety of issues rather than just within a single dominant dimension. Both parties are now taking consistently liberal or conservative positions on issues across the socio-cultural and economic policy range with

1059 Knoll, Shewmaker 2012, p. 21.

1060 Quoted in: Gagnon 2012: “Introduction: Ceasefire or New Battle? The Politics of Culture Wars in Obama’s Time.” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 42(3), pp. 261–273, here p. 261.

1061 Cf. Levendusky 2009, pp. 12–37 and 109–119.

voters receiving the cue “that their views on different issue agendas should go together and they should move toward polarized stands on each of those dimensions.”<sup>1062</sup> Voters who are aware of these cues<sup>1063</sup> have been shown to follow the lead of party leaders, also growing consistently more liberal or conservative in their positions on virtually all major domestic issue agendas.<sup>1064</sup> Layman and Carsey ultimately arrive at the conclusion that there has been a merger of attitudes on social welfare and cultural issues – which one might initially perceive as relatively unrelated – among party identifiers who are aware of the growing fault line between both parties on said issues.<sup>1065</sup>

Regardless of whether such increases in ideological consistency are the result of increasingly pervasive arguments (on the part of evangelical leaders for example) that *all* issue areas are interconnected or if the causal arrow points in the other direction, fact of the matter is that ideological constraint is far more widespread in American politics today than a few decades ago. At the very top of the elite level, Christopher Hare and Keith T. Poole on their part for example found that on a broad variety of socio-cultural issues – in their analysis abortion, gay rights, gun control, and immigration – members of Congress have since the 1970s increasingly voted according to a straightforward liberal-conservative dimension. Lending support to the argument that various issue realms are increasingly intertwined, the authors conclude that their “results provide strong evidence for the rapid growth in ideological constraint between economic, social, and cultural issues among [Members of Congress] during the last 40 years.”<sup>1066</sup> Long gone are the days when a member of Congress’s position on a salient issue such as, for example, abortion did not necessarily predict their stance on a variety of other policy matters. While Hare and Poole note that “[a]t the mass level, there is less evidence that issue attitudes have collapsed onto a single liberal-conservative dimension,”<sup>1067</sup> recent findings by the Pew Research Center point towards an emulation of elite level attitudes as an increasing share of Americans is now holding consistently liberal or conservative views across a broad spectrum of issue areas – all in all the share of respondents holding consistent political views doubled between 2004 and 2014.<sup>1068</sup>

1062 Layman, Carsey 2002: “Party Polarization and ‘Conflict Extension’ in the American Electorate.” *American Journal of Political Science* 46(4), pp. 786–802, here p. 799.

1063 According to the authors’ findings those with existing partisan affiliations.

1064 Cf. Layman, Carsey 2002, p. 796.

1065 Cf. *ibid.*

1066 For the authors’ broader analysis cf. Hare, Poole 2014, pp. 418–420; for the quote *ibid.*, p. 420.

1067 *Ibid.*

1068 That share went from 11 percent in 2004 to 21 percent a decade later. Ideological positions were based on a set of ten questions that gauged positions across a broad range of political value dimensions. Cf. Pew Research Center 2014e, p. 21 and p. 79 for questions.

Quantitative and qualitative findings that make the case for a fusion of issue areas have also been noted by political strategists such as Matthew Dowd who as George W. Bush's chief campaign strategist orchestrated the former Texas governor's re-election in 2004. According to Dowd, today's electorate no longer casts its votes based on specific issues but does so according to the "brand' values"<sup>1069</sup> a party represents. This can lead to an extension of polarization beyond the elite down to the mass level as voters come to support a particular stance on a particular issue not necessarily because this represents their own innate issue orientation but rather because they support the brand of Republican or Democratic (elite) issue positions and analyze a given policy first and foremost from a partisan viewpoint, or in the words of Dowd an "issue is seen through the brand."<sup>1070</sup> An interesting example of partisan allegiances apparently shaping issue orientation can be seen on the contested matter of evolution. Recent Pew data has revealed that the share of Republicans believing in the theory of evolution decreased from 54 to 43 percent between 2009 and 2013.<sup>1071</sup> Perhaps more important than this general contraction is the fact that the biggest shift towards a more religious position on evolution occurred among the less devout segments of the GOP electorate. While 71 percent of Republicans who attended church less than once a week believed in some sort of evolution in 2009 that share had dropped by a remarkable 14 percentage points to 57 percent by 2013.<sup>1072</sup> What exactly caused this drop is difficult to determine and most certainly offers itself to further research. In the contemporary polarized political climate in which both parties tend to take clearly distinct positions on virtually all issues, the anti-evolution stance prevalent in today's GOP – a position largely driven by evangelical Creationists – may very well have had an impact even on the less religious segments of the Republican electorate though as they increasingly recognize the elite cues on the matter and see evolution from a partisan point of view.

Sociologist Paul Froese uses a slightly different approach to that of Layman and Carsey but nonetheless arrives at a similar conclusion about today's pervasive partisan differences. He regards the emergence of a "religious-economic idealism" that has merged economic and fiscal conservatism as one of the prime reasons for the apparent unwillingness of the GOP to compromise on social *as well* as economic matters. In this environment, economic positions are inevitably and invariably linked to religious preferences; moral righteousness and economic individualism now share a common ancestry in the minds of con-

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1069 Quoted in: Edsall 1996, p. 61.

1070 Quoted in: *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

1071 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013t: *Public's Views on Human Evolution*, December 30, p. 4.

1072 Cf. Funk 2014.

servatives.<sup>1073</sup> Both brands of conservatism are today “almost indistinguishable, with economics having become [...] a matter of faith, and religion a way to economic success,”<sup>1074</sup> an assessment about the conflation of the two by Michael Lienesch that will be elaborated upon in the next chapter. This development of linking capitalist preferences to moral rectitude can be traced back to the late 1960s and the prevailing view among many on the right that the moral rot pervading every fiber of the nation – symbolized by the counterculture with its mantra of free love, liberal drug use, opposition to military engagements *and* support for an extensive welfare state – and the burgeoning power of the government in the economic sphere went hand in hand.<sup>1075</sup> During the 1970s, Jerry Falwell’s *Moral Majority* and the Christian conservative movement built upon these anxieties that came to the fore during the Nixon years to fuse the age-old libertarian fear about government intervention in the economic realm stifling individual initiative with the traditional evangelical suspicions about an intrusive government imposing its liberal worldview onto them into a single, coherent ideological stance at the center of which was an overbearing government that represented the root of the downfall of individual responsibility as well as the decline of the authority of family, religion and morality<sup>1076</sup> – a merger that, quite important in the context of this book, Christian Right historian Daniel Williams traces back to the burgeoning affluent suburbs of the post-World War II South, as increasingly wealthy evangelical Protestants began to see the advantages of lower taxes.<sup>1077</sup> For Froese this newly fused religious-economic idealism entails a transfusion of the traditional religious dogmatism present in questions related to social issues into policy matters pertaining to economic questions. The prevailing line of thinking in such an environment is that not only does God frown upon the moral shortcomings of contemporary America but he also looks unfavorably upon the erosion of individualist values in the economic sphere – after all, as Jerry Falwell argued and many Christian conservatives still believe, both property ownership and a competitive free-market economy are rooted in scripture and ordained by God.<sup>1078</sup> For many contemporary Republicans then, God himself supports the concept of a small government as well as the free market with any and all attempts to stray from the ubiquitous free-

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1073 Cf. Froese 2012: “How Your View of God Shapes Your View of the Economy.” *Religion & Politics*, June 13.

1074 Lienesch 1993, p. 95.

1075 Cf. Miller, Burton 2013: “Who Needs Enemies? The Tea Party Impact on the Republican Party.” *Paper Presented to the 2013 State of the Parties Conference Akron, Ohio, November 7*, p. 5.

1076 Cf. Horwitz 2013, p. 96.

1077 For a general overview of how this merger came about, cf. Williams 2010b.

1078 Cf. Horwitz 2013, p. 96.

market dogma on the right being tantamount to heresy,<sup>1079</sup> a deduction which once again returns us to the initial point made in this chapter about the problems of compromising in a political world in which policy is based on the supposed word of God. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this fusion is epitomized by the Tea Party in particular which, by its very name, traces its positions back to the *Founding Fathers* and other American revolutionaries who, at least in the minds of the Tea Party as well as the Christian Right, were guided by the Almighty himself when they established the United States as a nation of individual responsibility.

In this environment, legislative disagreements over something like health care reform become battles in the fight for American values and the nation's continued exceptionalism. Questions pertaining to whether a reform could actually result in less government spending almost become secondary. Rob Schaaf, a Republican member of Missouri's state house, for example based his opposition to the Affordable Care Act on the simple fact that he had "a philosophical problem" with "[providing] free medical care to able-bodied adults."<sup>1080</sup> Specific issues are not addressed in a specific manner but are instead interwoven into a general debate about the cultural and moral foundations of the nation, reminiscent of Hofstadter's *paranoid spokesman* who sees everything "in apocalyptic terms [and] traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values."<sup>1081</sup> In 1961 Ronald Reagan already warned his conservative friends in dire terms that if Medicare became the law of the land, "you and I are going to spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it once was like in America when men were free," arguing that from the implementation of a health insurance program such as Medicare "it's a short step to all the rest of socialism."<sup>1082</sup>

Such rhetoric has seamlessly found its way into the Republican Party of the twenty-first century. Speaking during Ted Cruz's 21-hour long speech ahead of a Senate vote on the Continuing Resolution that sought to fund the government only if the Affordable Care Act was simultaneously defunded in September of 2013, Florida Senator Marco Rubio boldly proclaimed that "[t]here can't be an America without the American dream [...] and that is what's being undermined by Obamacare."<sup>1083</sup> Republican U.S. House member Paul Broun from Georgia

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1079 Cf. Froese 2012.

1080 Quoted in: Chait 2013: "The Plot to Kill Obamacare." *New York*, September 15.

1081 Hofstadter 1965, p. 29.

1082 Quotes obtained from transcript of "Ronald Reagan Speaks Out Against Socialized Medicine." For transcript cf. Zorn 2009: "Ronald Reagan on Medicare, circa 1961. Prescient rhetoric or familiar alarmist claptrap?" *Chicago Tribune*, September 2.

1083 Quoted in: Cox 2013: "Rubio joins Cruz in calling for the defunding of ObamaCare." *The Hill*, September 24.

went even a step further by arguing that the president's landmark health care reform "[is] going to destroy our freedom, our economies and everything that we know is good in America."<sup>1084</sup> Senator Cruz himself likened the fight against Obamacare to the struggle against Nazism during his marathon speech, making the case that fellow Republicans wishing to compromise on the matter by approving a budget without attached cuts to the health care act were akin to supporters of appeasement.<sup>1085</sup> Not to be outdone, Rick Santorum claimed after Nelson Mandela's death that the late South African icon's fight against the "great injustice" of Apartheid was comparable to the conservative battle against the "great injustice going on right now in this country with an ever-increasing size of government that is taking over and controlling people's lives – and Obamacare is front and center in that."<sup>1086</sup> This incessant linkage of policies to the struggle for the American way of life appears to have had the desired effect. Scholarly analysis on the impact such rhetoric has had on creating a spillover of outwardly non-healthcare related personal positions into the opposition to Obamacare revealed nativist sentiments (in other words the fear that American values and customs are increasingly under threat from foreign influence) to be a significant predictor of opposition to the Affordable Care Act even when controlling for other variables like partisanship or ideology – findings that led the authors Benjamin Knoll and Jordan Shewmaker to conclude "that opposition to health care reform is at least partially attributable to the perception that it is somehow 'foreign' and outside the boundaries of American political culture."<sup>1087</sup> Such a spillover effect illustrates that framing the debate about healthcare (or any other piece of legislation) in a manner reminiscent of the *paranoid spokesman* by presenting legislative proposals as violating traditional American tenets such as self-reliance and individualism can most certainly pay off among some segments of the electorate, lessening the incentive for cooler Republican heads to prevail in these discussions.

### The Christian conservative preoccupation with flawless purity

The – not infrequently detrimental – impact of the Christian Right on the matter of compromise is not limited to the observation that its "end of days"-rhetoric

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1084 Quoted in: Afzali, Bachman 2013: "Rep. Broun: Replace Obamacare With Patient Option Act." *Newsmax*, March 6.

1085 Cf. Kludt 2013a: "Cruz Likens Obamacare Defunding Skeptics To Nazi Appeasers." *Talking Points Memo*, September 24.

1086 Quoted in: McCalmont 2013: "Rick Santorum ties Obamacare, Nelson Mandela." *Politico*, December 6.

1087 Knoll, Shewmaker 2012, p. 14.

has by now become a staple of the Republican Party's approach to framing contentious political issues. Even more important in terms of the selection of candidates and their subsequent legislative behavior in the halls of Congress is the importance placed by social conservatives on abiding by conservative orthodoxy with ample empirical evidence suggesting that a concern for ideological purity is particularly widespread among people that consider themselves part of today's religious right. Data from the 2001 Southern Grassroots Party Activists study that gauged activists' sentiments towards purist or pragmatist policy approaches for example revealed a "particularly high"<sup>1088</sup> preference for purism over pragmatism among those who felt very close to the Christian Right even compared to other Republican activists with an increase in church attendance also leading to a rise in purist vis-à-vis pragmatist orientations, primarily on social issue areas such as abortion, legislation protecting homosexuals from job discrimination, or gun rights but also on the question of government services and spending as well as providing aid to minorities.<sup>1089</sup> Obtaining an official office does not appear to mellow those positions as a continued focus on purity can also be seen among Christian conservative public officials. An analysis of the behavior by members appointed to Florida's Constitutional Revision Commission drawn up by Kenneth Wald and Jeffrey Corey indicates that the religiously conservative members of this body were far more likely to hold purist and populist views than the group of more pragmatic centrist Republicans within the commission. On a number of items, such as the question of whether the political process can protect moral rights, the role a candidate's religious background can play as an important indicator of their fitness to hold a public office, or the preference for candidates to be less experienced (i. e. a populist yearning for politicians who have not yet come into contact with the dirty world of politics) the group of more mainstream Republicans were actually closer to their Democratic counterparts on the commission than to their fellow religiously conservative Republicans.<sup>1090</sup> Geoffrey C. Layman also sees Christian conservatives as the prime reason behind the recent swing towards a more unyielding policy approach within the GOP.<sup>1091</sup> Data from the 2000 Convention Delegate Study which obtained information on activists' views on the constant struggle between electability and ideological purity showed that traditionalist

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1088 Prysby 2004, p. 139.

1089 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 139–140. For the definition of the purism/pragmatism scale cf. Prysby 2004 in chapter II.1.5.

1090 Cf. Wald, Corey 2000: *The Christian Right and Public Policy: Testing the Second Generation Thesis*, May, pp. 14 and 32.

1091 Cf. Layman 2007: "Religion and Party Activists: A 'Perfect Storm' of Polarization or a Recipe for Pragmatism?" *Prepared for the APSA Taskforce on Religion and American Democracy*, October 18, 2007.

Evangelicals were more than 20 percentage points less likely than all other Republican activists to agree with two pragmatic statements put to them<sup>1092</sup> while they were more than 20 percentage points more likely than other Republicans to agree with two purist statements,<sup>1093</sup> indicating that these highly committed evangelicals are the primary force behind recent trends within the Republican Party of putting ideological purity over electability.<sup>1094</sup> The significant conclusion Geoffrey Layman arrives at is a twofold impact of traditionalist evangelical activists on the GOP: Religious conservatives have not just driven the GOP's positions on a variety of issues in a more conservative direction but they have also reduced the inclination of the party's elite and its activists to compromise on said positions.<sup>1095</sup>

The *culture of non-compromise* as a roadblock to future Republican majorities

The centrality of moral-traditionalist issues in the Republican Party's attempts to forge a reliable Southern and evangelical electoral core has come with the side-effect of lessening the GOP's chances of creating nationwide majorities. What plays well with the uncompromising base does not yield the same kind of returns in general elections, as highlighted by the abysmal failure of some recent Republican senate candidates who defeated more moderate counterparts in the primaries by emphasizing their own social conservative credentials only to then go on and lose winnable seats in November.<sup>1096</sup> One of the possible reasons behind this diminishing Republican strength at the federal level is revealed by how the party is perceived by the wider public which has apparently observed changes in the Republican approach to politics similar to what has been addressed in this chapter. A Gallup poll from March of 2013 revealed that the Republican Party's unwillingness to compromise and inflexibility was the number one complaint the American public had about the party.<sup>1097</sup> This does

1092 "The party should play down some issues if it will improve the chances of winning," and "choosing a candidate with broad electoral appeal is more important than a consistent ideology."

1093 "One should stand firm for a position even if it means resigning from the party," and "losing an election is preferable to compromising my basic philosophy."

1094 Cf. Layman 2007, p. 24.

1095 Cf. *ibid.*

1096 There were at least five senate races in 2010 and 2012 (Delaware, Nevada, and Colorado in 2010 and Indiana and Missouri in 2012) in which right-wing candidates made it through the primary at the expense of often more promising moderate candidates only to then lose the subsequent general election.

1097 Cf. Saad 2013: "Americans' Top Critique of GOP: 'Unwilling to Compromise'." *Gallup*, April 1.



not come as much of a surprise when recent changes in the public's attitude towards compromise are taken into account. Asked if they preferred candidates who stuck to their positions or ones who make compromises with opponents they disagreed with, the share of Americans who preferred more flexible public officials rose by ten percentage points between March of 2011 and January of 2013, increasing from 40 to 50 percent. This trend is largely limited to Democrats and Independents though where this preference rose by 13 (from 46 to 59 percent) and 12 (from 41 to 53 percent) points respectively during the timeframe. Only a small shift towards a more concessionary stance was detected among Republicans on the other hand where 36 percent professed support for moderate candidates, an increase of four points compared to two years earlier.<sup>1098</sup> As table II.2.3 shows, the attitude towards compromise puts the Republican Party strongly at odds with the general public.

**Table II.2.3:** "I like elected officials who..." (in percent):<sup>1099</sup>

	"Compromise"	"Stick to positions"
<b>Total</b>	50	44
<b>Republican</b>	36	55
<i>Agree w/ Tea Party*</i>	31	58
<i>Disagree/No Opinion*</i>	45	50
<b>Democrat</b>	59	37
<b>Independent</b>	53	42

\* includes Republican leaning Independents

The logical conclusion of this is highlighted in another Pew survey. Asked which party was more extreme in its positions, the GOP led their Democratic counterparts by a 54 to 35 percent margin among all respondents.<sup>1100</sup> On the other hand, a mere 27 percent felt the GOP was more willing to work with the other party, a trait that 52 percent of the public instead attributed to the Democrats.<sup>1101</sup> In general, the American public appears to associate the *culture of non-compromise* with a strong level of obstinacy that has caused the Republican Party to become a political organization that no longer looks out for the nation's best interests. A poll conducted during the 2013 government shutdown showed that 32 percent of the public, as well as 31 percent of Independents, felt the GOP's highest priority was "causing political problems for President Obama," repre-

1098 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013b: *Obama in Strong Position at Start of Second Term*, January 13, p. 3.

1099 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 13.

1100 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014a: *Deficit Reduction Declines as Policy Priority*, January 27, p. 6.

1101 Cf. *ibid.*

senting a plurality of both. Just 19 percent of the public and 22 percent of Independents on the other hand felt that the Democratic Party's top priority was to cause problems for their congressional Republican counterparts.<sup>1102</sup> Unsurprisingly, the lion's share of the blame for the recent gridlock in Washington, D.C. has therefore been laid at the feet of the GOP as well. 42 percent of respondents argued in May of 2013 that Republican leaders were to blame for the lack of cooperation in the nation's capital compared to 22 percent who saw President Obama as the culprit.<sup>1103</sup> Even more interesting are the shifts in recent years. The 42 percent share represents an eleven-point increase over the share of respondents who blamed Republican leaders in February of 2011. President Obama's numbers are far less worrying: Only 19 percent considered him to be the source of gridlock in February of 2011, meaning that the share of Americans who held him alone responsible rose by just three points over the course of roughly two years.<sup>1104</sup> Seeing as the fused brand of social and economic conservatism that has proven to be such a threat to compromise which has in turn had a devastating effect on the popularity of the GOP<sup>1105</sup> originated to a large extent in the suburban Southern churches of the late 1970s and early 1980s,<sup>1106</sup> we also once again find an example of the detrimental impact the South has had on the Republican Party.

In a day and age in which a significant share of the public does appear to be yearning for Washington to work in a more bipartisan manner, the Republican reliance on the Christian Right serves to limit the ability of elected Republican officials to find common ground with their political opponents. Aside from the fact that hammering out a compromise is virtually impossible if your political opponents are regarded as representing absolute evil while your own views are based on what is regarded as God's divine plan for the United States,<sup>1107</sup> Christian conservatives have traditionally had a vested interest in eliciting fear and

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1102 Cf. Stamm 2013: "Is Causing a Political Problem a Priority?" *National Journal*, October 1.

1103 Overall, 80 percent of all respondents felt the GOP and President Obama were not working together while 15 percent saw some degree of cooperation between the two. Respondents who answered that there was no cooperation were then asked who was to blame for this. The percentages above are given as the share of the total pool of respondents. Cf. Pew Research Center 2013g: *Obama Maintains Approval Advantage, But GOP Runs Even on Key Issues*, May 8, p. 6.

1104 Cf. *ibid.*

1105 For the substantial drop in Republican favorability ratings in recent years cf. Pew Research Center 2013d: *GOP Seen as Principled, But Out of Touch and Too Extreme*, February 26, p. 4. The Pew Center showed the GOP's favorability in January of 2013 standing at a nearly two-decade low.

1106 Cf. Williams 2010b, pp. 126–127.

1107 To be an individualist, free market nation that serves as a beacon for democracy, freedom, and prosperity to the rest of the world. Or, in the words of Ronald Reagan, to be a *shining city on a hill*.

anger among their fellow value voters. As scholars like Michael Lienesch already observed three decades ago, the Christian Right's trademark "strategy of protest relies on confrontation."<sup>1108</sup> In Lienesch's view, Christian conservative leaders have traditionally "pursue[d] a strategy of conflict," while being "more comfortable with attack and combat" than "bargaining and compromise,"<sup>1109</sup> a character trait also evident in the Tea Party. Just like in the world of Hofstadter's *paranoid spokesman*, "everything can be reduced to right and wrong"<sup>1110</sup> in the eyes of a Christian conservative activist like Paul Weyrich. As Lienesch rightfully points out, the sustained growth and clout of such a movement whose *raison d'être* is the protection of traditional values against the onslaught of an increasingly powerful alliance of atheist and liberal legislators inherently depends on the continued vilification of political enemies while stoking the flames of confrontation that provide social conservative Republicans with often handsome returns at the ballot box.<sup>1111</sup> Compromise or moderation on the other hand represent a less appealing strategy if one depends on the Christian conservative vote, as members of the Christian Right continue to regard "moderation as compromise with the devil."<sup>1112</sup>

Any movement that sees the world in such black and white terms as the Christian Right does is bound to place special emphasis on members and political allies not veering off the righteous path and abiding by Christian conservative principles which can scare any remaining Republican moderates into submission, particularly when a movement that shares such strong similarities with the Christian Right as the Tea Party does provides the bulk of GOP primary voters and campaign activists (see chapter II.3.2). The result of this is – as seen earlier on in chapter II.1.5 on the polarization of U.S. politics in general and rightward shift of Republicans in particular – that candidates which might have in the past been seen as "mavericks" or moderates have had to move to the right in order to stave off primary challengers or avoid primary contests altogether, in the process moving ever further away from the political center of the nation and the views and preferences of many voters. Thomas Mann's and Norman Ornstein's extensive look at the state of contemporary American politics for example led them to the verdict that today's Republican Party "has veered toward tolerance of extreme ideological beliefs and policies and embrace of cynical and destructive means to advance political ends over problem solving" which "[has] led to disdain for negotiation and compromise."<sup>1113</sup> A disdain rooted in the

1108 Lienesch 1982, p. 423.

1109 All quotes in *ibid.*

1110 Quote from Weyrich in: *Ibid.*

1111 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 423–424.

1112 *Ibid.*, p. 418.

1113 Mann, Ornstein 2012, p. 185.

mindset of the Christian Right that has spread throughout the GOP as Christian conservatives have expanded their influence within the party.

All of this ultimately makes it far more difficult for the GOP to perform the traditional job of legislators: legislate. As political analyst Charlie Cook notes, a vehemently principled stance that eschews compromise is “anathema to the legislative process;” put more bluntly “[c]ompromise is part of democracy.”<sup>1114</sup> The base – particularly those who can be found within the fold of the religious right – despises a fair share of legislation coming out of the nation’s capital though seeing as these pieces of legislation are in all likelihood the product of bipartisan compromise and therefore incorporate some liberal ideas. This trait amounts to a death sentence. For in the eyes of many of those staunch conservatives, any legislation that bears certain liberal traits invariably infringes on the most basic personal liberties, both in the socio-cultural as well as the economic realm due to the interconnectedness of various policy areas today. A ban on assault rifles for example is not assessed by its merits (such as limiting the possibility of additional mass shootings)<sup>1115</sup> but instead perceived as a liberal ploy to chip away at the basic constitutionally guaranteed rights enjoyed by Americans. Fights over one specific topic are therefore increasingly regarded as mere battles of the larger culture war for the soul of the nation. In such an environment compromise is simply not an option. As a result of this we have seen the emergence of a Republican congressional caucus full of politicians who essentially abhor their own job, seeing as a not insignificant share would like nothing more than to shrink the government down to a size where they can “drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub” to use the words of conservative anti-tax advocate Grover Norquist.<sup>1116</sup> Such a mindset is reflected in politicians like Michele Bachmann who voiced excitement about the 2013 government shutdown and proclaimed that “it [was] exactly what we wanted, and we got it.”<sup>1117</sup> As we will see in subsequent chapters on the Tea Party, the movement and its supporters – referred to by one conservative commentator as “conservative American ayatollahs who demand purity”<sup>1118</sup> just like their counterparts in Tehran – have come to perfectly embody that hardline, unyielding

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1114 Cook 2013: “The GOP’s Reckless Bet.” *National Journal*, September 19. Even Barry Goldwater recognized this in his later years, saying in 1994 that “[p]olitics and governing demand compromise” – a far cry from his 1964 position “that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice.” Quoted in: Dyken 2013, p. 55.

1115 All victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting were for example killed with an assault weapon. Cf. Vigdor 2013: “State Police: All 26 Newtown victims shot with assault rifle.” *Connecticut Post*, January 24.

1116 Quoted in: Liasson 2001: “Conservative Advocate.” *NPR*, May 25.

1117 Quoted in: O’Keefe, Helderman 2013: “On cusp of shutdown, House conservatives excited, say they are doing the right thing.” *Washington Post*, September 29.

1118 Goldberg 2013: *An Open Letter to the Ayatollahs*. September 27.

position that I have dubbed the “culture of non-compromise” in this chapter. With its strong ties to the Christian Right and similar roots in the South, the twenty-first century Tea Party will therefore serve to provide a fascinating insight into what the Republican Party has become after decades of catering to white Southerners and evangelical Protestants.

## II.2.4 The economic conservatism of white evangelical Protestants and its role as an impediment for future Republican majorities

Economic concerns have been at the heart of some of the most hard-fought recent partisan battles transpiring in the halls of Congress. Whether it is the fiscal cliff, debt ceiling, or a multitude of other disputes surrounding taxes and government spending, whenever John Boehner or Paul Ryan have run into problems keeping their troops in line it has usually been caused by internal Republican disagreements regarding the best approach to these issues. As we saw in chapter II.1.2, a fair degree of intra-Republican disagreements can be put down to the regional differences in opinion between Southern and non-Southern Republican representatives. Seeing as the South is the heartland of white evangelical Protestantism the question now remains to what extent these variations in opinion may be correlated with denominational factors. The broad topic of *economics* has not just been a key battleground in recent years but it is a policy realm in which, as will be highlighted in chapters II.4.2 and II.4.5, significant differences in opinion exist between the GOP and burgeoning segments of the electorate like young adults and minorities. The following paragraphs will demonstrate that a fair degree of this can be put down to the views of white evangelical Protestants who, as Brian McKenzie and Stella Rouse point out, “are exceptional in their less than equitable views toward marginalized individuals.”<sup>1119</sup> As such the following data regarding white evangelical views on the economy and welfare questions therefore provide us with a better understanding of why and how the *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party has put it at odds with voting groups that are set to play a defining role in the coming decades and the extent to which Christian conservatives have therefore proven to

1119 In this particular instance, McKenzie and Rouse refer to “religious whites.” Their data does nonetheless show evangelical Protestants to be particularly opposed to virtually all measures aimed at mitigating economic and racial inequality. McKenzie, Rouse 2013: “Shades of Faith: Religious Foundations of Political Attitudes among African Americans, Latinos, and Whites.” *American Journal of Political Sciences* 57(1), pp. 218–235, here p. 231.

be detrimental to Republican chances of winning elections today and even more so in future years.

One of the more popular theories when it comes to social conservative white (working class) voters and the topic of economics is that they are essentially duped into voting against their own best economic interests by Republican leaders who run campaigns that emphasize values over economics. Each election cycle the same social conservative promises – such as constitutional bans against abortion and same-sex marriage – are made over and over again but never delivered upon with Republican elected officials instead passing free-market anti-welfare legislation while hollowing out employee rights – in the process harming those very same social conservative voters.<sup>1120</sup> How do these voters then respond? Instead of venting their anger they actually provide their support for those very same “self-destructive policies”<sup>1121</sup> at the next poll. This depiction has in recent years been popularized in particular by Thomas Frank’s *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* There most certainly is some evidence to back the assertion that a focus on values has allowed to the GOP to expand its base and incorporate segments of the electorate that might traditionally not be all that enthusiastic about its free-market mantra. Michael Lienesch already pointed out in the early 1980s that the Christian Right’s main “mass constituency” targets could primarily be found among the lower and working-class segments of society.<sup>1122</sup> Moreover, even contemporary data reveals white evangelical Protestants to be less affluent than whites of others faiths<sup>1123</sup> while Republican growth among Southern low income whites has been nothing short of spectacular as well.<sup>1124</sup> Are those working class white social conservatives really fooled into voting Republican through an elaborate game of smoke and mirrors though? First of all, as we have already seen, the assertion that Republican legislators do not deliver on their moral promises fails to stand up to closer scrutiny to begin with. And secondly, the argument that social conservatives need to be tricked into voting Republican by GOP “value campaigns” that de-emphasize economic matters

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1120 Cf. Frank 2005: *What’s the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, pp. 6–7.

1121 *Ibid.*, p. 243.

1122 Cf. Lienesch 1982, p. 413.

1123 Data from 2005 and 2006 showed that 36 percent of white evangelical Protestants had an annual household income below \$30,000. Among white mainline Protestants and non-Hispanic white Catholics those shares stood at just 29 and 24 percent respectively. At the other end of the income spectrum, white Evangelicals also fared substantially worse. Just 21 percent had an annual household income of \$75,000 or more, compared to 28 percent of white mainline Protestants and 34 percent of non-Hispanic white Catholics. Cf. Allen, Kohut 2006: “Pinched Pocketbooks.” *Pew Research Center*, March 28.

1124 Cf. Bullock III, Hoffman, and Gaddie 2005: “The Consolidation of the White Southern Congressional Vote.” *Political Research Quarterly* 58(2), pp. 231–243, here p. 236 for actual data.

does not survive a thorough analysis either. While there undoubtedly is some evidence that moral traditionalism has increased its salience in the electoral sphere<sup>1125</sup> (to a certain extent an artifact of the increased usage by Republican politicians) and that some voters embracing cultural conservatism can base their Republican choice at the ballot box primarily on moral matters while seeing GOP economic policies with a degree of distrust<sup>1126</sup> the data in this chapter will demonstrate that policies to remove the government from the economic realm are anything but unpopular among the social conservative base of the Republican Party. Contrary to Thomas Frank's claim, this group of voters simply does not have to trade in its own economic preferences for legislation that will further their moral cause.

The reasons for this were already touched upon in the previous chapter when we addressed the *interconnectedness* of various policy and issue areas. As sociologist Paul Froese accurately observes, "for many white evangelicals, religious and economic spheres are conceptualized as two sides of the same coin."<sup>1127</sup> This dual nature has been a central component of the Christian Right from the very beginning and is not a mere side-effect of the decades' long alliance with a fiscally conservative GOP. In the 1970s, veteran evangelical minister and conservative activist Tim LaHaye had already come up with a list of "minimum moral standards dictated by the Bible" that was to "be used to evaluate the stand of candidates on moral issues."<sup>1128</sup> Along with inquiries on abortion, prostitution, and homosexuality were three key questions related to the economy, namely if a candidate "would [...] vote for government spending that exceeds revenue, except in wartime or dire emergency," if a candidate "favor[ed] a reduction in taxes to allow families more spendable income," and a broader question on whether a candidate "favor[ed] a reduction in government."<sup>1129</sup> These strong ties between economic and religious or social conservatism do not come as a surprise if we take into consideration that for leading figures of the Christian Right, such as Jerry Falwell, "[t]he free-enterprise system is clearly outlined in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible. [...] Ownership of property is biblical. Competition in business is biblical. Ambitious and successful business

1125 Cf. Knuckey 2005b: "A New Front in the Culture War?: Moral Traditionalism and Voting Behavior in U.S. House Elections." *American Politics Research* 33(5), pp. 645–671.

1126 Cf. Prasad, Perrin, Bezila, Hoffman, Kindleberger, Manturuk, Smith Powers, and Payton 2009: "The Undeserving Rich: 'Moral Values' and the White Working Class." *Sociological Forum* 24(2), pp. 225–253.

1127 Froese 2012.

1128 LaHaye's list can be found in Falwell 1980: "Organizing the Moral Majority." In: Sutton 2013: *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 123–129, here p. 126.

1129 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

management is clearly outlined as a part of God's plan for His People."<sup>1130</sup> Espousing the values of a true fiscal conservative and mirroring LaHaye's fusion of different branches of conservatism, Falwell branched out beyond the traditional moralist rhetoric in the late 1970s and complained about the heavy taxation enforced by Washington, D.C. that was used to fund "a sick and unbalanced welfare program"<sup>1131</sup> while arguing that many of the services provided by the federal government could be handled in a better and more efficient manner by private organizations like churches.<sup>1132</sup> Anyone not employed essentially "[chose] to be poor"<sup>1133</sup> seeing as there were "enough jobs to go around,"<sup>1134</sup> according to Falwell. Similar to the Wallaceists of yesteryear and the Tea Party of today, many leading figures of the Christian Right moreover believed that welfare spending did little to alleviate the social problems the underclass was facing – if anything it made it even worse because it allowed them to afford a cozy lifestyle at the cost of the American taxpayer, lessening the incentive to find work.<sup>1135</sup> Such a lackluster attitude toward work and the general welfare culture would then be passed on from generation to generation, a development that had to be stopped at all costs as Falwell called on his followers to "defeat welfarism in America."<sup>1136</sup> Falwell's political brainchild, the *Moral Majority*, perfectly embodied the symbiotic relationship between the Republican Party (and its fiscal conservatism) and the quickly expanding Christian Right (with its primary ideological foundation of social conservatism) of the 1970s with the organization's Southern roots highlighting the extensive ties between the two strains of conservatism that aided the growth of both political movements. The Moral Majority's base could be found in the quickly growing – both in terms of size and affluence – suburbs of the white South whose inhabitants were both devout evangelical Protestants as well as supporters of the low tax policies promoted by the GOP. Christian conservative leaders sought to nurture the, in their eyes, inherent connection between both strains by combining a message of suspicion towards federal government activism in social as well as economic policy areas.<sup>1137</sup> Those very same religious leaders were themselves often successful businessmen who saw their own economic prosperity as evidence that wealth and personal success could be equated with religious righteousness, a message

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1130 Falwell 1981: *Listen, America!*, p. 13.

1131 Quoted in: Williams 2010b, p. 137.

1132 Cf. *ibid.*

1133 This view was expressed Colonel V. Doner, founder of "Christian Voice," a Christian conservative political advocacy group. Quoted in: Lienesch 1993, p. 133.

1134 Falwell quoted in: *Ibid.*

1135 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 130–132.

1136 Quoted in: Lienesch 1982, p. 414.

1137 Cf. Williams 2010b, pp. 126–127.



that was linked with the portrayal of poverty as a symbol of moral and spiritual shortcomings to their congregations where it fell on fertile ground.<sup>1138</sup> This was not an ideology in which either conservative plank had to be downplayed in favor of the other but rather a coherent worldview in which moral rectitude and wealth went hand in hand. Daniel Williams therefore concludes that the support of Southern social conservatives for Republican and Reaganite economic policies during the 1980s was “not merely an exercise in political opportunism” but instead reflected the “shared political ideology”<sup>1139</sup> that had emerged in the suburban South and its churches during the preceding decades.

Leaving aside the economic growth of the South and instead focusing on the historical background and context of this era leaves one with a picture that also helps explain the trek of white Evangelicals into the ranks of the Republican Party. When the nascent links between the two groups were first established, the world was still divided into two distinct camps, particularly on economic matters. On one side you had “godless” Communism with its state-run planned economy; on the other you found Reagan’s “shining city upon a hill” that championed individualist economic values that are, as will be made abundantly clear in this chapter, deeply intertwined with American Protestantism. Reagan himself made the case in one of his many speeches to use the “city upon a hill” image of the evident and inherent affiliation between *religious* and *economic* conservatism and its role as the central foundations for American exceptionalism. “[O]ur rendezvous with destiny,” Reagan argued in 1979, would only be fulfilled if the nation began to once again “uphold the principles of self-reliance, self-discipline, [and] morality”<sup>1140</sup> – a fine example of framing economic individualism and morality as “two sides of the same coin” to once again use Paul Froese’s description. The argumentative leap towards regarding the free market as divinely ordained appears rather small in a world in which the statist socialist opponent was perceived and portrayed as a hellish, un-Christian alternative. Christian conservatives, in a manner similar to Hofstadter’s *paranoid spokesman*, had few qualms about depicting this battle as a straightforward fight between good and evil. Gary North, a Christian Reconstructionist historian, predicted in 1981 that the evil empire of the Soviet Union would eventually be consigned to the scrap heap of history at which point “statism’s intellectual defenders will be recognized finally for what they are, namely, defenders of the economics of Satan.”<sup>1141</sup> Such rhetoric and the interconnection of economic individualism with religious righteousness and true American values are part

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1138 Cf. Lienesch 1993, pp. 95–96.

1139 Williams 2010b, p. 142.

1140 Quoted in: Domke, Coe 2010, p. 50.

1141 Quoted in: Lienesch 1993, p. 137.

and parcel of contemporary conservative rhetoric as well, particularly among those representing the right-wing populist wing of the GOP. Glenn Beck, former FOX News employee and a favorite commentator of many conservatives, made the point at a rally in the summer of 2013 that the Founding Fathers, guided by their religious beliefs, themselves objected to the welfare state, seeing as they “came to these shores not for free stuff, but for freedom. [...] They came here because they knew that God made them free to make their own way in life, take the risk, do their best and take responsibility for their own lives.”<sup>1142</sup> Republican elected officials have been known to adopt a similar view. Former Republican South Carolina Senator Jim DeMint for example also sees an important link between religiousness and the size of government (and by extension its economic policies), noting that “the bigger the government gets the smaller God gets and vice versa,” while concluding it was “no coincidence that socialist Europe is post-Christian.”<sup>1143</sup> Perhaps one of the stranger examples of this marriage between fiscal and social conservatism was the suggestion by Dr. Ben Carson – whose rise to fame and popularity within the Christian conservative movement began with his keynote address at the 2013 National Prayer Breakfast – that the Bible’s preferred tax system was a flat tax.<sup>1144</sup> In today’s *evangelized* Republican Party, members of Congress also appear to receive guidance on specific economic policies from the Almighty. Representative Stephen Fincher (Tennessee) for example defended his support for cutting funding to the nation’s food-stamp program by quoting the Book of Thessalonians: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”<sup>1145</sup> It comes as no surprise then that data compiled by William D’Antonio, Steven Tuch, and Josiah Baker reveals that the centerpieces of Republican supply-side economics – namely tax cuts and decreases in welfare spending – have received the strongest support in the House over the last 30 years among conservative (i. e. evangelical) Protestant members of the GOP House conference (compared to both mainline Protestant and Catholic Republicans as well as Democratic House members).<sup>1146</sup>

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1142 Beck 2013: “Glenn gives rousing Civil Rights speech outside the Capitol.” *Glenn Beck*, June 19.

1143 Quoted in: Goldberg 2011: “The Rise of the Budget Fundamentalists.” *New York*, February 24.

1144 Carson referred to a “tithe” of 10 percent that is mentioned in the Bible. Cf. Page 2013: “Dr. Ben Carson, new right-wing hero.” *Chicago Tribune*, March 23.

1145 Quoted in: Ungar 2013: “GOP Congressman Stephen Fincher On A Mission From God – Starve The Poor While Personally Pocketing Millions In Farm Subsidies.” *Forbes*, May 22.

1146 Cf. D’Antonio, Tuch, and Baker 2013, pp. 74–76 and pp. 80–82.

## The numbers

A number of scholarly articles as well as additional data provide a significant amount of evidence to support the assertion that religious conservatives – despite their sometimes less than affluent background – are a key driving force behind the contemporary GOP’s vehement opposition to an activist government. Using data from the 2000 Religion and Politics Survey, Brian McKenzie and Stella Rouse note that “religiously conservative whites [...] are less likely than non-religious conservative whites to be interested in helping the poor,”<sup>1147</sup> a difference in attitude that is not evident among African Americans and Hispanics. This finding is also supported by Jonathan Knuckey’s work, whose own assessment on the views and values of *religious conservatives* and *conservative Republicans* revealed the former group to possess a more conservative position than the latter on three basic issues that gauge the social welfare dimension (those being government spending, government health insurance, and a government guarantee of jobs).<sup>1148</sup> Table II.2.4.a from Knuckey’s analysis (based on data from the 1996 American National Election Study) shows the substantial difference between those *religious conservatives* and other key electoral groups, with a particularly large gap in place between religious conservatives and conservative Republicans on healthcare.

**Table II.2.4.a:** *Issue Positions by Partisan Groups* (RC = Religious Conservatives, CR = Conservative Republicans, Ind. = Independents, WD = White Democrats). Cell entries are standardized scores with positive scores indicating a more conservative issue preference and negative scores indicating a more liberal issue preference.<sup>1149</sup>

Issue	RC	CR	Ind.	WD
Government spending/ services	.69	.53	-.07	-.29
Government provide jobs	.54	.47	-.12	-.22
Health Insurance	.68	.46	-.11	-.29

Even within the “cultural conservative” camp, religion and the adherence to doctrinal teachings inhabit a central role in the support for conservative economic policies. Also using data from the 1996 ANES, David Barker and Christopher Jan Carman found white born-again Christians to be significantly more likely to support the free market and policies aimed at preserving its individualist foundations (such as lower taxation and a general opposition to

1147 McKenzie, Rouse 2013, p. 229.

1148 Cf. Knuckey 1999: “Religious Conservatives, the Republican Party and Evolving Party Coalitions in the United States.” *Party Politics* 5(4), pp. 485–496, here pp. 491–492.

1149 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 492.

programs that aim to mitigate social problems) than white cultural conservatives who did not claim to be born-again among whom not even a marginally significant relationship between their cultural conservatism and attitudes towards taxation or the general role of government existed.<sup>1150</sup> Ultimately, the authors arrive at the conclusion that there is ample evidence to suggest that fundamentalist or evangelical (referred to by them as *doctrinarian*) Protestantism does indeed appear to “inspire economic individualism,”<sup>1151</sup> allowing the Christian Right to influence politics and policies well beyond its traditional socio-cultural realm.<sup>1152</sup>

It is most certainly, as already mentioned, interesting to note that the approval for economic conservative measures appears widespread among religious conservatives despite their relative lack of affluence compared to other demographic groups. A large scale survey conducted by Baylor University in 2011 highlights the differing positions of various groups based on their level of religiosity. The survey asked respondents if they believed “God ha[d] a plan for them,” and then placed respondents into four different groups based on their level of agreement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The overwhelming majority of respondents felt that there was a divine plan in place for them as roughly 41 percent strongly agreed (with another 32 percent agreeing) while just 14.6 percent strongly disagreed. While almost 30 percent of the latter group had an annual income of \$100,000 or more that share dropped to just 17.2 percent among the “strong agreeers.”<sup>1153</sup> That wealth and secular attitudes correlate may not come as much of a surprise but the specific policy attitudes most certainly challenge commonly held assumptions about the relationship between personal income and public policy preferences related to the size of government and aid to the disadvantaged. For example among respondents who strongly agreed that God had a plan for them, 43.9 percent also strongly agreed that able-bodied people who are out of a job should not receive unemployment aid compared to a share of just 24.3 percent of “strong disagreeers” who adopted such a position.<sup>1154</sup> 52.6 percent of those religious strong agreeers also strongly agreed with the proposition that “the government does too much” compared to a share of just 21.1 percent among the more affluent strong

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1150 Cf. Barker, Carman 2000: “The Spirit of Capitalism? Religious Doctrine, Values, and Economic Attitude Constructs.” *Political Behavior* 22(1), pp. 1–27, in particular pp. 14–15 and p. 20.

1151 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

1152 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22.

1153 Cf. Baylor University 2011: *The Values and Beliefs of the American Public – Wave III Baylor Religion Survey*, September, p. 2.

1154 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.

disagreeers.<sup>1155</sup> Support for the quintessential American ethos that “anything is possible for those who work hard” saw strong agreement among 53.7 percent of the most religious group as well while it dropped to just 21.5 percent among the least religious one.<sup>1156</sup> It is a rather small ideological leap from the position that everyone is in charge of their own destiny and economic well-being to the racial resentment propositions addressed earlier in this work about African Americans simply not trying hard enough to work their way out of poverty – and as we will see later on, the strongly religious Tea Party indeed subscribes to a more racially resentful outlook than other parts of the electorate. The lack of support for redistributive measures and egalitarian policies highlighted by the data over the coming pages is thus not all that surprising in light of the basic ideological outlook that the economic positions of religiously conservative whites are based on. If all it takes to move up the social ladder is hard work – while discounting all other factors such as discrimination or growing up in poverty – then measures seeking to alleviate poverty and lend a helping hand to the less fortunate are for all intents and purposes a waste of money seeing as these people are only in their position through no one’s fault but their own and their less than stellar work ethic (think back to Falwell’s comment that there are “enough jobs to go around”) which no amount of financial support will ever change.

The actual data pertaining to the economic preferences of different religious groups also demonstrates the extent to which evangelical Protestants – particularly those of the earlier discussed *traditionalist* variety that play such a disproportionately influential role within today’s GOP – support fiscally conservative, Reaganite economic policies. Data from the University of Akron’s Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics provides one of the best overviews of the diverging opinions between different religious affiliations.<sup>1157</sup> Whether it is an objection to government spending and aid being provided to minorities or the support for tax cuts, white traditionalist evangelical Protestants often have uniquely conservative policy preferences. Take the two core issues of government spending and tax cuts around which many recent legislative battles have revolved (see table II.2.4.b). While only a quarter of all Americans argued for less government spending in the survey, 40 percent of white traditionalist Evangelicals supported spending cuts. Similar discrepancies can be seen in the support for large tax cuts that were a central policy pillar of the economic strategy favored by the George W. Bush administration. The entire country was split virtually half down the middle; traditionalist white Evangel-

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1155 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 3.

1156 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.

1157 Cf. Green 2004: “The American Religious Landscape and Political Attitudes: A Baseline for 2004.” *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*.

icals on the other hand unequivocally supported large-scale tax cuts – not just because they were championed by “their” president but also because such policies were in line with their basic traditional economic preferences. What we also see here, a feature we will elaborate upon in the demographics section, is the wide gap between (*traditionalist*) evangelical Protestants and minorities. Just 16 percent of Latino Catholics and 19 percent of Black Protestants preferred a decrease in government spending. Instead almost half of all respondents from both groups backed increases in government expenditure. As we will see later on there is some evidence to support the thesis that such opinions are not just related to the (lower) economic position these groups find themselves in but that they are a depiction of a generally more favorable attitude towards an activist government that can be found even among more affluent Hispanics and African Americans.

**Table II.2.4.b:** *Attitudes towards different economic policies by religious affiliation. EP = evangelical Protestants (white), TEP = Traditionalist evangelical Protestants (white), MP = Mainline Protestants (white), BP = Black Protestants, CA = Catholics (white), LC = Latino Catholics, UN = Unaffiliated (in percent).*<sup>1158</sup>

	Government Spending			Big Tax Cuts		
	Less	Same	More	Good	No Op.	Bad
All	26	40	34	48	7	45
EP	30	41	29	57	10	33
<i>TEP</i>	40	39	21	67	8	25
MP	28	43	29	45	8	47
BP	19	36	45	49	6	45
CA	25	40	35	46	5	49
LC	16	36	48	50	8	42
UN	25	42	33	39	6	55

When asked if the middle class ought to be taxed to fight poverty, 50 percent of the entire survey sample agreed while around a third opposed such a policy (see table II.2.4.c). Hispanic Catholics and African-American Protestants differed little from the national view while the religiously unaffiliated – a group of voters who have seen their numbers rise substantially in recent years and are set to play an even bigger role in future elections as we will see in chapter II.4.6 – are particularly open to the notion of using tax revenue to combat poverty. A plurality of traditionalist evangelical Protestants on the other hand opposed this approach though. The second proposition in table II.2.4.c that “[m]inorities need governmental assistance to obtain their rightful place in America” through measures such as affirmative action unsurprisingly evoked a positive response

<sup>1158</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 20.

from the minority groups themselves while the nation at-large opposed this policy approach, although by a relatively slim margin of just four points. Particularly strong opposition was once again found among white Evangelicals where an outright majority opposed preferential treatment for minorities. Among traditionalist evangelical Protestants, the gap between those opposed to aid and those in favor of government assistance stood at 26 points, six and a half times larger than the national average. This attitude is in line with the aforementioned findings of McKenzie and Rouse's analysis which showed evangelical whites to be less likely than non-evangelical whites to support policies aimed at achieving racial equality, leading the authors to the conclusion that "[r]eligious conservatism has a negative effect on whites' attitudes toward policies that promote racial fairness."<sup>1159</sup>

**Table II.2.4.c: Attitudes towards fighting poverty by taxing the middle class and affirmative action by religious affiliation.** EP = evangelical Protestants (white), TEP = Traditionalist evangelical Protestants (white), MP = Mainline Protestants (white), BP = Black Protestants, CA = Catholics (white), LC = Latino Catholics, UN = Unaffiliated (in percent).<sup>1160</sup>

	Fight poverty, tax middle class			Government help minorities		
	Agree	No Op.	Disagree	Agree	No Op.	Disagree
All	50	15	35	39	18	43
EP	43	17	40	31	19	50
TEP	40	15	45	28	18	54
MP	52	17	31	32	21	47
BP	53	16	31	58	16	26
CA	51	15	34	37	18	45
LC	50	14	36	62	18	20
UN	57	11	32	40	17	43

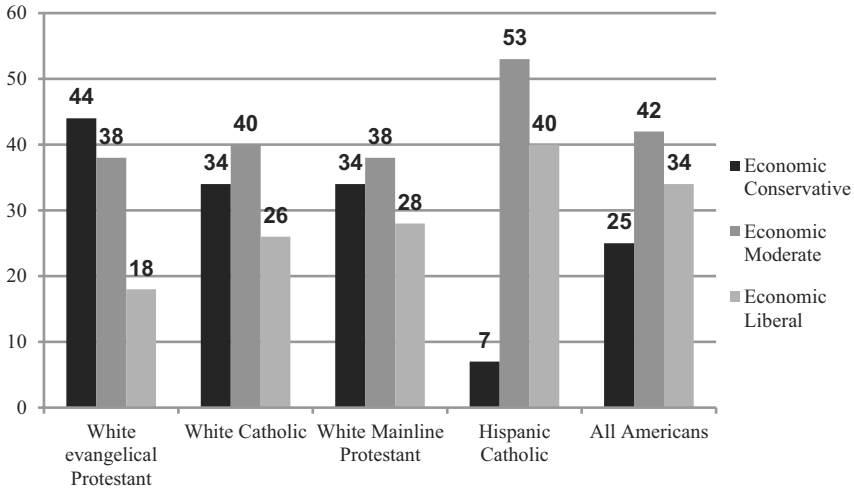
Based on the information on the previous pages it comes as little surprise then that according to an "economic orientation scale" based on six separate measures<sup>1161</sup> drawn up by the Public Religion Research Institute, white evangelical Protestants are by far the most economically conservative religious group in the country (see figure II.2.4). 44 percent of them fell into the economic conservative category compared to a national average of just 25 percent. Just 18 percent of

1159 McKenzie, Rouse 2013, p. 231.

1160 Cf. Green 2004, pp. 26 and 28.

1161 The scale was drawn up based on opinions on the minimum wage, increasing taxes on wealthy Americans, repealing the Affordable Care Act, questions about equal opportunity, positions towards economic policies intended to promote growth, and preferences regarding the role and size of government. Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera, Dionne Jr., and Galston 2013b: "Do Americans Believe Capitalism & Government are Working? Findings from the Economic Values Survey." *Public Religion Research Institute / The Brookings Institution*, July 18, p. 28.

white evangelical Protestants on the other hand could be classified as economically liberal, compared to a share of 40 percent among Hispanic Catholics and 34 percent among all Americans.



**Figure II.2.4:** *Economic orientation of different religious affiliations (in percent).*<sup>1162</sup>

## Conclusion

As we have seen over the previous pages it appears that a fair degree of the vehement economic anti-statism found in today's Republican Party is driven (or at least supported) by white evangelical Protestants. Their opposition to an activist government is not a mere artifact of their recently adopted Republican partisan affiliation which has made them adjust their economic preferences but is instead rooted in a deeply held suspicion towards the federal government and the hard work by figures like Jerry Falwell who drove home the point that moral rectitude and economic individualism went hand in hand. The problem this presents for the GOP will be made clearer in the chapters of the demographics section. One basic fact can be summed up already though: Young voters and minorities are by and large economic liberals. These voters, contrary to the evangelical and Reaganite core constituency of the GOP do not see government as problem. They may not always see it as the solution either but they certainly acknowledge that it has a role to play in ameliorating certain societal ills which

<sup>1162</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 29.



puts these growing segments of the electorate at odds with the evangelical base of today's Republican Party.

That America in general appears to have become more open to certain liberal economic policies (to a certain extent as a result of the recent "great recession") is highlighted by a number of recent polls and surveys. Asked if they believed the government should "redistribute wealth by heavy taxes on the rich," 51 percent of Americans opposed such government activism in 1998 while 45 percent voiced support. By 2013 those shares had reversed though as Gallup recorded its highest ever percentage of Americans (52 percent) favoring a tax-based redistribution of wealth.<sup>1163</sup> Such shifts in opinion have gone hand in hand with a decreasing belief in the traditional American mantra that hard work will invariably lead to success which, as indicated by the Baylor study, is so widespread among devoutly religious Americans. In 1999, 74 percent of all Americans voiced the conviction that "[m]ost people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard." One and a half decades later that share had dropped to just 60 percent. During the same period the share of people who believed that hard work was no guarantee for success on the other hand increased from 23 to 38 percent.<sup>1164</sup> Table II.2.4.d also shows that a majority of Americans now believe advantages enjoyed in life (e.g. the family one is born into) rather than hard work lead to personal wealth while circumstances beyond a person's control – rather than a general lack of effort or a lackluster work ethic – are seen as the primary reason behind poverty. As the table also illustrates, a significant gap is now in place between the contemporary *evangelized* Republican Party and the wider electorate.

**Table II.2.4.d:** Views on the underlying reasons behind poverty and wealth by political affiliation (in percent):<sup>1165</sup>

	Which has more to do with why a person is rich?		Which is more to blame if a person is poor?	
	Worked harder than others	More advantages than others	Lack of effort on their part	Circumstances beyond their control
<b>All</b>	38	51	35	50
<b>Democrats</b>	27	63	29	63
<b>Republicans</b>	57	32	51	32
<b>Independents</b>	37	52	33	51

1163 Cf. Newport 2013c: "Majority in U.S. Want Wealth More Evenly Distributed." *Gallup*, April 17.

1164 Cf. Pew Research Center, USA Today 2014: *Most See Inequality Growing, but Partisans Differ over Solutions*, January 23, p. 14.

1165 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 7.

Seeing as many Americans apparently consider the economic playing field to be tilted in favor of the rich it does not come as much of a surprise then that the same survey revealed support for liberal redistribution policies. 54 percent of Americans (as well as 51 percent of Independents) felt that raising taxes on the wealthy to expand programs for the poor was the best way to reduce poverty while just 35 percent of all Americans (but 59 percent of Republicans) instead made the case that lowering taxes for the wealthy and corporations to encourage investment and economic growth would do a better job of mitigating poverty.<sup>1166</sup> The underlying theme this data exposes is that Republican economic policies are no longer perceived as a viable solution to the problems the nation is facing. This is also demonstrated by one particular question included as part of the 2012 presidential exit poll. Asked to judge the country's economic state, 45 percent of the public assessed it to be "not so good" (the other options were "excellent," "good," and "poor") a moderate demographic that would have been central to any victorious Romney campaign. The anti-statist proposals of the GOP appear to have offered little appeal to this particular group of voters though as they supported President Obama by a 55 to 42 percent margin.<sup>1167</sup> Of course some of this newfound support for redistribution and more liberal economic policies may be due to the recent economic upheaval that has made people question to what extent the free market can work and recover without the government lending a helping hand. We will have to wait and see if this distrust towards supply-side policies is here to stay even after prolonged periods of growth or a possible perceived failure of Democratic economic policies. The most recent data leaves little doubt though that the policies favored and championed by Christian conservatives are increasingly rejected by the wider American public, leaving the *evangelized* GOP in a precarious position even on its traditional bread and butter issue of economics.

## II.2.5 The Gap between white Evangelicals, their Southern homeland and the rest of the nation on gay rights

The past few years have seen momentous changes on the gay marriage (and by extension gay rights) front. Ever increasing numbers of politicians have come out to support its legality as President Obama even became the first president in the history of the nation to address the topic in an inauguration speech.<sup>1168</sup> Some

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1166 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 2.

1167 Cf. CNN 2012l.

1168 Cf. Tumulty 2013: "Obama invokes gay rights in inaugural address." *Washington Post*, January 22.

journalists, like the Washington Post's Chris Cillizza, have even gone as far as to proclaim that "[t]he political debate on gay marriage is effectively over."<sup>1169</sup> While these changes appear to have passed by many at the Republican base, quite a few opinion leaders within the Republican Party have begun to recognize the writing on the wall, expressing the fear that younger voters may be put off permanently by what they perceive to be a hidebound ideology that demonizes supposedly immoral behavior.<sup>1170</sup> Gregory T. Angelo, executive director of the Log Cabin Republicans (the party's primary gay advocacy group), bluntly feels that a continued opposition to marriage equality "is not a winning issue politically."<sup>1171</sup> Even one and a half decades ago, Jonathan Knuckey already noted in his 1999 essay on the role of religious conservatives within the electorate in general and the GOP in particular that Republicans would not only face problems appealing to Independents if it adopted the socio-cultural preferences of religious conservatives but that "it could face serious vote defections among its own ranks, from both moderate *and* conservative Republicans [emphasis in original]."<sup>1172</sup> Addressing these changes or let alone facilitating a fundamental shift in the party's position towards homosexuality and gay rights is easier said than done though in a party that is more Southern and religious than at any time in its history, traits that are increasingly putting the party at odds with the wider public's opinion. Case in point Election Day 2012: While a number of states voted in favor of legalizing gay marriage in referenda held on the same day Barack Obama (who had already spoken out in favor of marriage equality on a number of occasions before his 2012 inaugural address) was re-elected, Alabama chose to elect a chief justice to the state's supreme court who had expressed the position that same-sex marriage would bring about "the ultimate destruction of our country."<sup>1173</sup>

Alabama demonstrates that when it comes to the matter of gay rights, similar to the evidence we have encountered regarding abortion, there are some signs to suggest that instead of mellowing and moderating their stance, the Republican base is actually hardening its opposition in a manner not dissimilar to the *white*

1169 Cillizza 2013a: "Rob Portman and the end of the gay marriage debate." *Washington Post*, March 15.

1170 Cf. Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, McCall 2013: *Growth & Opportunity Project*, p. 8.

1171 Quoted in: Khan 2013: "Will Republicans Move to the Middle on Gay Rights?" *National Journal*, January 30.

1172 Knuckey 1999, p. 491.

1173 The comment was made by Roy Moore who during his first term as chief justice gained national notoriety for disobeying a federal judge's order to remove a monument of the Ten Commandments from the Alabama Judicial Building. Quoted in: Robertson 2012: "Hard-Nosed Approach Wins Votes in the South, but Lacks Broader Appeal." *New York Times*, November 11.

*backlash* witnessed in the wake of the civil rights revolution among some racially conservative whites. A number of state legislatures controlled by the Republican Party have for example used their power in recent years to pass laws aimed at severely curtailing gay rights, with some commentators likening these pieces of legislation to the segregation laws enacted in the pre-civil rights era South.<sup>1174</sup> The GOP's *Growth & Opportunity Project* report which called on the party to rethink its strategy on, among others, social issues was also met with strong resistance by religious conservatives. In a letter addressed to the Republican National Committee's chairman Reince Priebus shortly after the report's publication in early 2013, the leaders of 13 different social conservative groups demanded the reaffirmation of the party leadership to the 2012 platform that called for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. They also warned Republican leaders against neglecting its social conservative base, arguing that "an abandonment of its principles will necessarily result in the abandonment of our constituents to their support."<sup>1175</sup> George W. Bush's chief campaign strategist Karl Rove had already warned in 2008 that the party would be ill-advised to disregard the views and values central to *social conservatism* seeing as its basic tenets, such as an uncompromising pro-life stance, "are often more popular than the GOP itself."<sup>1176</sup>

Contrary to previous chapters, the following pages will not just assess the views and preferences of white evangelical Protestants but also incorporate data from their Southern homeland, providing a dual assessment of the impact both the *Evangelicalization* as well as *Southernization* have had on the GOP and its stance on the contentious issue of gay rights.

### The views of white evangelical Protestants

According to the Pew Research Center's extensive data on the topic of gay marriage, opposition to marriage equality has decreased substantially since the mid-2000s. While 60 percent of all Americans voiced opposition to legalizing gay marriage in 2004 that share had dropped to just 43 percent by 2012, a decline of roughly 28 percent (see table II.2.5.a). A substantial softening in opposition is not just limited to liberal Americans though. Among Independents, opposition also decreased by 28 percent, decreasing from 53 percent in 2004 to 38 percent in 2012. What is worrying for Republicans though is the simple fact that the topic of

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1174 Cf. Stern 2014a: "Idaho's New Anti-Gay Bill: Doctors and Teachers Can Turn Away Gays." *Slate*, February 19.

1175 Quoted in: Weiner 2013: "Some social conservatives threaten to abandon GOP." *Washington Post*, April 11.

1176 Quoted in: Liscio, Stonecash 2009, p. 29.

gay marriage exposes the kind of *white evangelical exceptionalism* that we already encountered on abortion. 78 percent of white evangelical Protestants opposed gay marriage in 2012, representing a decrease of just 8.2 percent compared to eight years earlier. As a matter of fact, no decrease in opposition could be detected within this demographic between 2008 and 2012 as *strong opposition* actually increased by four points over the second four-year period. The two other big white Christian denominations, mainline Protestants and Catholics, also saw substantial decreases in opposition with the decline among the former actually exceeding the wider national trend. Among Republicans, opposition to gay marriage decreased by just 13 percent over the eight-year period, widening an already substantial gap between the GOP and the wider public. While Republicans were just 1.3 times more likely than the nation at-large to oppose marriage equality in 2004, this rift had expanded to 1.6 times by 2012, a remarkable shift that in conjunction with the data on white Evangelicals (which exposes a similarly widening rift between this group and the American public) also serves to highlight the influence this particular group wields over the party today.

**Table II.2.5.a:** *Views on allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally, 2004/2008/2012 (in percent) (Wh. Evan=White evangelical Protestants, Wh. MP=White Mainline Protestants, Wh. Ca=White Catholic).<sup>1177</sup>*

	2004		2008		2012	
	Oppose	Strongly	Oppose	Strongly	Oppose	Strongly
Total	60	36	51	30	43	22
Repub.	78	54	73	47	68	40
Dem.	50	28	42	23	31	14
Indep.	53	29	45	25	38	19
Wh. Evan.	85	61	78	52	78	56
Wh. MP	55	30	45	22	36	13
Wh. Ca.	56	28	47	25	44	21

There are a number of avenues to explore when attempting to detail why white evangelical Protestants continue to remain such an exceptional religious group when it comes to gay rights. High levels of church attendance and the impact these weekly gatherings have on the formation of opinion are one explanation. Data from two Pew Research surveys (conducted in March and May of 2013) for example showed that among white evangelical Protestants who attended church

<sup>1177</sup> Cf. Pew Research Center 2012b: *More Support for Gun Rights, Gay Marriage than in 2008 or 2004*, April 25, p. 5.

once a week or more often, just 16 percent supported gay marriage, far below both the national average of 50 percent and – more importantly – also lagging far behind other white religious denominations with similar church attendance records: 47 percent among white non-Hispanic mainline Protestants and 40 percent among non-Hispanic white Catholics.<sup>1178</sup> White evangelical Protestants who attended church less than once a week were more than twice as likely to support gay marriage (33 percent) as their more religious brethren though; white mainline Protestants and white Catholics with a less regular attendance record on the other hand were only 1.26 and 1.53 times more likely respectively to support gay marriage than group members who attended church more frequently.<sup>1179</sup> Of course this is a relatively straightforward bivariate approach that does not address the multitude of other factors which shape individual positions towards gay rights such as age, education, income, partisanship, or general ideology. One can also contend that relatively liberal denominations (at least when compared to evangelical Protestantism on homosexuality) will have a smaller discrepancy between frequent and less frequent churchgoers. If white mainline Protestants who attended church less than one a week were for example twice as likely to approve of gay marriage as their more devout denominational kin, support would stand at almost 100 percent. Moreover, even among white Evangelicals who attend church on a less frequent basis, support for gay marriage remains significantly lower than among the more religious Catholics and mainline Protestants, illustrating that evangelical Protestantism leads to a particularly strong opposition towards gay rights even among those parishioners who congregate with fellow Evangelicals on a more infrequent basis. The obvious reason behind this trait can be ascribed to the general religiosity that is such a defining element of evangelical Protestantism. As has already been pointed out, at the very basis of Evangelicalism stands the widespread belief and support for the literal interpretation of the Bible which sets it apart from its mainline cousin.<sup>1180</sup> Even evangelical Protestants who do not visit a church on a weekly basis are therefore quite likely to nonetheless base their opinions pertaining to homosexuality on scripture.

Moving beyond church attendance we can see that a fair amount of other scholarly data and analysis supports the assertion of (general) religiosity and a belief in the authority of scripture having a uniquely negative impact on one's views towards gays and their battle for equality, particularly among white Americans. McKenzie and Rouse for example found that among white re-

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1178 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013i: *In Gay Marriage Debate, Both Supporters and Opponents See Legal Recognition as 'Inevitable,'* June 6, pp. 24 and 26.

1179 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 26.

1180 Cf. Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 57.

spondents in their analysis, all of the religious belief and behavior measures they incorporated – which took into account religious conservatism, authority of the Bible, and the aforementioned church attendance – reduced the interest in lessening intolerance towards gay individuals, a pattern that was in this broad form not evident among non-whites. Why could church attendance have a particularly notable impact among the most conservative white Christians as discussed in the previous paragraph? The authors conclude that the reasons for this strict opposition may very well be rooted in the special emphasis placed by conservative white Christian congregations in particular on educating their followers about immoral behavior while calling on them to strictly reject such conduct.<sup>1181</sup> On their part, Darren Sherkat and his colleagues not only found uniquely conservative behavior among “sectarian Protestants” when it came to gay rights but also a growing gap between religious conservatives and the rest of the nation. Using data from a number of General Social Surveys, they found that biblical fundamentalism reduced the estimated odds of a supportive stance towards same-sex marriage by 40 percent more in the authors’ 2006 and 2008 dataset than it had done in 1988.<sup>1182</sup> The authors also observed a shift within the GOP similar to the one demonstrated in table II.2.5.a of the party becoming increasingly associated with an anti-gay stance when compared to the rest of the nation. In 1988, party identification did not serve as a predictor of respondents’ beliefs towards the legality of same-sex marriage. By 2006/08 though having a more Republican identification lowered the odds of expressing a more favorable opinion on gay marriage by 12 percent net of other factors.<sup>1183</sup>

## The South

The South also stands out among the different regions of the United States for its continued opposition to gay marriage, a distinctive characteristic one can trace back to the predominance of white Evangelicals in the former Confederacy<sup>1184</sup> as well as the sizeable black Protestant population which also trails the rest of the country when it comes to gay rights. The data therefore does not only in-

1181 Cf. McKenzie, Rouse 2013, p. 229.

1182 Cf. Sherkat, Powell-Williams, Maddox, and de Vries 2011: “Religion, politics, and support for same-sex marriage in the United States, 1988–2008.” *Social Science Research* 40(1), pp. 167–180, here p. 174.

1183 Cf. *ibid.*

1184 Steven White reaches the conclusion in his paper on the distinctiveness of Southern whites that on social issues like abortion and gay marriage the “[d]isproportionate concentration of born-again Christians in the southern states confounds assessments of regional distinctiveness.” S. White 2013, p. 9 for hypothesis and p. 20 for results.

corporate white views but nonetheless provides us with a straightforward picture of the regional differences in opinion on the topic which make it far more difficult for the Republican Party in general and GOP officials and candidates in particular to adopt a more moderate position on gay rights. If we try to find the South on a list of states ranked according to their support for marriage equality one has to look at the very bottom as evidenced by a logistic regression model drawn up by statistician Nate Silver (see table II.2.5.b). His calculations seek to infer how residents of all 50 states along with Washington, D.C. would vote (or would have voted) in same-sex marriage referenda between 2008 and 2020.

**Table II.2.5.b:** *Projected support for same-sex marriage in ballot initiative (in percent).*<sup>1185</sup>

State	2008	2012	2016	2020
Washington, DC	57.1	63.1	68.7	74.0
Massachusetts	56.4	62.9	69.0	74.5
Rhode Island	56.3	63.1	69.3	75.1
Hawaii	52.2	58.6	64.6	70.3
Connecticut	52.0	58.2	64.1	69.8
<b>National</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>54.4</b>	<b>60.5</b>
Tennessee	34.5	40.3	46.3	52.6
North Carolina	34.2	40.2	46.3	52.7
Texas	33.4	39.4	45.8	52.4
Oklahoma	32.5	38.4	44.7	51.2
South Carolina	31.5	37.3	43.3	49.7
Arkansas	31.1	36.8	42.8	49.1
Georgia	30.8	36.7	42.9	49.5
Louisiana	29.3	35.1	41.4	48.1
Alabama	24.4	29.9	35.9	42.5
Mississippi	20.9	25.9	31.5	37.8

As can be seen in the table, nine of the ten states with the lowest support levels in a hypothetical gay marriage referendum can be found in the South, with the sole exception (Oklahoma) usually also considered to be part of the extended South. By 2020, the sole holdouts in the nation opposed to gay marriage (six states in total according to the model) will all be located within the former Confederacy. Data from the ANES of the past two presidential elections have on their part also shown the South to be around 10 percentage points less likely to support gay

<sup>1185</sup> Cf. Silver 2013: "How Opinion on Same-Sex Marriage Is Changing, and What It Means." *FiveThirtyEight / New York Times*, March 26.



marriage than the rest of the country in both 2008 and 2012.<sup>1186</sup> Since the 2012 election, support for gay rights and same-sex marriage has risen remarkably at the national level, leading to a possible widening in the rift between the South and the rest of the nation, at least as indicated by recent data from the Pew Research Center. According to their numbers from aggregated 2014 polls, only 44 percent of Southerners<sup>1187</sup> approved of same-sex marriage compared to a national share of 52 percent and regional ones of 52 percent in the Midwest, 58 percent in the West, and 61 percent in the East.<sup>1188</sup> Data from the Public Religion Research Institute's 2015 American Values Atlas goes into even more detail, highlighting that while 53 percent of Americans nationally supported same-sex marriage, those shares stood at 25 percent in Mississippi, 33 percent in Alabama, 37 percent in both Arkansas and Tennessee, 40 percent in South Carolina, 41 percent in Louisiana, 45 percent in Georgia, 46 percent in both North Carolina and Texas, 49 percent in Virginia, and 53 percent in Florida.<sup>1189</sup>

## Outlook

The future prospects for a more moderate Republican position on this contentious issue therefore appear to be rather grim, primarily due to the party's reliance on the one region of the country that stands out for its vehement opposition to marriage equality. The data regarding younger white Evangelicals does not provide much hope for anyone wishing to move the GOP to the center either. Numbers from the Pew Research Center showed that among 18 to 34 year old (non-Hispanic) white evangelical Protestants support for gay marriage increased by just five percentage points between 2003 and 2012/13, rising from 25 to 30 percent, substantially below the national shift of 15 points from 33 to 48 percent.<sup>1190</sup> This means that even younger white Evangelicals lagged far behind their cohort associates of white mainline Protestants (where 64 percent of 18 to 34 year olds were in favor of gay marriage by 2013), Catholics (72 percent in favor

1186 Cf. Fisher 2014, p. 185.

1187 That includes the eleven former states of the Confederacy along with Kentucky, Oklahoma, and West Virginia. Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. are also moved from the "South Atlantic" region into the "Mid-Atlantic" group, a decision that takes their citizens out of the Southern census region.

1188 Cf. Lipka 2014: "Gay marriage arrives in the South, where the public is less enthused." *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, October 15.

1189 Cf. Jones, Cox, Cooper, and Lienesch 2016: "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: Attitudes on LGBT Nondiscrimination Laws and Religious Exemptions." *Public Religion Research Institute*, February 18, p. 8.

1190 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013e: *Growing Support for Gay Marriage: Changed Minds and Changing Demographics*, March 20, pp. 12 and 14.

of gay marriage), and religiously unaffiliated (81 percent pro-gay marriage).<sup>1191</sup> Other studies also highlight the wide rift even among the youngest voting age cohort. A 2012 survey from the Public Religion Research Institute put support for gay marriage among college-age millennials (18 to 24 year olds) at 59 percent, rising to 62 percent among white mainline and 66 percent among Catholic millennials. Just 27 percent of white evangelical college-age millennials on the other hand answered that they supported gay marriage.<sup>1192</sup>

Scholarly analysis has picked up on this point as well. The previously mentioned work done on the topic by Sherkat et al. also showed younger Republican cohort groups to be substantially less supportive of marriage equality than other intra-cohort groups, leading the authors to conclude that “both religious affiliation and political identifications retard the development of tolerant orientations, even in younger cohorts which should have been affected by the dramatic changes in how sexuality was viewed during this period.”<sup>1193</sup> We therefore see little evidence to suggest that the strongly conservative views of these younger Christian conservatives will soften in future years, particularly because of the foundation these sentiments are built upon. As political analyst Nate Cohn rightfully points out, instead of being driven by bigotry, the position of young Evangelicals on gay marriage – just as is the case on abortion – is primarily rooted in “firm religious and moral beliefs,”<sup>1194</sup> an area where evangelical Protestants have historically shown few if any signs of a sudden about-face.<sup>1195</sup> As we already saw earlier, young Evangelicals are also more likely to oppose abortion than their elders,<sup>1196</sup> indicating that a religiously motivated

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1191 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 14.

1192 Cf. Jones, Cox, and Banchoff 2012, p. 27.

1193 Sherkat, Powell-Williams, Maddox, and de Vries 2011, p. 176.

1194 Cohn 2013b: “As a Long-Term Political Issue, Gay Marriage Will Be More Like Abortion than Integration.” *The New Republic*, June 27.

1195 The extent to which religion plays a unique role for white Evangelicals is highlighted by a 2013 Pew survey. In it, 74 percent of white evangelical Protestants answered that homosexuality conflicted with their religious beliefs, far higher than the share of 48 percent found among all Americans and interestingly enough also notably higher than the 59 percent share among those respondents who answered that religion played a “very important” role in their lives, showcasing the exceptional conservatism found among white Evangelicals even within the subsection of religious Americans. In the same survey, 78 percent of white evangelical Protestants also expressed the belief that it was a sin to engage in homosexual behavior, compared to a national share of just 45 percent. The latter represented a drop of ten percentage points compared to a decade earlier. Among white Evangelicals on the other hand, this share decreased by just four points, evidence of the stable opposition to gay rights and homosexual behavior found within this group of Americans that is, as Cohn points out, based on basic religious and moral beliefs. Cf. Pew Research Center 2013i, pp. 20–21.

1196 Cf. Hoffmann, Mills Johnson 2005, pp. 174–177 as well as Smidt 2013, p. 206.

across the board social conservatism appears to have a strong foothold within this demographic, making significant shifts in opinion all the more unlikely.

The increasing salience of the topic has had a profound effect on public policy in a number of Republican-dominated states, mirroring developments pertaining to the other hot-button cultural issue of abortion. In 2014, a proposed bill in Idaho would have allowed doctors to refuse treatment to homosexuals on the grounds of their own religious convictions.<sup>1197</sup> While this particular bill was withdrawn, a number of other, often toned down versions, have been at the center of heated debates and sometimes received the approval of Republican state legislatures. The approach employed here is not dissimilar to the path chosen by Christian conservative legislators when it comes to abortion. While *TRAP laws* do not outright ban abortion, some of the anti-gay legislation also appears innocuous enough on the surface but nonetheless provides someone with the opportunity to discriminate against sexual minorities without fearing legal repercussions from state authorities. Mississippi's 2014 *Religious Freedom Restoration Act* for example only states that "state action [...] shall not burden a person's right to the exercise of religion,"<sup>1198</sup> with "burden" meaning "any action that directly or indirectly constrains, inhibits, curtails or denies the exercise of religion by any person or compels any action contrary to a person's exercise of religion."<sup>1199</sup> While this does sound sensible enough, the act may make it rather difficult for any city or entity in the state to enforce legislation intended to protect homosexuals or other members of the LGBT<sup>1200</sup> community against discrimination. A landlord denying housing to gays for example could relatively easily argue that any measures undertaken by city or local authorities against his stance qualifies as "compel[ing] [an] action contrary to [his] exercise of religion."<sup>1201</sup>

This recent flurry of legislation serves as evidence of the effect the shift in national attitudes concerning gay marriage appears to have had on cultural conservatives, causing a backlash similar to the one found among the white community of the South in response to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and its advances. As the country has moved in a more liberal direction on gay rights, Christian conservatives and other groups on the right appear to have responded to this threat by defending their own values with increased vigor and vehemence. Polling done by the Barna Group, an evangelical public opinion

1197 Cf. Serwer 2014: "States fight to push anti-gay bills. But will they pass?" *MSNBC*, February 20, updated April 2.

1198 Mississippi State Legislature 2014: *Senate Bill No. 2681*, p. 1.

1199 *Ibid.*

1200 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

1201 Cf. Stern 2014b: "Mississippi Passed Its Anti-Gay Segregation Bill. Will It Be Struck Down?" *Slate*, April 2.

research firm, showed that while twelve percent of evangelical Protestants were in favor of legislation to support LGBT lifestyles in 2003 that share had declined to just five percent a decade later.<sup>1202</sup> Mark Potok, senior fellow at the Southern Poverty and Law Center, on his part notes that the volume of anti-gay comments emanating from the religious right, such as the claim by Peter LaBarbera of *Americans for Truth about Homosexuality* that the election of the first openly gay U.S. senator in November of 2012 was another signal of America “falling apart,” appeared to now be “higher than ever before.”<sup>1203</sup> This process will in all likelihood continue in future years as the demographic shifts occurring in the country replace older more conservative cohort groups with younger ones that have a more favorable position towards gay rights than any previous generation. Social conservatives may therefore “feel marginalized anew,”<sup>1204</sup> a sentiment that may, if anything, harden the resolve of this group of Americans to stand up for their own religious positions. The influence wielded by religious and social conservatives within the GOP will most certainly make it more difficult for the party to bridge the growing gap between it and the wider electorate, with recent data frequently highlighting those diverging trends and the aforementioned possible social conservative backlash. Take the basic question of whether promoting respect for traditional values or encouraging greater tolerance ought to be the more important societal goal. Between 1999 and 2013, the share of Americans opting for “greater tolerance” increased by half, rising from 29 to 44 percent. The share preferring “respect for traditional values” on the other hand decreased from 60 to 50 percent during the same period.<sup>1205</sup> This is not due to an almost identical change in opinion found throughout all segments of the population though. Over the 14-year period, the share of Republicans who opted for *traditional values* instead actually rose from 76 to 77 points.<sup>1206</sup>

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1202 One should note though that the Barna Group uses a rather strict definition of Evangelism which puts a premium on the literacy of the Bible. According to their data, evangelical Protestants represent just eight percent of the U.S. population, a far smaller share than what most other surveys indicate. The data thus gauges the views and values of the most fundamentalist Evangelicals who believe all parts of the Bible are accurate. Cf. The Barna Group 2013b: *America's Change of Mind on Same-Sex Marriage and LGBTQ Rights*. July 3.

1203 Potok 2013: “The Year in Hate and Extremism.” *Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report* 149.

1204 C. Parker 2014: “Will the Tea Party Outlast Obama?” *Democracy* 31, pp. 24–27, here p. 27.

1205 Cf. NBC News, and Wall Street Journal 2013a: *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey: Study #13127*, April 5–8, p. 7.

1206 Cf. Murray 2013: “NBC/WSJ poll: 53 percent support gay marriage.” *NBC News*, April 11.

## Conclusion

The Republican Party is increasingly being left behind in the gay marriage debate thanks to the clout of white evangelical Protestants within the party and the unique conservatism this group possesses on gay rights. As we will see in chapter II.4.5, today's younger voters have by far the most favorable position towards the advancement of gay rights of any age cohort in the country with the GOP running the risk of doing permanent harm to its brand image among this demographic if it continues to be seen as a vehemently anti-gay party. Based on the most recent data we can venture the forecast that if anything the rift between white evangelical Protestants – and by extension the GOP – and the wider nation will only expand in future years. As David Kinnaman, president of the aforementioned Barna Group states, “the data shows that evangelicals remain countercultural against a rising tide of public opinion. If the sands have shifted under evangelicals’ feet in the last ten years, [...] it will seem the ground has completely opened beneath them during the next ten.”<sup>1207</sup> Changing the party's position will be far from easy though due to the composition of the GOP's contemporary base which frequently rejects any suggestions that moderation is a prerequisite for electoral success.

At the same time though, one has to remember that elections are usually not primarily decided on social issues, meaning that the extreme conservatism of white evangelical Protestants and their detrimental impact can to a certain extent be contained. In 2004 for example, just 13.1 percent of Republicans who supported gay marriage defected over into the Kerry camp.<sup>1208</sup> The issue was also not particularly salient in the electorate's mind. In that year's election 23.8 percent of voters considered gay marriage to be “not at all important” compared to just 1.0 and 1.6 percent who felt the same way about terrorism and employment/job security respectively.<sup>1209</sup> This phenomenon of placing economic matters above social ones can even be found among more religious voters. In the six presidential elections from 1984 through 2004 even respondents who said that religion provided a great deal of guidance in their lives placed twice as much emphasis on a policy area like government spending than they did on possibly the most salient social issue of abortion when it came to deciding how to cast their ballot.<sup>1210</sup> Can Republican candidates therefore de-emphasize the party's position on divisive social issues and focus on the economy, an electoral strategy

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1207 Quoted in: The Barna Group 2013b.

1208 Cf. Hillygus, Shields 2005: “Moral Issues and Voter Decision Making in the 2004 Presidential Election.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 38(2), pp. 201–209, here p. 203.

1209 Cf. *ibid.*

1210 Cf. Bartels 2008: *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*, pp. 92–93.

that would possibly make the party a more appealing electoral choice among moderate voters while allowing GOP candidates to retain the support of the base? The one substantial catch inherent to this strategy remains the fact that even on economic issues (see the previous chapter) the strong anti-statist conservatism of white Evangelicals creates a stumbling block for Republicans attempting to appeal to younger voters and minorities. Moreover, the party's image is not just shaped by its most prominent politicians who may feel the need to move to the center on gay rights but also by the large number of local candidates who often hail from areas of the country (such as the white South) where social issues are more salient and moderation on gay rights can do significant harm to one's electoral chances. These are the kinds of politicians who – despite their regional focus – can nonetheless gain nationwide notoriety as well, lessening the GOP's appeal among socially liberal young voters in the process. While gay rights played a more subdued role in the 2016 Republican presidential primaries, a major about-face by the party on this culture war topic nonetheless appears rather unlikely.

## II.2.6 Conclusion: The lasting impact of the Republican Party's Evangelicalization

What we have seen over the past few chapters is the evolution of a group that had refused to partake in the political process up until the early 1970s into possibly the most influential voting bloc in the United States today. This influence has come at a price for its host though. White evangelical Protestants stand out for their conservative views in virtually all issue areas. On social issues such as same-sex marriage the past few years have seen the emergence of an expanding rift between this group and the wider nation as the latter has become far more supportive of gay rights. Through the *Evangelicalization* of the GOP this has also meant that the gap between the public and the Republican Party has grown at a similar pace. On economic matters, white evangelical anti-statism – rooted in deeply held religious beliefs and at least in the South in a certain degree of racial conservatism – represents a major impediment for Republican attempts of appealing to younger voters and minorities who simply do not share this kind of visceral hatred towards an activist government. The influx of white evangelical Protestants has also meant that their *culture of non-compromise* has become an integral part of how Republicans perceive and frame many political issues today, a development with disastrous consequences for the entire political process as legislative discussions are now increasingly waged as battles between ultimate good and ultimate evil for the soul of America. Through its clout at the state level,

the Christian Right has also been able to obtain a number of remarkable victories on the socio-cultural issues that played such a key role behind the movement's resurrection in the 1970s. Significant increases in anti-abortion legislation have severely curtailed access to abortion in a number of Republican-run states. In the process the Republican Party has become branded as the party that forces women to take out rape insurance while its elected officials and candidates discuss the finer points of what exactly constitutes "legitimate rape."

Despite the facts provided over the last few chapters which are a testament to the influence wielded by the Christian Right, some scholars look at the Christian Right and its supporters and see a group of people that might very well be described as *useful idiots*, that derisive term for political activists cunningly exploited by party leaders often misattributed to Lenin. Social conservatives are sometimes portrayed as a group of voters manipulated by fiscal conservatives within the GOP to garner majorities without the party ever delivering on their promises to combat abortion and other sins perpetrated by liberals. In 1981, Reverend Billy Graham already claimed that "the hard right has no interest in religion except to manipulate it."<sup>1211</sup> Clyde Wilcox and Carin Robinson also conclude that while the religious right has "been the most successful social movement in influencing elections and party politics over the last century" it has also simultaneously been "the least successful in influencing policy and culture."<sup>1212</sup> In a different essay Clyde Wilcox elaborates on that assessment, supporting Graham's exploitation thesis by arguing that the Christian Right's primary role within the GOP has been to act as a vehicle for delivering votes for fiscally conservative candidates, in return only receiving "symbolic politics."<sup>1213</sup> He arrives at the conclusion that compared to some of the other prominent political movements of the last century – namely the labor, women's, and civil rights crusaders – the Christian Right has achieved far less.<sup>1214</sup> A view like this would to a certain extent disprove the claim of a significant *Evangelicalization* of the GOP if Christian conservatives were primarily used by "mainstream Republican elites for electoral gain"<sup>1215</sup> without elected officials ever delivering on their promises. As we have seen though the facts speak a different language, instead depicting a movement that has had significant success on social issues at the state level whose governmental institutions often act as the primary legislator on these matters<sup>1216</sup> while enjoying substantial influence within the national

1211 Quoted in: Dodds 2012, p. 291.

1212 Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 199.

1213 Wilcox 2005, p. 16.

1214 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 19.

1215 Dodds 2012, p. 276.

1216 Pietro Nivola rightly points out that "social issues [...] fall quintessentially within the

GOP in conjunction with its sister organization, the Tea Party. It also warrants remembering the extent to which the GOP has changed from the days of Nelson Rockefeller and his tenure as the Governor of New York State when he and the Republican state legislature passed the most liberal abortion law of the land in 1970,<sup>1217</sup> a conversion that was already made evident earlier on in this book when different positions towards abortion within Republican platforms were compared with one another.<sup>1218</sup> It was not until the Christian Right decided to finally enter the political stage that the GOP began to significantly shift to the right on social issues like abortion or the Equal Rights Amendment. 40 years later and the transformation of the Republican Party appears complete. A pro-choice national candidate in today's GOP? Unthinkable.<sup>1219</sup> A candidate that does not advance the biblically ordained free-market views so cherished by Falwell and others? Also unthinkable. Through its power at the state level Christian conservatives have also been able to influence *policy* and *culture* in quite a successful manner (at least partially disproving Wilcox's and Robinson's claim), severely restricting access to abortion while driving the trend of an increasing stigmatization of those women who even contemplate going through with the procedure. When comparing the Christian Right to previous social campaigns such as the labor, women's or civil rights movements as Clyde Wilcox does, one should also not forget that Christian conservatism possesses certain inherent limitations that make it somewhat unfair to lump supporters of the religious right into a group with activists whose causes often elicited not just nation- but also worldwide support. The Christian Right has always had to make do with a far narrower and smaller set of supporters while combatting the widespread trend of secularization. Considering these factors, it is quite remarkable just how much influence it does wield in one of the two parties at the very top of the political system of the most powerful nation in the world.

Fact of the matter also is that there are a number of positive traits that the Christian Right brings to the table, particularly in the way of campaigning which makes them, as one Republican activist from Florida put it, a "necessary an-

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traditional jurisdiction of the states, hence that's where much of the action inevitably centers." Nivola 2013, p. 25.

1217 Cf. Williams 2011a, p. 516.

1218 See chapter I.2.2.

1219 While Donald Trump undoubtedly failed to match the profile of Christian Right's perfect candidate due to his past positions on the topic of abortion (among a variety of other reasons), his stance on the contentious issue had nonetheless shifted significantly to the right by the time he entered the Republican presidential primary in the summer of 2015, as the billionaire businessman even earned criticism from fellow Republican pro-life candidates for stating that if abortion was outlawed, any woman that nonetheless carried out the procedure would have to be punished as well. Cf. Flegenheimer, Haberman 2016: "Donald Trump, Abortion Foe, Eyes 'Punishment' for Women, Then Recants." *New York Times*, March 30.



noyance.”<sup>1220</sup> According to Ralph Reed, the big advantage his fellow members of the Christian Right enjoy over “liberals and feminists” is that devout Christians “gather in one place”<sup>1221</sup> on the weekend preceding each and every Election Day. This level of interaction – which Clyde Wilcox and Carin Robinson refer to as an “infrastructural advantage”<sup>1222</sup> – creates a constant link between activists and a sizeable segment of the GOP’s core constituency, allowing Republican candidates to disseminate their message in a quick and efficient manner without having to put much thought and effort into how to reach the base. Instead of funding and maintaining costly “get out the vote”-schemes, leaders of the congregations themselves are tasked with last minute appeals to its members to turn out and support candidates that will uphold socially conservative policies. Robert Putnam therefore sums up one of the defining traits of the Christian Right quite appropriately when he contends that “[r]eligious conservatives have created the largest, best-organized grassroots movement of the last quarter century.”<sup>1223</sup>

The extent to which this network can be employed to the GOP’s advantage was highlighted by the 2004 presidential election. Heading into that year’s election, Karl Rove felt that mobilizing some of the evangelical voters who had stayed home four years earlier was going to play a vital role in the president’s re-election efforts.<sup>1224</sup> A central tool in this endeavor was going to be state initiatives to outlaw gay marriage which were placed on the ballot in eleven states. While the impact these initiatives may have had on getting the president re-elected is disputed, getting out the evangelical vote may have proved crucial in one state partaking in these referenda in particular: Ohio. In the Buckeye state President Bush almost doubled his share of the African-American vote (who continue to remain highly critical of gay marriage to this day) from nine percent in 2000 to sixteen percent in 2004 – at the national level on the other hand Bush only managed a two point increase among black voters.<sup>1225</sup> Two other groups strongly opposed to gay marriage also increased their vote for the incumbent in the state by substantial margins: Voters who attended church more than once a week (rising from 52 percent in 2000 to 69 percent in 2004) and voters aged 65 and older (increasing from 46 percent in 2000 to 58 in 2004). Among the former, President Bush managed to increase his national share of the vote by just a single percentage point while among the latter it rose by five points across the na-

1220 Quoted in: Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 105.

1221 Quoted in: Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 201.

1222 Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 7.

1223 Putnam 2000: *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, p. 162.

1224 Cf. Rozell, Smith 2012, p. 145.

1225 Cf. Taylor 2006: “Wedge Issues on the Ballot.” *Pew Research Center*, July 26.

tion.<sup>1226</sup> Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio's Republican Secretary of State between 1999 and 2007 and the party's gubernatorial candidate in 2006, even went as far as to claim that "the values voters won Ohio and won the presidency for George Bush,"<sup>1227</sup> seeing as John Kerry would have moved into the White House had he carried the state. This approach also has its downsides though. Bayliss Camp's analysis of anti-gay marriage referenda between 2000 and 2006 shows that these referenda did allow Republicans to "poach" voters not usually included in its electoral alliance, such as African Americans and Hispanics. A certain backlash to these referenda nonetheless eventually emerged among some groups in the electorate though. While evangelical Protestants appeared more enthusiastic than ever to support traditional marriage at the ballot box according to Camp's 2005/06 data, mainline Protestants and Catholics on the other hand showed increasing opposition to these attempts to curtail gay rights during the later stages of Camp's timeframe, highlighting that appeals to get out the moral-traditionalist vote not infrequently come at the price of alienating more moderate segments of the electorate.<sup>1228</sup>

Camp's findings demonstrate that despite some the positive features Christian conservatives have brought to the table one cannot help but arrive at the conclusion that the increasing clout of the Christian Right – in connection with its high levels of activism – can (and will) have often negative consequences for Republican electoral hopes, particularly in states that are undergoing momentous demographic changes. A prime example of this is Virginia, a state on the fringes of the newly established Republican *Solid South* that has seen a significant influx of voters from more liberal areas of the country as well as minorities.<sup>1229</sup> Barack Obama won the state twice and the most recent round of elections for executive offices in the state (governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general) in 2013 swept three Democrats into office, allowing the party to hold all five statewide offices in the Old Dominion for the first time since 1969.<sup>1230</sup> An integral part of this abysmal GOP showing was Bishop E.W. Jackson, the party's pick for lieutenant governor and a favorite of the local Christian conservative Republican base. Instead of being selected in the traditional primary process, Jackson won the nomination in a convention that provided social conservatives and single-issue activists with a disproportionate impact on the

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1226 Cf. *ibid.*

1227 Quoted in: Sager 2006: *The Elephant in the Room*, p. 16.

1228 Cf. Camp 2008: "Mobilizing the Base and Embarrassing the Opposition: Defense of Marriage Referenda and Cross-Cutting Electoral Cleavages." *Sociological Perspectives* 51(4), pp. 713–733. For specific data see pp. 723–725.

1229 Cf. Harwood 2013: "Demographic Shifts May Help Virginia Democrats." *New York Times*, August 22.

1230 Both U.S. Senators from Virginia were Democrats as well. Cf. Sullivan 2013b.

selection process, a procedural change pushed through by those very same right-wing Republicans who went on to select Jackson.<sup>1231</sup> Jackson, himself an African American, earned a fair degree of notoriety for arguing that Planned Parenthood “[had] been far more lethal to black lives than the KKK ever was” and claiming that “the Democrat Party and Planned Parenthood are partners in this genocide [referring to abortion].”<sup>1232</sup> On election day, Jackson by far fared the worst among the three Republican candidates running for statewide offices, losing to his Democratic opponent by over 10.5 percentage points.<sup>1233</sup> Similar trends have of course been spotted in a number of other races in recent years as well, with candidates like Richard Mourdock and Todd Akin sinking their own electoral hopes (and those of a potential Republican takeover of the U.S. senate) in 2012 thanks to much publicized comments surrounding the issue of abortion and “legitimate rape.”

This detrimental impact of salient Christian conservative issues is neither a recent nor a regional phenomenon. Alan Abramowitz for example considers George H. W. Bush’s attempt to shore up the base by moving to the right on abortion in 1992 as one of the reasons why Bill Clinton managed to secure the presidency. Abramowitz’s data shows that just 65 percent of Republican identifiers who took the most liberal position on abortion (in this case that it was a “woman’s choice”) voted for the Republican incumbent in that year’s election while 23 percent instead cast their vote for Ross Perot who took a decidedly libertarian pro-choice position on the matter. A similar defection rate was not found among the most pro-life Democrats on the other hand.<sup>1234</sup> As was discussed in chapter II.2.1, Bob Dole underwent a similar transformation during the primaries four years later before attempting to tack back to the center at the convention by softening the party’s platform on abortion, an endeavor thwarted by Christian conservative delegates. Today, a Republican pro-choice candidate at the presidential level is a virtually unthinkable prospect, a testament to the *Evangelicalization* of the GOP. In conjunction with the data we have seen over the previous chapters on a variety of issues this conclusion also serves to illustrate the movement’s ultimately harmful impact though. As America – thanks to the ideological views of today’s youngest voters – is becoming less religious and

1231 Cf. Kraushaar 2013a: “Republican Red Flags All Over in Bellwether States.” *National Journal*, May 30.

1232 Quoted in: Edelman 2013: “Virginia GOP Lt. Gov candidate E.W. Jackson: Planned Parenthood ‘has killed unborn babies by the tens of millions.’” *New York Daily News*, May 20.

1233 The GOP’s gubernatorial candidate Ken Cuccinelli lost by 2.5 points while Mark Herring, Republican candidate for the office of attorney general, lost by just 0.04 points. Cf. Virginia State Board of Elections 2013: *Official Results – General Election, November 5, 2013*.

1234 Cf. Abramowitz 1995: “It’s Abortion, Stupid: Policy Voting in the 1992 Presidential Election.” *The Journal of Politics* 57(1), pp. 176–186, here pp. 179–180.

more supportive of an activist government in the economic sphere along with increasingly backing gay rights and continuing to support a woman's right to choose in the socio-cultural realm,<sup>1235</sup> Republican candidates bound by the constraints of an *evangelized* party are facing an increasingly difficult challenge of succeeding at the national level.

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1235 The move away from conservatism on socio-cultural matters is also reflected in the rise of Americans identifying as social liberals. Data by Gallup from 2015 for example showed that for the first time in the polling company's records on social ideology (dating back to 1999), the share of social liberals among Americans equalled that of social conservatives (both standing at 31 percent). In 2009, the gap between social conservatives and their liberal counterparts had still stood at 17 points (with shares of 42 and 25 percent respectively). Cf. Jones 2015b: "On Social Ideology, the Left Catches Up to the Right." *Gallup*, May 22.



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## 11.3 Wallace won after all – The Tea Party

The popular narrative quite frequently traces the emergence of the modern Tea Party back to a single day in February of 2009 when CNBC's Rick Santelli went on an infamous rant on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Displaying the anger that would become a hallmark of the movement, Santelli attacked the freshly inaugurated president and his plans to lend a helping hand to Americans facing foreclosure as "promoting bad behavior" while making the case that America was sick and tired of "[subsidizing] the losers' mortgages."<sup>1236</sup> Far from appearing out of nowhere on that ominous day, the organizational structure of what was to become the Tea Party goes back significantly further. Anger on the far right was of course already brewing during the spendthrift days of Georg W. Bush's second term when a number of staunchly conservative organizations first began to float the concept of populist rallies against "big government" and its ever growing fiscal irresponsibility. Initial supporters could often also be found in a genuinely libertarian camp: The first event associated with the modern day "Tea Party" to gain nationwide attention was for example organized by Texas congressman Ron Paul in December of 2007.<sup>1237</sup> While Ron Paul is today primarily known for his rather libertarian position on a wide range of issues, the movement whose name he helped spawn rests on the foundations of a vastly different ideology – that of the racially and socially conservative white South which has few problems with government intervention when it suits its own needs but will fight any and all government programs that are deemed to be beneficial to non-whites.

The underlying reasons for the rise of the Tea Party can primarily be found in the Republican attempts to win the South that were illustrated in the first part of this book. Unsurprisingly, race, religion, and an admiration of Reaganite anti-statism are all central tenets and core concerns of the movement that could not

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1236 Quoted in: Sher 2009: "CNBC's Santelli Rants About Housing Bailout." *ABC News*, February 19.

1237 Cf. Formisano 2012: *The Tea Party: A Brief History*, pp. 26–27.

have become such a major player within the GOP without its *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization*. It would be unfair to lay all the blame for the movement at the feet of the white South, yet there is – as will be seen time and again over the coming pages – a remarkable overlap between the views and political positions of the South of yesteryear (and to some extent modern Dixie as well) and today's Tea Party. Perhaps no ideological tenet is more central to both the South and the Tea Party than the vehement opposition to a government that is perceived to actively intervene on behalf of virtually all groups except one's own. Moreover, as was already discussed in the chapter on the connection between the Christian Right and the South (I.2.1), both also perceive the liberal establishment in the nation's capital as an enemy that is to be kept in check at all costs – because of its stance on both economic *and* social issues. Keeping in mind the remarkable influx of Southerners and white evangelical Protestants into the ranks of the GOP over the last half a century, it should therefore come as no surprise then that the Tea Party as the pre-eminent conservative movement of the twenty-first century embodies some of the Christian Right's and white South's defining traits, namely a racially charged religious conservatism and fervent anti-statism that extends to all areas of the government – except matters pertaining to morality and legislation intended to buttress and defend it.

The spirit of George Wallace lives on

There were few politicians who embodied those values more so than George Wallace, that towering figure of Southern politics for much of the second half of the twentieth century. Even though the governor's background as a staunch segregationist forbids any association with him, in their attempts to win Wallace's voters the Republican Party undoubtedly integrated significant parts of his ideology into their own fold. The Tea Party – standing in that Wallaceist tradition – represents a culmination of those developments that were described throughout part I of this book, through their very existence ensuring that the racially conservative governor continues to loom large over today's Republican Party.<sup>1238</sup> As was already shown earlier on, Ronald Reagan could conceivably be considered the heir to George Wallace – and in a sense the Tea Party represents the heir to both, thereby uniquely embodying the impact both the South and the Southern Strategy have had on the wider Republican Party. Despite the almost 30

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1238 Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized the remarkable influence of the Alabama governor that extended well beyond the borders of his home state quite early on, with the civil rights icon declaring in 1963 after George Wallace had blocked the entrance to the Foster Auditorium at the University of Alabama that “Wallaceism is bigger than Wallace,” an assessment that has undoubtedly been proven true by the governor's legacy. Quoted in: Carter 2000, p. 156.

years that have passed since Wallace's last days in office, the manner in which the former arch-segregationist framed political issues remains a contemporary phenomenon. Wallace's own transition from an ideology of traditional racism in the mid-1960s towards an agenda of lambasting the federal government for telling people how to run their business and which schools they had to send their children to (while employing racial undertones) has proven to be an invaluable blueprint for Republican candidates, particularly the most zealous racial conservative ones in the South.<sup>1239</sup> Just as is the case today, the primary target of those Wallaceist campaigns always were the liberal elites in the nation's capital who invariably worked on behalf of non-whites, using the tools provided to them by being in government to lift up minorities at the expense of the white population. Wallace thus carefully crafted an ideology that fused racial resentment with a broader anti-statist populism – an ingenious approach that made it possible to use the latter as a fig leaf for the former, always ensuring that accusations of exploiting racial animus could be denied.<sup>1240</sup> In doing so the Alabama governor created a rift between the “pointy headed intellectuals”<sup>1241</sup> residing in their liberal ivory towers in D.C. and their white working class base who were suffering at the hands of the “reverse discrimination” policies that were being passed in the nation's capital.<sup>1242</sup> It is not hard to see the similarities with many of today's Republican candidates, particularly those on the Tea Party and social conservative side. From Sarah Palin's folksiness and attempts to define a “real America” that could be found in the (largely white) rural communities of the nation to Rick Santorum's remark that President Obama was a “snob” for wanting everyone to attend college, “Wallaceist” anti-elitism and opposition to the government has found its home in the Republican Party of the twenty-first century in which many of its leaders appear to want nothing more than “to make Washington D.C. as inconsequential” in peoples' day to day lives as possible.<sup>1243</sup> And virtually no other movement embodies the transition and transformation the Republican Party has undergone over the past three decades more so than the Tea Party, standing in the tradition of the late Alabama governor by com-

1239 Point made by historian Taylor Branch in Fulwood III 2013: “Race and Beyond: 1963 can still teach us something.” *Center for American Progress*, January 29.

1240 Cf. Lowndes 2008, p. 81. As demonstrated in chapter I.1.1, such a fig leaf became a necessity in the 1960s as racial equality had become the norm in American society and public discourse.

1241 Wallace quoted in: Edsall, Edsall 1992, p. 85.

1242 Cf. Horwitz 2013, pp. 57–58 and Edsall, Edsall 1992, pp. 77–79.

1243 The assessment is based on a quote by Rick Perry on the 2012 campaign trail when the Texas governor told an audience: “I'll work every day to make Washington, D.C., as inconsequential in your life as I can.” Quoted in: Seib 2011: “For Perry, the Middle Might Prove Problematic.” *Wall Street Journal*, August 15.



binning a visceral opposition to government intervention with conspicuous racist undertones.

A closer look at Wallace's rhetoric reveals a startling similarity to the language and framing of issues employed by today's Tea Party members and other components of the Republican Party, some of whom can even be found right at the heart of what is usually considered to be the *establishment* or *mainstream* branch of the GOP. When today's Tea Party activists (and even many elected GOP officials in Washington) are warning about the dangers of socialism in relation to the policies brought forth by President Obama – despite the fact that he is the most moderate Democratic president since the end of World War II according to his DW-Nominate score<sup>1244</sup> – they are essentially copying Wallace (who, if we remember, had already claimed in the late 1960s that he would be collecting “immense royalties”<sup>1245</sup> from Republican presidential candidates if he had copyrighted his speeches). For Colbert I. King, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the Washington Post, the lineage of today's most prominent right-wing movement is quite clear: “[T]oday's Tea Party adherents are George Wallace legacies.”<sup>1246</sup> Similar to contemporary right-wing populists, Wallace perceived a socialist threat everywhere, warning his supporters in 1964 that “[a] left-wing monster” which “[had] invaded the government [...] the news media [...] many of our churches [and] every phase and aspect of the life of freedom-loving people” had “risen up in this nation.”<sup>1247</sup> Another favorite target of his was the federal government. In a different speech, the Alabama governor bemoaned that Americans had allowed the institutions in Washington, D.C. to expand in size to such an extent that they were now in a position “to lead us dangerously close to a complete rejection of the democratic idea in favor of a form of statism embracing many of the social and economic theories of Marx and Lenin.”<sup>1248</sup> Just as many contemporary Tea Party activists do, Wallace saw himself as the last true defender against “the continuing trend toward a socialist state which now subjects the individual to the dictates of an all-powerful central government.”<sup>1249</sup>

In a similar manner, the likening of Obama to Hitler (a favorite theme on quite a few Tea Party posters and a comparison that has been made time and again by those on the far right)<sup>1250</sup> also ultimately has its roots in the rhetoric of the

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1244 Cf. Voteview 2013a.

1245 Quoted in: Kruse 2005, p. 253.

1246 King 2010: “In the faces of Tea Party shouters, images of hate and history.” *Washington Post*, March 27.

1247 Wallace 1964.

1248 Quoted in: Lowndes 2008, p. 84.

1249 Wallace 1964.

1250 See, among numerous other examples, TeaParty.org 2013: *Stop America's Hitler*. “We could become ‘Schindler's America’ – a nation where only the police and the military have guns,

Alabama governor. Speaking at his inauguration ceremony in January of 1963, Wallace warned against the “liberal” system of government, arguing that it was “degenerate and decadent” and “as old as the oldest dictator,” invoking Hitler and ancient Rome as similar examples of such a flawed system of government that had ultimately landed on the scrap heap of history.<sup>1251</sup> Providing the blueprint for today’s Tea Party tirades about the supposed persecution of whites (as we will see later on, many on the far-right believe discrimination against whites is today just as big or an even bigger problem than discrimination against minorities), Wallace noted that “[a]s the national racism of Hitler’s Germany persecuted a national minority to the whim of a national majority, so the international racism of the liberals seeks to persecute the international white minority to the whim of the international colored majority.”<sup>1252</sup>

It is important to note that at the onset of the twenty-first century this sense of feeling persecuted at the hands of the liberal establishment in Washington, D.C. is not necessarily just limited to the Tea Party and its base. Tom Perkins, founder of a major venture capital firm, argued in a letter to the *Wall Street Journal* in January of 2014 that there were significant parallels between “Nazi Germany[’s] [...] war on its ‘one percent,’ namely its Jews, [and] the progressive war on the American one percent, namely the ‘rich,’” expressing the fear that another Kristallnacht against the upper members of society was no longer completely “unthinkable.”<sup>1253</sup> Similar fears are even expressed by what one could call “establishment Republicans.” Pat Roberts, three term Republican U.S. Senator from Kansas, mourned on the campaign trail in 2014 “that the America that we love and cherish will not be the same America for our kids and grandkids [...] because our country is headed for national socialism.”<sup>1254</sup>

Wallace’s vitriol was also directed against specific institutions that were seen to be acting in an un-American manner as they empowered minorities, with Wallace linking them to actors that the Founding Fathers had fought against or even worse historical figures. Particular hatred was reserved for the Warren Supreme Court, with Wallace accusing the judges on it as well as members of other judicial institutions of “assert[ing] more power than claimed by King George III [or] Hitler.”<sup>1255</sup> Such rhetoric – albeit in a tamer manner (as already evidenced by Pat Roberts’ reference to “national socialism” and not “Hitler”) – has been widely adopted by mainstream Republicans as well, revealing the

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the people are disarmed and unable to defend themselves. [...] Remember, Hitler and his Nazi regime disarmed the people. The comparison between Hitler and Obama is striking.”

1251 Wallace 1963a, p. 229.

1252 *Ibid.*, pp. 229–230.

1253 Perkins 2014: “Progressive Kristallnacht Coming?” *Wall Street Journal*, January 24.

1254 Quoted in: Tomasky 2014: “Dole, Nazis, and Desperation in Kansas.” *The Daily Beast*, September 26.

1255 Wallace 1964.

impact Wallace's way of framing political issues has had on contemporary conservative politicians not necessarily associated with the more radical fringe. In his memo to House Republicans regarding the initiation of a lawsuit against President Obama in June of 2014 for his supposed executive overreach, John Boehner also raised the specter of the president executing his office in a royal (and by extension un-American) fashion. Relating to his House colleagues the fears of citizens across the nation, the Speaker remarked that concerned Americans had been telling him "[w]e elected a president [...]; we didn't elect a *monarch* or *king* [emphasis added]." <sup>1256</sup> To drive home the point that the president had been acting in the manner of an almost autocratic monarch hostile to America's laws and values, Boehner would later on accuse the president on the floor of the House of "tear[ing] apart what our founders have built." <sup>1257</sup>

Despite the overt focus on defending American values against socialist or fascist ideas and activists within the federal government, warnings by Wallace back then and the Tea Party today contain heavy racially conservative undertones. When George Wallace cautioned his supporters about the emergence of a socialist, all-powerful, soulless state in a 1964 address, he did so during a speech against the Civil Rights Act. His dire warnings about an "omnipotent march of centralized government that is going to destroy the rights and freedom and liberty of the people of this country" <sup>1258</sup> came days ahead of the governor's infamous "stand in the schoolhouse door" at the University of Alabama. The true reason for his opposition to civil rights legislation and integration of schools was not difficult to infer. Today's Tea Party supporters on their part rail against supposedly socialist measures – such as the Affordable Care Act – that in their eyes redistribute money from hard-working (white) Americans to those relying on government handouts, a group primarily made up of poor, and sometimes lazy, minorities (the so called "undeserving poor") according to many right-wing conservatives. Just as was the case with Wallace's ideological brand, "race both saturate[s] and [is] masked by [...] antigovernment populism." <sup>1259</sup> This populist, racially tainted and deeply anti-statist strain of looking upon the government has survived in the South and through the region's "colonization" of the GOP in the early 90s infected the general party with an ever increasing virulence, ensuring that today's Republican Party and the right-wing movement at its core can be regarded as the legitimate heir to Wallace and his political worldview.

1256 Boehner 2014: *House Memo: "[T]hat the Laws Be Faithfully Executed...*" June 25, p. 2.

1257 Quoted in: Parkinson 2014: "Boehner v. Obama: House Approves Resolution to Sue President." *ABC News*, July 30.

1258 Quoted in: Lowndes 2008, p. 83.

1259 This is how Joseph Lowndes refers to George Wallace's a brand of populism, a description that can easily be applied to the Tea Party as well. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

## The heart of twenty-first century Republicanism

The remarkable similarities between the Tea Party and a politician who arguably shaped today's Republican Party to a significant extent also illustrate that an assessment of the Tea Party in more detail provides a greater understanding of what has happened to the wider Republican Party as well. Instead of being a mere fringe movement within the GOP, the Tea Party serves to depict the transformation of the broader GOP – as a sort of microcosm – on a smaller scale: a desire to stand up for principles with as little compromise as possible, a merger between the social and fiscal conservative ideological camps, and a distinctly Southern populist ideological foundation; all in all an ideology that can best be summed up as a “dogmatic anti-establishment conservatism”<sup>1260</sup> that has in recent years frequently impeded to government's ability to function smoothly. As such it instead represents the party's core rather than one of its ideological outskirts. Most scholarly research supports the assertion that this movement did not appear out of thin air but rather represents the culmination of a decades' long trend, at whose heart stands the simultaneous *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party. As Paul Street and Anthony DiMaggio contend, “the extremism of the Tea Party is nothing new.”<sup>1261</sup> Instead, the positions espoused by the movement “are consistent with the deeper and long-term rightward drift of the Republican Party [...] over the last 35 years.”<sup>1262</sup> William Miller and Michael John Burton on their part also arrive at the verdict that “the Tea Party's merger of conservative libertarianism and conservative traditionalism has deep roots in the party shaped by President Ronald Reagan in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.”<sup>1263</sup> The Tea Party as such does not represent an extremist faction within the GOP but rather a more radical wing that espouses the same values as the broader *southernized* and *evangelized* party but only seeks to implement their goals in a less compromising manner. The ability of the movement to hold the government hostage (as illustrated by various budgetary negotiations) and wield so much clout on socio-cultural matters as well is only made possible precisely because support for tax cuts, small government, second amendment rights, opposition to welfare spending, abortion, and same-sex marriage are widespread among both Tea Party *and* non-Tea Party Republicans,<sup>1264</sup> as is the overarching and ubiquitous fear of an ever ballooning defi-

1260 Horwitz 2013, p. 210.

1261 Street, DiMaggio 2012, p. 556.

1262 Ibid., p. 557.

1263 Miller, Burton 2013, pp. 2–3.

1264 For a good overview of the stance both factions hold on a variety of matters see: Pew Research Center 2013q: *Tea Party's Image Turns More Negative*, October 16, p. 14.

cit.<sup>1265</sup> Differences between both factions are primarily found when it comes to the issue of compromising on said core values and the extent to which those core values are supported. More often than not though, when notable differences in opinion do emerge, the position of Republican Tea Party adherents (whether it is on the deficit, health care, immigration or gay marriage and abortion) is a far better indicator of the prevailing position championed by the wider Republican Party – a fact that by itself once again illustrates that the movement is far from extremist when assessed from a purely Republican perspective.

A good example of this rift on compromise materialized during the 2013 government shutdown, which is why specific data obtained amid the discussions leading up to and during the shutdown will be used to reveal the differences in opinion within the Republican alliance in chapters II.3.1 (specifically concerning the Affordable Care Act) and II.3.3 (views on compromise). The closure of the federal government and the approach to solving this impasse expressed by both Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans is of vital interest if one wishes to understand the movement and its underlying principles precisely because the battle to defund the Affordable Care Act represents the hitherto crowning achievement – or culmination – of the Tea Party which by itself, as demonstrated, already represents the culmination of a decades long trend. What was witnessed in this legislative fight were traits that had in the past been found among Wallace supporters in particular as well as many white Southern conservatives in general but could now be spotted in the midst of the Republican congressional ranks: A vehement anti-statism, latent racism – after all a black president had provided millions of uninsured, often non-white, “takers” with socialized health care funded by the (white) American tax payer – and the uncompromising attitude of Hofstadter’s paranoid spokesman that has always been a staple of the Christian Right.

Despite some of these slight differences in opinion between Republicans of both factions on compromise and the general extent to which both groups show an aversion to “big government,” the argument that moderate or even liberal Republicans are forced to convert to conservatism thanks to the rise of the Tea Party is nonetheless misguided and fails to properly comprehend the relationship between the two. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, himself forced to endure a primary challenge in 2014, noted that the difference between the Tea and Republican Parties was “only on tactics” adding that “on the issues [...] we’re largely united.”<sup>1266</sup> In a similar vein, former Republican Speaker of the

1265 Cf. Rapoport, Dost, Stone 2013: “The Tea Party, Republican Factionalism and the 2012 Election.” *Paper prepared for the panel on Tea Party Activism at the State of the Parties Conference, November 7–8, Akron, OH*, p. 8.

1266 Quoted in: Public Broadcasting Service 2013: “Sen. Mitch McConnell: I don’t think anybody can make the health reform law work.” *PBS NewsHour*, October 30.

House John Boehner observed that “[t]here’s not that big a difference between what you all call the tea party and your average conservative Republican.”<sup>1267</sup> We will see that the activism and strong views of Tea Party supporters most certainly provide a strong incentive for Republican elected officials to move even further to the right but that the basis for such a move is already in place due to the strong conservative lean and ideological underpinnings of both sides that have been established as a consequence of the embrace of Southern white conservatism. The differences between the Tea Party as a faction within the Republican Party and the wider GOP are therefore differences of degree and not of kind. Whenever political commentators, analysts or even scholars seek to neatly separate the two into opposing camps with differing interests while making the case that the GOP needs to fight back against what these authors depict as an alien Tea Party movement, we are faced with a complete misunderstanding of the interconnectedness of the two. Former George W. Bush speechwriter David Frum offers a perfect example of this kind of erroneous approach. In the wake of the 2013 shutdown, Frum argued that “a tea party bolt from the GOP might [...] just liberate the party to slide back to the political center,”<sup>1268</sup> a statement which completely misses the point that the Tea Party movement and its underlying ideology have been nurtured by the Republican establishment for the better part of half a century, that the Southern anti-statist populist views that connect Tea Partiers from all walks of life have in the process become the preferred method of governance for a majority of Republican supporters and that the remaining centrist elements in the party are few and far between.

Seeing as the movement could not have been established without the severe shift to the right the Republican Party has undergone thanks to the *South-ernization* of both its ideology and (congressional) ranks and because the Tea Party mirrors those wider developments within the GOP, it is inherently necessary to have a closer look at just what makes Tea Party supporters tick if one wants to receive a comprehensive answer to the title of this book. Tea Party supporters exhibit some of the same views also espoused by white Southerners when it comes to race, the role and size of government, and socio-cultural matters such as abortion and same-sex marriage. The Republican Party’s new evangelical Southern and anti-government populist underpinnings and its embrace of the ideological tenets of “Wallaceist” conservatism have made it possible for these kinds of anti-statist, nativist, and racially conservative voters to become an indispensable pillar of one of America’s two main parties. Moreover, the Tea Party also serves to uniquely highlight and reflect both the

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1267 Quoted in: Memoli, Mascaro 2014: “Republicans keep tea party wing at bay in primary races.” *Los Angeles Times*, May 20.

1268 Frum 2013: “A tea party exit would be a blessing for GOP.” *CNN*, October 14.

positive and negative aspects of the GOP's Southern Strategy, their alliance with the Christian Right and adoption of its views on social issues as well as the general *Southernization* of the party. It provides the party with an easily galvanized base that will turn out at the polls no matter what the occasion while simultaneously pulling the party in an ever further hardline conservative direction that is increasingly putting the GOP at odds with the wider electorate. Occasionally, the movement has even unseated or defeated Republican moderates in primary elections, demonstrating a taste for moderate blood that could in future years dampen the GOP's chances of obtaining congressional majorities.<sup>1269</sup> Ultimately, the changes the Republican Party has undergone over the past half a century are nowhere put on a more public display than among the Tea Party and its angry, white, religious, anti-government, right-wing, and both socially and racially conservative supporters. And virtually no other movement serves to more accurately epitomize the increasing Republican trend towards ideological purity across all issue areas – whether it pertains to economic or social matters – better than the Tea Party does.

The following subchapters on the Tea Party will thus be guided by two overarching questions and propositions that we will return to time and again: First of all, the focus will be on finding out what exactly the views of Tea Party supporters are on a variety of topics and how those positions are indicative of a stance that stands in the tradition of what one might refer to as “Wallaceist anti-statism” while also incorporating many elements of the Christian Right's agenda and merging the two into a worldview that is staunchly conservative both in the fiscal and the social realm. This is done by looking at the underlying ideological positions of Tea Partiers on a variety of issues ranging from welfare spending, to gay rights, immigration, and the general opinion towards the size of government (chapter II.3.1). A more detailed look at the movement's racial and religious/social conservatism illustrates its Southern pedigree even further (chapters II.3.1.1 and .2). Building on that, a comprehensive assessment as to how the Tea Party has been able to disproportionately leave its mark on American politics thanks to its high levels of activism is presented (chapter II.3.2). Through organizing and attending rallies, contacting public officials and trying to win over fellow voters, the Tea Party's staunchly conservative views have now to a certain extent become the GOP's public image, an important factor to always remember when the movement's position on racial, social, and fiscal matters are analyzed.

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1269 As already mentioned in chapter II.2.3 on the *culture of non-compromise*, a number of recent Republican Senate primaries saw Tea Party challengers – who went on to lose against their Democratic opponents – defeat more moderate Republican counterparts that could have arguably gone on to defeat a Democrat. In 2010 that was the case in Colorado, Delaware, and Nevada while the far-right arguably lost another two winnable seats in 2012 in Indiana and Missouri.

The movement's views on compromise (chapter II.3.3) will serve as additional evidence of how the movement stands in the tradition of other hardline conservative groups, namely the Christian Right. These chapters will answer the second question which asks how the Tea Party's uncompromising anti-statist conservatism puts the GOP at a disadvantage in today's and tomorrow's America, a nation that is traditionally quite individualist yet is slowly but surely becoming more open to the notion of an activist government due in part to the demographic changes assessed in closer detail in chapter II.4.

Most importantly, as the following pages will make clear time and again, the Tea Party is not the *cause* of the Republican shift to the right but rather a *consequence* of a decades' long trend, keeping in mind the trajectory the Republican Party has been on for the past half a century as illustrated in the first part of this book. Barry Goldwater's attempts to win over racial conservative Southern whites set the foundations for the twenty-first century Tea Party which shares many of the same traits that those Southerners who made the first leap across the partisan divide in 1964 possessed. Through subsequent decisions and actions by Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan in particular, the Republican Party was ultimately turned into a political organization that could spawn the Tea Party. The considerable overlap between both is also reflected by the partisan allegiances of Tea Party supporters. Contrary to initial claims about the supposed independence of the movement, its supporters have been shown to possess long-standing and deep-seated ties to the Republican Party. A Pew survey from October of 2013 for example revealed over 90 percent of all Tea Party supporters to have a Republican affiliation as 53 percent considered themselves to be Republicans while another 39 percent leaned Republican.<sup>1270</sup> An increasing share of those very same Tea Party members also consider their movement to be part of the broader Republican Party: While just 29 percent of them felt that the Tea Party – instead of being a separate, independent movement – was a part of the GOP in April of 2011 that share had risen to 41 percent two and a half years later.<sup>1271</sup> It does not come as much of a surprise then that Frank Newport of Gallup has characterized the Tea Party as “a rebranding of core Republicanism.”<sup>1272</sup> A verdict such as this highlights that the Tea Party – heirs to Wallace, Goldwater, and Reagan and themselves the torchbearers of today's anti-statist, racially and religiously conservative movement – warrants a closer assessment.

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1270 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013q, p. 12.

1271 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8.

1272 Newport 2010: “Tea Party Supporters Overlap Republican Base.” *Gallup*, July 2.



### II.3.1 Tea Party conservatism

As will be shown in chapters II.3.1.1 and .2, Tea Party Republicans are more religiously and socially conservative than their non-Tea Party brethren within the GOP while also standing to their right on racial matters. Unsurprisingly then, whenever general conservative sentiments are gauged, members of the Tea Party do stand out for their strict orthodox beliefs as well. 83 percent of Tea Party Republicans for example described themselves as conservative in the fall of 2013 compared to 51 percent among non-Tea Party Republicans in a Pew survey. Just 15 percent of the former self-identified as “moderate” compared to 37 percent among the latter.<sup>1273</sup> The 2012 American National Election Study (ANES) attests to this as well: a remarkable 69 percent of Tea Party Republicans applied the label “very conservative” to themselves while just 27 percent of the remaining Republicans did the same, placing them roughly in line with the overall electorate (24 percent).<sup>1274</sup>

This sort of conservative sentiment is pervasive and evident across all issue areas whether they are economic or social, demonstrating that the movement is far from libertarian. Asked to place themselves on a seven point scale from one (least conservative) to seven (most conservative) in an extensive December 2011 YouGov/Polimetrix survey, more than two thirds of Tea Party supporters placed themselves in the two most conservative categories on three separate measures of ideology – economic, social, and overall – compared to just 23.0 percent among non-Tea Party Republicans who exhibited similar levels of across the board conservatism.<sup>1275</sup> On economic issues, 89.3 percent of Tea Party supporters were in the top two conservative categories while a similar 81.3 percent reached such lofty levels of conservatism on social issues.<sup>1276</sup> If anything it appears that recent political developments have hardened the conservative inclinations of many on the far right. A follow up survey conducted by Ronald B. Rapoport and Meredith Dost among supporters of the Tea Party group “FreedomWorks” (who had first been polled in December of 2011) in the spring of 2013 showed that the share of respondents who placed themselves in the highest conservative bracket (“very conservative”) in terms of overall ideology had

1273 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013q, p. 13.

1274 Cf. Abramowitz 2013c: “Not Their Cup of Tea: The Republican Establishment Versus the Tea Party.” *Sabato’s Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, November 14.

1275 Cf. Rapoport, Dost, Lovell, Stone 2013: “Republican Factionalism and Tea Party Activists.” *Paper prepared for the panel on Political Parties and Interest Mobilization in American Politics at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, April 11–14, Chicago, IL*, p. 10.

1276 Cf. *ibid.*

increased from 53 percent in 2011 to 59 percent in 2013.<sup>1277</sup> At the same time though, there appears to be a widely held belief among Tea Partiers that Republican officials fail to adequately share those staunchly conservative values and that a lack of orthodox views represents an impediment to electoral victories – assessments that make future Republican shifts to the center rather unlikely. In the same survey, 54 percent of FreedomWorks members for example felt that Governor Romney’s lack of conservatism was a “major cause” for his defeat in 2012 while just 16 percent attributed the loss to his association with the Tea Party.<sup>1278</sup> Such trends are to some extent also replicated if wider samples are assessed. Asked if they wanted Republican leaders in Washington to move in a more conservative direction, 69 percent of Tea Party Republicans expressed such a desire in the summer of 2013 compared to just 43 percent among non-Tea Party Republicans.<sup>1279</sup>

Ultimately, the reason for this strong conservatism across a broad variety of issue areas can be traced back to the conflation of cultural and outwardly non-cultural issues that has led to what was described in chapter II.2.3 by Geoffrey Layman and Thomas Carsey as “conflict extension” – in other words a development strongly related to the *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party. The same chapter posited the theory that the incorporation of the Christian Right into the GOP led to the simultaneous infusion of the former’s “culture of non-compromise” into the latter. As will be made evident time and again throughout the following chapters on the Tea Party, the movement represents the embodiment of that culture. Its supporters see virtually any issue through the lens of culture because Republican politicians and leading figures of the Christian Right have sought to present them as such for the past few decades: Increases in the size of government are un-American because the country was built upon the principle of limited government; therefore such allocations of additional power have to be fought without compromises. Immigration from Latin America threatens the individualist values America was built upon; therefore the Southern border has to be closed to stop culturally alien Hispanics from entering the country, a stance used to great effect by Donald Trump in 2016.

The particular blend of conservatism and its impact on American politics is thus highlighted on the three issue areas that have dominated political discourse in the country in recent years while serving to galvanize the far-right populist base of the GOP unlike most other issues because of their unique manner of fusing traditionally conservative fears about an all-encompassing government

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1277 Cf. Rapoport, Dost 2013: *FreedomWorks Supporters: 2012 Campaign Activity, 2016 Preferences, and the Future of the Republican Party*, September 11, p. 11.

1278 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

1279 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013k: *Whither the GOP? Republicans Want Change, But Split over Party’s Direction*, July 31, p. 6.

with cultural apprehensions: The general question and debate pertaining to the role and size of the government along with deficit reduction, the Affordable Care Act also known as Obamacare, and comprehensive immigration reform. Seeing as those issues are set to remain at the core of political battles and disputes for the foreseeable future as well, the Tea Party's position on those topics is particularly relevant to the question of what sort of future electoral prospects the Republican Party will have especially in light of the fact that – as we will see in the demographics chapters – the Tea Party is often at odds with younger voters and minorities on those three matters. Furthermore, one has to remember that few House Republicans can afford to disregard the movement's position as to how to proceed on the matter of immigration and its overhaul as well as dealing with the deficit and a ballooning health care budget, seeing as the Tea Party's activist credentials and clout can make or break a candidate's campaign (see chapter II.3.2).

### The size and role of government and deficit reduction

On the bread and butter issue of the question what sort of role the government should play in the day to day lives of citizens, the strong anti-statist tendencies of the Tea Party movement become particularly evident. While 56 percent of Americans responded that the government had gotten bigger due to getting involved in matters better left to people themselves in a 2010 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute those shares shot up to 86 and 74 percent among white Tea Party supporters and white Christian conservatives respectively.<sup>1280</sup> A survey conducted by the Washington Post and Kaiser Family Foundation (see table II.3.1.a) illustrates the vehement anti-government positions of the movement; positions which put the Tea Party, and by extension the GOP, at odds with the wider electorate. While a majority of Americans for example agreed that the government ought to do everything possible to improve the living standards of all Americans, a mere two percent of Tea Party supporters felt the same way. 97 percent of Tea Partiers on the other hand felt the government controlled too much of their daily lives, a position shared by 65 percent of Independents and 60 percent of the entire sample.

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1280 Cf. Jones, Cox 2010a: "Religion and the Tea Party in the 2010 Election: An Analysis of the Third Biennial American Values Survey." *Public Religion Research Institute*, October, p. 31.

Table II.3.1.a: *The conservatism of the Tea Party*:<sup>1281</sup>

	Tea Party Movement	Independents	All Adults
Would you say you favor a smaller federal government with fewer services, or larger federal government with many services? / SMALLER GOV.	98 %	61 %	55 %
Government regulation of big businesses and corporations does more harm than good / AGREE	86 %	45 %	44 %
Do you personally agree or disagree with the following statement? Government controls too much of our daily lives / AGREE	97 %	65 %	60 %
The government in Washington should do everything possible to improve the standard of living of all Americans / AGREE	2 %	47 %	52 %

The unique distrust by the Tea Party displayed towards the government is particularly evident when compared to younger voters and minorities (whose positions will be addressed in closer detail in chapter II.4), indicating that the gap between the movement and its Republican host will in all likelihood only widen in future years. While 19 percent of the general public along with 29 percent of 18–29 year olds, 24 percent of African Americans, 21 percent of Hispanics and even 16 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans said they trusted the government in Washington, D.C. to do the right thing always or most of the time in a Pew survey, a mere 3 percent of Tea Party Republicans took this position.<sup>1282</sup>

1281 Cf. Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation 2012: *Democrats and Republicans have many stripes*. July 25-August 5.

1282 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013r: *Trust in Government Nears Record Low, But Most Federal Agencies Are Viewed Favorably*, October 18, p. 4.

Such views pertaining to the (abstract) role and size of government of course have a tangible effect on actual policies, highlighted in particular by the unfolding of the 2013 government shutdown and the views Tea Party Republicans had with regards to the resolution of this crisis. Compared to the rest of the electorate and even other members of the GOP, Tea Party Republicans saw the shutdown as a far less disastrous event, influencing the sense of urgency – or rather lack of it – they possessed when it came to ending it. While 43 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans for example felt it was “absolutely essential” to raise the debt ceiling in October of 2013, just 23 percent of Tea Party Republicans agreed with this sentiment. 69 percent of them instead felt that the country could go past the October 17<sup>th</sup> deadline without any major problems with 52 percent of all Tea Party Republicans actually arguing that the debt ceiling did not have to be raised at all – a sentiment shared by just 31 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans and 24 percent of Independents.<sup>1283</sup> Such views were also propagated by many Tea Partiers within Congress, such as Florida congressman Ted Yoho who stated amid the discussions to re-open the government that a failure to raise the debt ceiling “would bring stability to the world markets,”<sup>1284</sup> a comment earning him a fair amount of derision from economic experts.

When it comes to the question of how to actually go about reducing the deficit we see a major rift between the Tea Party and the all-important group of Hispanic voters. The basic Republican position on this matter has in recent years been to call for cuts in government spending while avoiding any tax hikes that might add revenue to government coffers. As we will discuss in closer detail in chapter II.4.2, Hispanics fail to be impressed by such proposals. A 2012 exit poll conducted solely among Hispanics showed that just 12 percent of respondents favored spending cuts as the preferred way of reducing the deficit while 35 percent suggested raising taxes on the wealthy with another 42 percent calling for a combination of both; in other words close to 80 percent disagreed with the preferred Republican course of action.<sup>1285</sup> Among all voters, Tea Party supporters on the other hand are the biggest proponents of slashing government spending while vehemently objecting to using solely tax increases as indicated by table II.3.1.b. 48 percent of them felt that the best way to reduce the deficit was to cut major programs, a view shared by only 20 percent of Americans and 21 percent of Independents.

1283 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013p: *As Debt Limit Deadline Nears, Concern Ticks Up But Skepticism Persists*, October 15, p. 4.

1284 Quoted in: Fahrenthold 2013: “For Rep. Ted Yoho, government shutdown is ‘the tremor before the tsunami.’” *Washington Post*, October 5.

1285 Cf. impreMedia, *Latino Decisions 2012: impreMedia – Latino Decisions Election Eve Poll 2012*, p. 2.

Table II.3.1.b: *Best way to reduce deficit is to mostly... (in percent)*:<sup>1286</sup>

	Cut major programs	Increase taxes	Combination of both	Other/Don't know
<b>Total</b>	20	7	63	10
<b>Republican</b>	32	3	56	9
<b>Democrat</b>	10	10	71	10
<b>Independent</b>	21	6	63	9
<i>Among GOP</i>				
Tea Party	48	2	44	6
Non-Tea Party	26	3	63	9

As we will see in the following chapter on the racial conservatism of the Tea Party, its supporters – just as Wallace and Reagan among others did before them – have conflated the issue of race, welfare spending, and fiscal conservatism into a policy preference that calls for welfare spending to be slashed across the board while often not touching certain other government programs and expenditures that are not deemed to be primarily beneficial to minorities. Such policy preferences are reflected in data from the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study which asked respondents about where spending cuts to balance the budget should take place. The data does reveal a difference in opinion even within America's conservative community. Among non-Tea Party conservatives 54.3 percent argued that balancing the budget should be achieved through cuts in domestic spending while 36 percent preferred cuts to be shouldered by the military. Those respective shares stood at 87.8 and 9 percent among conservative “strong” supporters of the Tea Party on the other hand.<sup>1287</sup> Among all respondents who did not show a strong affinity for the Tea Party, support for spending cuts in the military budget was notably higher (54.4 percent) than the share of people who preferred to balance the budget through domestic cuts (24 percent). A similarly high share of 21.5 percent of the non-Tea Party sample went in the opposite direction and called for tax hikes to reduce the deficit, a position shared by just 3.2 percent of conservative strong Tea Party supporters.<sup>1288</sup> Put together, the data most certainly illustrates just how far removed Tea Partiers are

1286 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013s: *In Deficit Debate, Public Resists Cuts in Entitlements and Aid to Poor*, December 19, p. 8.

1287 Cf. Arceneaux, Nicholson 2012: “Who Wants to Have a Tea Party? The Who, What, and Why of the Tea Party Movement.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(4), pp. 700–710, here p. 703. The survey asked respondents about their view of the Tea Party movement which could be described as “very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, or very negative.” Respondents who chose “very positive” were part of the “strong” Tea Party sample, making up 29.2 percent of the entire sample. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 702.

1288 Cf. Arceneaux, Nicholson 2012, p. 703.

from the political center of the nation on the particularly salient issue of government spending.

### The Affordable Care Act

Quite possibly the centerpiece of the populist right's aversion to the concept of big government is the Affordable Care Act (ACA), colloquially known as *Obamacare*. As we already saw in the chapter on the *culture of non-compromise*, opposition to "socialized health care" is hardly a new phenomenon as Reagan already warned of the dire consequence of such government programs in the 1960s. Yet the acrimonious reaction on the right caused by President Obama's defining piece of legislation may have taken even some of the most seasoned analysts and scholars by surprise. For many within the Tea Party the Affordable Care Act represents a stew of everything they have come to hate about liberal politics: An expansion of the role and size of government at the expense of the private sector and the provision of free health care to the general public that would allow the poor and unemployed (quite frequently non-whites) to receive access to medical care in a scheme bankrolled by tax paying Americans. Such programs to increase the government's reach elicit a visceral opposition among virtually all Tea Partiers who, as we will see in a subsequent chapter on the movement's position towards compromise, see "free health care" provided by the government as a basic violation of many tenets that have made America great, namely the limited role of government and in combination with that the strong sense of self-reliance "real Americans" possess but certain other groups supposedly do not. Obamacare provided the perfect target for the far-right to center its hatred on. Introduced by the nation's first black president and perceived to primarily benefit the undeserving poor, it received the kind of scorn and contempt that Wallace supporters possessed for the civil rights act. At the same time, the president's landmark health care law also represents an interesting case study because it does divide Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans into two sometimes quite distinct camps, a gap that may very well be rooted in the racial conservatism of the former in conjunction with the strong racialization of the overall health care debate. Data from the previously mentioned December 2011 YouGov/Polimetrix Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) showed that while both Republican factions took quite conservative positions on the question of whether to repeal Obamacare (as a matter of fact across a range of ten salient issues Obamacare was one of the just two issues in which a majority of non-Tea Party Republicans took one of the two most

conservative positions)<sup>1289</sup> non-Tea Party Republicans assigned a far lower priority to the matter of repealing the ACA. For 20 percent Tea Party Republicans, repealing Obamacare was the top priority in this particular survey, a share only topped by the 25 percent who saw the deficit as their primary concern. Just two percent of non-Tea Party Republicans on the other hand placed such importance and weight on the fight against government provided health care.<sup>1290</sup>

This rift and the widespread view among the GOP's Tea Party wing that Obamacare was not just an objectionable piece of legislation but also something that had to be defeated at all costs also became evident during the 2013 government shutdown that was of course facilitated by the Tea Party, its members in Congress, and their staunch opposition to the ACA. A month ahead of the shutdown, a Pew Research Center/USA Today survey revealed that both 80 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans as well as 94 percent of Tea Party Republicans disapproved of President Obama's health care law.<sup>1291</sup> An interesting difference emerges though when the same respondents who object to the ACA are asked about how to then best go about addressing the defects of the legislation (see table II.3.1.c). While 64 percent of all Tea Party Republicans (meaning roughly 70 percent of those Tea Party Republicans who disapproved of the ACA) argued that elected officials should do whatever possible to make it fail, a mere 31 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans (around 40 percent of the non-Tea Party GOP sample who disapproved of Obamacare) had the same sort of uncompromising approach. Instead, a majority of non-Tea Party Republicans who disapproved of the health care reform nonetheless argued that their elected officials should try to make the law work as best as possible.

**Table II.3.1.c:** *Views towards the Affordable Care Act: Approval and Disapproval (in percent):*<sup>1292</sup>

	Total	GOP/GOP lean	GOP lean: Tea Party	GOP lean: Non Tea Party	Dem/Dem lean
Approve	42	13	5	17	73
Disapprove	53	85	94	80	23

1289 95 percent of Tea Party Republicans as well as 59 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans took one of the two most conservative positions on the question of whether to repeal the ACA, meaning that they either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with such a course of action. Cf. Rapoport, Dost, Stone 2013, p. 7.

1290 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8.

1291 Cf. Pew Research Center, USA Today 2013c: *As Health Care Law Proceeds, Opposition and Uncertainty Persist*, September 16, p. 2.

1292 Cf. *ibid.*



((Continued))

	Total	GOP/GOP lean	GOP lean: Tea Party	GOP lean: Non Tea Party	Dem/Dem lean
<u>Elected officials should try to ...*</u>					
<i>Make law work as well as possible</i>	27	37	24	44	15
<i>Make it fail</i>	23	43	64	31	6

\* Asked of those who disapprove of health care law, based on total.

A subsequent Pew survey conducted a few days into the 2013 government shutdown also serves to demonstrate the unique mixture of aversion to Obamacare and intransigence in the legislative realm that is such a distinctive feature among Tea Party supporters both within and without Congress. 72 percent of polled Tea Party Republicans answered that it was unacceptable for Republican leaders to drop their health care demands – in other words the complete defunding of Obamacare – even if this was the only way to reach an agreement to reopen the government. Just 39 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans on the other hand took such an unyielding and antagonistic position.<sup>1293</sup> What this data highlights quite vividly is that the strong desire of many House Republicans to defund the Affordable Care Act (before the party had decided to use the budgetary fight in the fall of 2013 as a tool to starve the act from its funding, the GOP house conference had already voted to repeal or defund the ACA over 40 times)<sup>1294</sup> was and continues to primarily remain driven either by the representatives' own Tea Party background or the knowledge that a lenient and more compromising stance on the issue will have dire consequences for their electoral fortunes in the next primary season due to the high levels of activism found among Tea Partiers (see chapter II.3.2).

This approach to dealing with the shutdown most certainly did not endear the party to significant segments of the electorate; strong evidence of the negative impact the recalcitrant attitude the Tea Party and its supporters possess can have on the popularity of the GOP.<sup>1295</sup> 53 percent of Independents for example dis-

1293 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013o: *Partisans Dug in on Budget, Health Care Impasse*, October 7, p. 1.

1294 As of September 12, 2013. Cf. Whitaker 2013: "For 41st time, GOP votes against Obamacare." *MSNBC*, September 12.

1295 According to the generic House race ballot which provides a general overview of the popularity of both parties, Democrats and Republicans were essentially tied in early August of 2013 in a composite poll that tracks and combines different surveys (August 1: Democrats 42.2 %, Republicans 41.7 %). Two months later a rift of four and a half percentage points had emerged between the parties as the generic Democratic candidate was

approved of the tactic of cutting off funding to the ACA to stop the law from being implemented while just 39 percent of them supported such a strategy in a pre-shutdown survey from August of 2013.<sup>1296</sup> A different poll conducted during the midst of the negotiations to avoid the shutdown in late September revealed that a mere 27 percent of all Americans and 30 percent of Independents approved of the hardline Tea Party driven approach of only funding the government if President Obama surrendered on his landmark piece of legislation with strong majorities instead calling on the issues to be dealt with separately.<sup>1297</sup> While Republicans were quick to point out during the shutdown negotiations that Americans were by and large dissatisfied with the Affordable Care Act, they usually omitted the fact that for most Americans a complete removal of the act is not the preferred option either. Data from an NBC News and Wall Street Journal survey conducted in December of 2013 showed that even after a disastrous two month period during which the roll-out of the Affordable Care Act had been mishandled in the worst manner possible and while the president's own disapproval rating stood at a then all-time high of 54 percent, just 26 percent of Americans felt Obamacare ought to be completely eliminated while two thirds instead argued for an overhaul with either minor (36 percent) or major (31 percent) modifications.<sup>1298</sup>

## Immigration Reform

Throughout the history of the United States, few issues have been able to attain the kind of linchpin status for rallying conservative activists as immigration and the supposed cultural threat emanating from foreigners have, particularly for those located at the far-right fringe of society.<sup>1299</sup> The 2016 campaign and Donald Trump's remarkable rise from complete outsider to the party's nominee on the back of the promise to build a wall across the country's southern border (all of

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now leading with 45.4 percent compared to the 40.9 percent garnered by the Republican candidate on October 1. The Democratic peak came immediately after the end of the shutdown when the rift between the two parties had widened even further to seven points (October 19). For data cf. Huffpost Pollster 2014: *2014 National House Race*. March 19.

1296 Cf. Kaiser Family Foundation 2013: *Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: August 2013*. August 28.

1297 Cf. Roarty 2013: "Americans Oppose House GOP's Obamacare Strategy." *National Journal*, September 23.

1298 Cf. NBC News, and Wall Street Journal 2013c: *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey: Study #13528*, December 4–8, pp. 3 and 25.

1299 Today's Tea Party is no different from past movements in the relevance bestowed upon the issue of immigration. 82 percent of Tea Party supporters answered in a 2010 CBS News/ New York Times poll that illegal immigration was a "very serious problem," compared to shares of 72 percent among all Republicans and just 60 percent among all Americans. Cf. CBS News, New York Times 2010a: *The Tea Party Movement: What They Think*, April 5–12, p. 7.

this despite his less than stellar conservative credentials on other topics) is another testament to the issue's notable and enduring potency. Comparing historic texts to contemporary talking points and pamphlets reveals a remarkable degree of similarity over the centuries. Take the fears and worries expressed by someone like Lyman Beecher, father of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who in his 1835 text *A Plea for the West* voiced the anxiety that the (Catholic) immigrant masses entering the nation from Europe were going to “[quadruple] our taxation” and eventually after gaining American citizenship, “[send] annually accumulating thousands to the polls to lay their inexperienced hand upon the helm of our power.”<sup>1300</sup> In contemporary times, few scholars have been able to better articulate the apprehensions many on America's right feel towards the slow but certain Hispanicization of their nation than Samuel P. Huntington. A central tenet of the objections by many Tea Party supporters towards increased immigration is the assertion that Hispanic morals and ideals are alien to traditional American values and customs, traits that set this group of newcomers apart from other notable waves of immigrants. Or, in the words of conservative columnist and Tea Party favorite Ann Coulter, “[n]ow we're scraping the bottom of the barrel” while pre-1960s immigrants were “pre-welfare state immigrants” who either “sank or swam.”<sup>1301</sup> As we will see in chapter II.4.3 though this is ultimately nothing more than a myth of a supposed “Hispanic exceptionalism.” The late Harvard and Columbia professor nonetheless supported this theory and gave a prominent voice to those fears in the later years of his life, singling out Hispanics for their apparent unwillingness to integrate into U.S. society and accusing them of “rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream.”<sup>1302</sup> Central components of those Anglo-Protestant values are “individualism, the work ethic, and the belief that humans have the ability and the duty to try to create a heaven on earth, a ‘city on a hill,’” traits which are supposedly rejected by Hispanics, some of whom the professor saw as being “often contemptuous of American culture.”<sup>1303</sup> For Huntington Hispanics thus represented a clear threat to that culture because of their lack of initiative and self-reliance as well as – instead of chiding them – the acceptance of the poor and poverty.<sup>1304</sup> These points also demonstrate the ties that are in place between the past and present of racial politics as depicted throughout this book. For many white Southerners of the 1960s, African Americans also lacked the quintessentially American Protestant work ethic; beliefs that formed the basis of the former group's racially

1300 Beecher 1835: “A Pleas for the West.” In: Davis (ed.), 1971: *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present*, pp. 85–93, here p. 90.

1301 Coulter 2013: *When did we vote to become Mexico?* May 22.

1302 Huntington 2004: “The Hispanic Challenge.” *Foreign Policy*, March 1.

1303 Ibid.

1304 Cf. *ibid.*

resentful views. And just like Beecher, Huntington, or the racially conservative Southern politicians of yesteryear, today's Tea Party supporters also base their concerns about increased immigration on the lack of individualism found within the Hispanic community and the supposed incompatibility of their big government values with key American ideals. For an overwhelming majority of Tea Partiers, increased immigration from Latin America will therefore precipitate (or continue) a cultural transformation that will inevitably diminish America's economic prowess and its status as the aforementioned *city on a hill*.

The views espoused by the Tea Party, as is the case in so many other policy areas, present Republicans with a simultaneous opportunity and a challenge. Anti-immigrant rhetoric can whip Tea Party activists into a frenzy and pay off at the ballot box in certain electoral environments (such as low-turnout elections). What presents Republican legislators with a major challenge is the fact that many of today's conservative populists use a similar approach their compatriots of yesteryear by conflating immigration and culture into a single issue area in which an increase of the former leads to the inevitable downfall of the latter, an ideological fusion that makes it immensely difficult for Republican lawmakers to strike a compromise on an integral issue such as comprehensive immigration reform with their Democratic counterparts. This dilemma and its consequences for Republican public policy undoubtedly lower the appeal of the GOP brand among the minority segments of the population even further, particularly among Hispanics who unsurprisingly place a key emphasis on immigration reform.<sup>1305</sup>

This fusion and interconnectedness becomes evident with just one look at the "non-negotiable core beliefs" explicitly stated on one of the movement's main websites, TeaParty.org. Sitting atop the list of the 15 "core beliefs" is the blunt statement that "[i]llegal aliens are here illegally" followed by the assertion that "[p]ro-domestic employment is indispensable."<sup>1306</sup> The opposition to immigration is rooted much deeper though and extends beyond simple economic and employment concerns. Core belief number 14 for example states that "English as our core language is required."<sup>1307</sup> A variety of studies and surveys attest to the Tea Partiers' widespread and visceral fear of the nation's Anglo-Protestant culture being under attack as articulated by Samuel P. Huntington, a worry also driven home with added emphasis by the election and re-election of the nation's first black president on the back of strong showings among African Americans and Hispanics which many Tea Party supporters credit to the President's supposedly big gov-

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1305 In 2014, almost three quarters (72 percent) of Hispanics answered that it was "extremely" or "very important" that Congress pass new immigration legislation. Cf. Pew Research Center 2014b: *Public Divided Over Increased Deportation of Unauthorized Immigrants*, February 27, p. 3.

1306 Eichler 2014: "About Us." TeaParty.Org.

1307 Ibid.

ernment policies that were particularly popular among these – in the eyes of quite a few Tea Partiers – freeloading elements of the electorate. Polling work done by the Public Religion Research Institute and Brookings Institution from March of 2013 revealed that while 40 percent of the general public felt immigrants threatened traditional American values and customs, those shares shot up to 60 and 55 percent respectively among Tea Party supporters and Republicans. 68 percent of respondents aged 18 to 29 as well as 54 percent of Independents on the other hand felt immigrants strengthened American society, demonstrating the large rift between the Tea Party and other important segments of the electorate.<sup>1308</sup> Fears about the detrimental cultural impact of immigrants appear to not necessarily be a general conservative phenomenon though but rather one limited to its Tea Party variant. Christopher Parker and Matt Barreto for example arrive at the conclusion after extensively assessing the views of Tea Party and non-Tea Party conservatives on immigration that while the latter are ultimately primarily concerned with everyone adhering to the existing legal framework, the former are much more likely to also support additional measures intended to curtail the growth of the Hispanic-American community that go beyond merely ensuring everyone obeys the laws of the land (measures such as the annulment of Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. constitution which bestows citizenship upon anyone born in the United States<sup>1309</sup>). The authors thus support the contention that for these Tea Party conservatives conflicts over immigration instead constitute a battle for the very survival of the American way of life and everything that the country stands for.<sup>1310</sup> Ultimately then, we see the extent to which right-wing fears about immigrants have remained largely unchanged over the centuries. Similar to Lyman Beecher's apprehensions about "accumulating thousands" of new citizens "lay[ing] their inexperienced hand upon the helm of our power," Tea Party Republicans fear the establishment of an unholy alliance between the increasing number of Hispanic voters and liberal Democrats, both of whom reject America's individualist cultural foundations. Right-wing conservatives dread nothing more than a future in which left-leaning Hispanics will provide liberal Democrats with majority after majority at the ballot box, electoral conquests in no small part achieved thanks to the handouts provided to these voters by liberal officials in the nation's capital.

These deep-seated apprehensions about the loss of one's culture obviously have a significant effect on policy preferences. While the data does show that the

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1308 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera, Dionne, Jr., and Galston 2013a: "Citizenship, Values, and Cultural Concerns: What Americans Want From Immigration Reform." *Public Religion Research Institute / The Brookings Institution*, March 21, pp. 20–22.

1309 "All persons born [...] in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

1310 Cf. C. Parker, Barreto 2013: *Change They Can't Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*, pp. 172–173.

basic position on questions pertaining to immigration among both the Tea Party and the GOP in general is not as out of sync with the stance predominantly preferred by the wider public as it tends to be on the aforementioned policy matters of the size of government and publicly funded health care, we nonetheless do see a gap in opinion.<sup>1311</sup> Once again Tea Party Republicans appear to be the driving force behind an unyielding Republican policy stance, unsurprising in light of the perception of this legislative debate by them as a fight over America's customs and culture. More so than on the question of the Affordable Care Act, some differences in opinion are in place between Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans; a rift that can primarily be explained by the aforementioned contrasting foundations of the objection to immigration reform. One can assume that contrary to the Tea Party positions rooted in socio-cultural motivations, more economically focused Republicans or conservatives are not just guided by legal considerations but also consider the possible economic windfalls of immigration, leading to a more balanced approach among the latter.

On the key question that has been at the center of the recent immigration debate of whether to grant undocumented immigrants a legal working status and pathway to citizenship, almost three fifths of Tea Party supporters voiced opposition to this broader concept in a 2011 survey while nationally only 41 percent opposed and 56 percent favored this approach to immigration reform. Overall, a third of Tea Partiers polled were "strongly opposed" to bestowing a legal status upon illegal immigrants, compared to just 19 percent among the general public and 20 percent among Independents.<sup>1312</sup> This extremely high level of opposition to any softening of immigration laws is also highlighted when we look at the Republican Party itself in more detail and separate both strains of Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans. By all accounts, today's Republican Party has a relatively strict position on immigration related policies. 41 percent of Tea Party Republicans nonetheless still felt in the summer of 2013 that the party's position failed to be adequately conservative on immigration compared to a share of 33 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans who took the same stance and argued for a more conservative approach (13 and 21 percent respectively felt the party's position on immigration was on the other hand "too conservative").<sup>1313</sup>

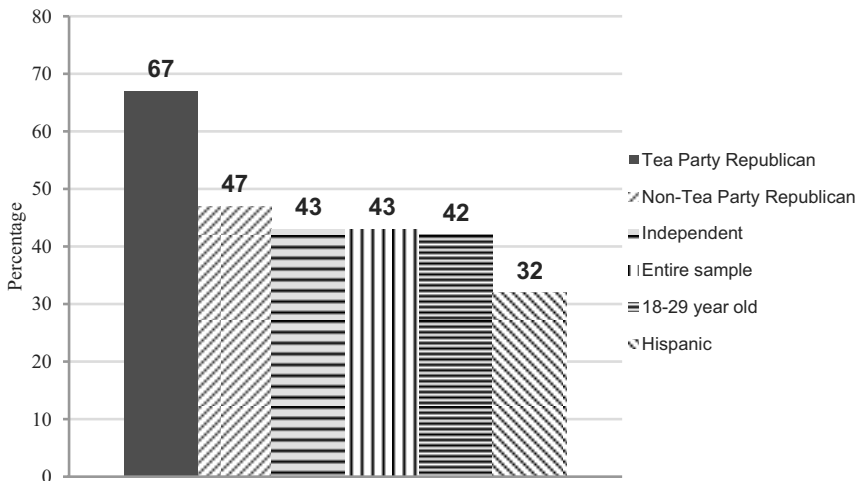
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1311 Some data most certainly also appears to suggest that on the matter of immigration the GOP has not moved as far to the right as it has on a variety of other salient issues such as abortion, gun rights, or economic questions, diminishing the potentially harmful role this particular issue area could play in future Republican primaries. Cf. Silver 2014: "Like Bush, Many Republicans Are Moderate on Immigration." *FiveThirtyEight*, April 12.

1312 Cf. Jones, Cox, Galston, and Dionne, Jr. 2011: "What It Means to Be American: Attitudes in an Increasingly Diverse America Ten Years After 9/11." *The Brookings Institution / Public Religion Research Institute*, September 6, p. 31.

1313 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013k, p. 6.

A key disagreement in the legislative battle over immigration reform revolves around the question of border security and its linkage to any proposals to bestow legality upon illegal migrants. Congressional Republicans have been adamant that steps to tighten the border (either before or during the implementation of a new immigration reform) are paramount and a condition for their approval of any legislation pertaining to the topic, an approach in line with Tea Party Republicans but not necessarily the wider public. Asked by the Pew Research Center when undocumented immigrants ought to be allowed to apply for a legal status, two thirds (67 percent) of Tea Party Republicans argued that effective border control was a prerequisite for subsequently allowing any illegal immigrants to apply for a legal status (see figure II.3.1). Non-Tea Party Republicans on the other hand were evenly divided: 47 percent backed the position of their Tea Party brethren while the same share chose a more lenient stance and argued for allowing undocumented immigrants to undertake the transition towards legality while border improvements were being made simultaneously, a position roughly in line with the path also favored by the nation at large as well as Independents. As we can see by looking at figure II.3.1, the resolute position of the Tea Party unsurprisingly puts them – and by extension the Republican Party – at odds with Hispanics in particular, creating a major impediment to any attempts by the GOP to appeal to this growing segment of the electorate.



**Figure II.3.1:** When should undocumented immigrants be allowed to apply for legal status? Percentage answering “only after borders are effectively controlled.”<sup>1314</sup>

1314 Cf. Pew Research Center, USA Today 2013b: ‘Borders First’ a Dividing Line in Immigration Debate, June 23, pp. 2 and 8. A plurality of both Independents (47 percent) as well as the entire sample (49 percent) favored a simultaneous approach.

An even better insight into the Tea Party mindset is revealed when the propositions presented to survey participants provide respondents with a clear choice between deporting illegals or allowing them to stay (see table II.3.1.d), a distinction not made by the aforementioned Pew survey. While 62 percent of Americans and Independent voters argued in a 2011 survey conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute that the enforcement of border security ought to be coupled with a pathway to citizenship (with 36 percent of both instead calling for the deportation of all illegal immigrants) those shares were essentially reversed among Tea Partiers as close to 60 percent instead preferred the headline stance of deporting all immigrants that had come to the country illegally.

Table II.3.1.d: *Best way to solve illegal immigration problem.*<sup>1315</sup>

	Secure borders and provide earned path to citizenship	Secure borders and arrest and deport all illegal immigrants
General public	62 %	36 %
Democrats	74 %	24 %
Independents	62 %	36 %
Republicans	50 %	48 %
Tea Party	41 %	57 %

In light of the data and the vehemence with which Tea Partiers oppose most measures that seek to ease the transformation of undocumented immigrants into legal residents, it does not come as a surprise that Republican officials who move to the center on immigration do so at their own peril. Case in point Marco Rubio. The Florida Senator – member of the so called “Gang of Eight” that hammered out a bipartisan proposal to reform the nation’s immigration laws in the spring of 2013 which received the backing of the president – had his support among Republican primary voters in New Hampshire more than halved between April and July of 2013, going from 15 to 6 percent.<sup>1316</sup> His national fortunes followed a similar trajectory. At the beginning of 2013, Marco Rubio was still leading the Republican field of possible Republican presidential candidates by a considerable margin, topping the field at about 20 percent ahead of the nearest rival Chris Christie who came in at around 13 percent.<sup>1317</sup> By mid-December of the same year though, Rubio could be found among the also-rans in eighth place at a mere four percent in an Economist/YouGov poll.<sup>1318</sup> Around one and a half months earlier, Rubio had already decided that the best possible course of action

1315 Cf. Jones, Cox, Galston, and Dionne, Jr. 2011, p. 23.

1316 Cf. Edsall 2013a: “Marco Rubio’s Un-American Dream.” *New York Times*, August 14.

1317 Cf. Huffpost Pollster 2013: *2016 National GOP Primary*. Data as of December 2013.

1318 Cf. The Economist and YouGov 2013: *The Economist/YouGov Poll, December 14–16*, p. 6.



to salvage his presidential aspirations was to conduct a U-turn on immigration with the Florida senator urging fellow Republicans in late October of 2013 to not pass the Senate bill that he had helped draw up while also calling on House Republicans to not engage in any negotiations with the Senate on the matter.<sup>1319</sup> What would have happened to his fortunes in 2016 without this about-face is of course impossible to gauge but his decision – and the rise of Donald Trump – nonetheless illustrate the seminal role nativism plays among Republican core voters today.

The issue of immigration was front and center during the 2012 Republican primary race as well with some in the media arguing that the revelation to a large audience during two debates in September of 2011 (on September 12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>) that Texas Governor Rick Perry had granted in-state tuition fees to the children of illegal immigrants turned out to be one of the key reasons for the governor's fall from grace.<sup>1320</sup> Comments made by his Republican opponents during both debates most certainly indicate two things. First of all, the widespread vehement opposition within the GOP to granting even the children of illegal immigrants – who broke the law through no fault of their own – any special favors such as lower tuition fees and secondly, the fact that in today's Republican Party, it is virtually impossible to be too far to the right. Governor Perry could have been attacked for a number of outlandish views that not necessarily made him an appealing choice to moderate voters but instead his opponents focused on the one area in which he was deemed to be too liberal, in the process sending a rather questionable signal to both minority and less conservative voters.

Knowing the Republican base's position on the matter, Republican presidential hopefuls duly concentrated on the topic during the two debates in their attempts to chip away at the Texas governor's lead in the polls. Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum for example wondered during the first encounter between the candidates if the Texas governor's decision "was an attempt to attract the illegal vote – I mean, the Latino voters."<sup>1321</sup> One does have to wonder if referring to Hispanics as "the illegal vote" was a mere slip of the tongue or if a more sinister mindset caused such a wording. Regardless, comments like these are part of the answer as to why the GOP has such a difficult time among Hispanics. Not to be outdone, Minnesota Congresswoman Michele Bachmann also chimed in, accusing the Texas governor of the cardinal sin of providing benefits to minorities:

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1319 Cf. Sarlin 2013: "Rubio to GOP: Don't pass my immigration bill!" *MSNBC*, October 28.

1320 Cf. Wilson 2013: "Chris Christie just took a big risk on immigration." *Washington Post*, December 21.

1321 Quoted in: CNN 2011: *Full Transcript of CNN-Tea Party Republican Debate*. September 12.

*“I think that the American way is not to give taxpayer subsidized benefits to people who have broken our laws or who are here in the United States illegally. That is not the American way. Because the immigration system in the United States worked very, very well up until the mid-1960s when liberal members of Congress changed the immigration laws.”*<sup>1322</sup>

During the second debate ten days later, Mitt Romney – by now having trailed Rick Perry for around a month – also decided to go on the attack. The former Massachusetts governor chose to present the audience with a straightforward calculation of the benefits the children of illegal immigrants had received thanks to Governor Perry’s actions (a “\$100,000 break”) – benefits non-Texan Americans on the other hand did not get to enjoy:

*“[I]f you’re an illegal alien, you get an in-state tuition discount. You know how much that is? That’s \$22,000 a year. Four years of college, almost \$100,000 discount if you are an illegal alien [and] go to the University of Texas. If you are a United States citizen from any one of the other 49 states, you have to pay \$100,000 more. That doesn’t make sense to me. [...] That kind of magnet draws people into this country to get that education, to get the \$100,000 break.”*<sup>1323</sup>

Perry’s lead over Mitt Romney on the night of the first debate, twelve points, halved over the course of two weeks, dropping to 6.2 points by September 26<sup>th</sup>. By early October, Mitt Romney was atop the polls once again.<sup>1324</sup> Of course it is difficult to claim that the drop in the polling numbers was only down to the matter of immigration since Rick Perry in general ran a less than stellar campaign. His jump to the top of the GOP field also meant that all other candidates – including Mitt Romney and his considerable arsenal of attack ads – focused their attention and criticism on Perry. Moreover, a number of other Republican *Flavor of the Day* candidates, such as Herman Cain or Michele Bachmann, fell by the wayside as quickly as their meteoric rise had initially transpired, indicating that Perry’s fall from grace was by no means a surprise that could necessarily be attributed to a single issue. The strong views of Tea Party supporters on the matter and the salience “immigration” enjoys among these voters as illustrated in this chapter indicate that any future Republican candidate will find it difficult to move too far to the center on this topic.

1322 Quoted in: Ibid.

1323 Quoted in: Fox News 2011: *TRANSCRIPT: Fox News-Google GOP Debate*. September 22.

1324 Cf. RealClearPolitics 2012: *2012 Republican Presidential Nomination poll averages*. April 25.

## Conclusion

The data in this chapter paints a clear picture of the Tea Party's views on some of the most salient issues of contemporary politics. Whether it is immigration, the size of government, or the matter of health care reform, when compared to the national electorate Tea Partiers stand out for their staunch conservatism *and* their opposition to yielding an inch to the opposition on such matters. The explanation for this can be found in the decades-long conflation of various issue areas – a development inextricably linked to the rise of the Christian Right and its courtship by the GOP as seen in chapter II.2.3 – that has imbued a cultural meaning to virtually any policy realm, cues that have been picked up upon in particular by the most ardent conservatives who form the basis of today's Tea Party and see politics in general through a cultural lens. The data at the same time illustrates though that while their non-Tea Party brethren usually take a more moderate line, this stance nonetheless tends to share the core beliefs that the Tea Party faction within the Republican Party subscribes to as well (a shared affinity that will also be demonstrated in chapter II.3.1.2). These two groups are simply not at war with one another for the ideological heart of twenty-first century Republicanism – where they do differ is how to best to achieve their shared aims. The non-Tea Party wing of the party may not want to fight Obamacare to the bitter end but it nonetheless wants to significantly alter its basic tenets that would have been accepted if not even embraced by the wider Republican Party before it became the *southernized* political organization that it is today.<sup>1325</sup> Controlling the deficit and immigration are also central values that Republicans not part of the movement coalesce around.

What this data along with the recent major legislative battles in Washington, D.C. on immigration reform and the Affordable Care Act – and the position taken by the Republican Party in these debates – also highlights is the simple yet important fact that the Tea Party is far from a fringe movement in terms of its relationship with the GOP. The positions held by the conservative anti-statist base are driving the agenda in the congressional Republican Party, indicating the substantial approval such a Southern worldview elicits both within the Republican electorate and among elected Republican officials. A mere fringe movement would not have been able to orchestrate the 2013 government shutdown nor put the brakes on immigration reform. The problem this presents for the Republican Party is that such an approach to doing politics fails to appeal to many moderate sectors of society as well as young and minority voters. Particularly on immigration, many Republican figures have recognized the writing

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1325 For an overview of past Republican positions on health care cf. Dallek 2010: "The GOP's Dirty Health-Care Secret." *The Daily Beast*, March 24.

on the wall and the obstacle to future majorities these unyielding positions represent. Former Republican House Majority Leader Eric Cantor for example argued in favor of providing the so called “Dreamers” (children who were brought illegally into the country by their parents) with a pathway to citizenship while stopping short of giving their parents the same prospect. Speaking at the conservative American Enterprise Institute in February of 2013, Cantor noted that “[o]ne of the great founding principles of our country was that children would not be punished for the mistakes of their parents,”<sup>1326</sup> making the case “it is time to provide an opportunity for legal residence and citizenship for those who were brought to this country as children and who know no other home.”<sup>1327</sup>

Terry Nelson, Republican strategist and political director of the 2004 re-election campaign of President Bush, goes even a step further, making the case that “[i]mmigration is an existential issue for the party”<sup>1328</sup> that will determine the future fortunes of the GOP unlike any other policy area, pleading that “if we can’t get it right, we’re going to be in trouble for a long, long time.”<sup>1329</sup> Not to be outdone and in a rather dramatic about-face, the Republican National Committee’s chairman Reince Priebus even came out in the summer of 2013 to criticize his own party’s policy preference of *self-deportation* – which was a cornerstone of the party’s 2012 presidential platform that called on illegal aliens to return to their homelands “voluntarily”<sup>1330</sup> – as “horrific.”<sup>1331</sup> The fact that Donald Trump managed to obtain the Republican nomination by heading in the exact opposite direction illustrates just how perilous the path Republican moderates have to chart on immigration is. Case in point – along with a variety of Republican presidential hopefuls in 2016 – Eric Cantor. The Virginia Congressman became the first House Majority leader to be defeated in a primary since the post was created in 1899, losing to a Tea Party backed challenger who had attacked the representative for his supposedly lenient stance on immigration, accusing Cantor of being “the number one Republican supporter of amnesty.”<sup>1332</sup> In light of the warning that Cantor’s defeat and Trump’s success

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1326 Cantor 2013: *Making Life Work: Remarks by Majority Leader Eric Cantor*, February 5, p. 10.

1327 Ibid.

1328 Quoted in: Martin, Haberman 2013.

1329 Quoted in: Ibid.

1330 The 2012 GOP platform, dubbed *We Believe in America*, had this to say on the matter: “We will create humane procedures to encourage illegal aliens to return home voluntarily, while enforcing the law against those who overstay their visas.” Republican Party 2012: *2012 Republican Platform – We Believe in America*, p. 26.

1331 Quoted in: LoGiurato 2013: “GOP CHIEF: Mitt Romney’s ‘Self-Deportation’ Quote Was ‘Horrific.’” *Business Insider*, August 16.

1332 Quoted in: Leahy 2014: “Cantor Primary Challenger David Brat: Anti-Amnesty Mailer ‘Act Of A Desperate Campaign.’” *Breitbart*, May 24.

represent, a significant move to the center on immigration therefore appears rather improbable though.

### 11.3.1.1 Racial conservatism

Just as is the case with many aspects of contemporary Republican policies, attempting to disentangle Tea Party positions on government spending and the influence racial views have on them is a rather challenging task. Similar to the manner in which George Wallace was able to use his broader anti-government populism as a fig leaf for his racially resentful ideology, the Tea Party's racial views can also be hidden under a blanket of ostensibly "economic" conservatism. As will become clear over the coming pages, there can be little doubt though that those very same racial views play a central role in shaping Tea Party policy preferences, particularly those in the economic realm. The inherently strong links between both issue areas and the general linkage of race and non-race related issues in Tea Party discourse are widely recognized, with scholars such as Michael Minkenberg arguing that behind the veneer of an opposition to Obama's tax-and-spend policies lies a social conservative agenda with racist undertones.<sup>1333</sup> In a similar vein Chip Berlet contends that Tea Party supporters "can use the economic argument to mask their anger at politicians who tolerate gay marriage, feminists, abortionists, black Presidents, and the wave of dark-skinned immigrants polluting our nation."<sup>1334</sup> Joseph Lowndes also sees a strong connection between the Tea Party's (outwardly non-racial) anti-statism and their racial views.<sup>1335</sup> As soon as the movement first appeared on the political stage, the nascent Tea Party and its supporters began to depict President Obama as a harbinger of socialism. While many on the right have traditionally argued that this vehement opposition to government spending and likening of government programs to socialism is completely unrelated to race, Lowndes rightfully points out that America's far-right has for a number of decades now depicted liberal policies emanating from the nation's capital as the result of an "unholy alliance of invasive state elites above and criminal, parasitic blacks below" that is determined to fight "against a virtuous middle of hardworking

1333 Cf. Minkenberg 2011: "The Tea Party and American Populism Today: Between Protest, Patriotism and Paranoia." *dms – der moderne staat- Zeitschrift für Public Policy, Recht und Management* 4(2), pp. 283–296, here p. 293.

1334 Berlet 2012a: "Collectivists, Communists, Labor Bosses, and Treason: The Tea Parties as Right-Wing Populist Counter-Subversion Panic." *Critical Sociology* 38(4), pp. 565–587, here p. 567.

1335 Cf. Lowndes 2012, pp. 164–166.

white Americans,<sup>1336</sup> a tradition adopted and employed as a central theme by the Tea Party.

Race and the manner in which it is used by the Tea Party to attack government programs is also one of the most striking examples of the extent to which today's most prominent American right-wing populist movement subscribes to a "Wallaceist" worldview and therefore stands in the political tradition of the white South. As we saw earlier on, when Governor Wallace railed against civil rights and the empowerment of African Americans, he did so not by attacking the general concept of racial equality but by portraying the Democratic Washington elites as socialists seeking to impose their views and values on the common (white) man through legislation enacted by a "soulless state"<sup>1337</sup> that curtailed the freedom of hardworking (white) Americans and, by its very nature, violated traditional American tenets like individualism and the free market. This central theme was employed by the Alabama governor time and again: Speaking in front of a U.S. Senate committee in the summer of 1963, Wallace for example warned that President Kennedy's proposals for civil rights legislation were "part of the drift toward centralized socialist control and away from the free enterprise system"<sup>1338</sup> – it is not difficult to see the similarities in the manner of framing issues between 21<sup>st</sup> century Republican right-wing populists and their intellectual godfather from Alabama. In Wallace's and today's Tea Party narratives, white staunchly conservative Americans – acting on their anti-statist impulses as they push back against liberal government programs primarily beneficial to minorities – are doing nothing less than to uphold America's best and greatest values, in the process forging a link between themselves and the nation's founders (as illustrated by the very name chosen by the Tea Party). In Wallace's arguably most (in)famous speech – his first inaugural address as Governor of Alabama in which he uttered the "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever" line that would come to define him for many – the governor described the defense of his "Great Anglo-Saxon Southland" and its racial separation as a fight against "the tyranny that clanks its chains upon the South," telling his fellow Southerners "that today we sound the drum for freedom as have our generations of forebears before us done, time and again down through history."<sup>1339</sup> Fighting liberals from Washington, D.C. and preferential minority treatment was therefore not only a just cause – it made you *more* American as you were standing in the tradition of those brave patriots who took on their British oppressors in a struggle against a tyrannical, overbearing government.

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1336 Ibid, p. 166.

1337 Wallace 1964.

1338 Quoted in: Carter 2000, p. 157.

1339 For all quotes: Wallace 1963a, pp. 228–229.

Despite the lack of an explicit mention of race, the divisive issue undoubtedly stood at the center of Wallace's ideology and continues to occupy a central role in the minds of many Tea Party supporters as well. As has already been stated, it is therefore always worth remembering that the staunch libertarian positions most Tea Party supporters espouse in relation to government spending in general and welfare spending in particular (as seen in the previous chapter) are usually rooted not in a broader fiscally conservative outlook but rather in the racially conservative views held by so many of them as illustrated over the coming pages. For these racially resentful conservative whites, government spending invariably is a highly racialized topic – just as it was during the era of Wallace – in which government programs only receive their approval if they are seen to be primarily beneficial to whites and not blacks (programs such as Social Security).<sup>1340</sup> At the same time spending for other welfare programs is fought with a rancor seldom seen. Disentangling these matters has become virtually impossible after half a century of continued conflation. Nonetheless the data in this chapter will provide a greater understanding of the motivations behind Tea Party intransigence on the issue of government spending. Additionally, it is also worth remembering that even though we tend to see the biggest overlap between Tea Party supporters and Christian conservatives on social and religious matters, it is often difficult to pinpoint where the Christian Right ends and the Tea Party begins even on the divisive issue of race. White evangelical Protestants themselves frequently display some of the highest levels of racial conservatism while, as already highlighted in chapter II.2.4 (see in particular table II.2.4.c) voicing some of the most vehement opposition to government initiatives that intend to support minorities and establish a level playing field for all.<sup>1341</sup> “Conservative Christianity is associated with less interest in [...] policies to promote racial parity”<sup>1342</sup> is the conclusion Brian McKenzie and Stella Rouse arrived at – a possession among

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1340 For the strong support of racially conservative whites toward Social Security cf. Winter 2006: “Beyond Welfare: Framing and the Racialization of White Opinion on Social Security.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2), pp. 400–420.

1341 For racial conservatism levels of evangelical Protestants vis-à-vis other groups cf. Roemer, Lee, and Van Der Straeten 2007: *Racism, Xenophobia, and Distribution: Multi-Issue Politics in Advanced Democracies*, pp. 86–87. For additional data on the issue preferences related to race and minority politics cf. Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 63, Green 2004, p. 28, or Pew Research Center 2012a: *American Values Survey. Question Database: 40d. We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.* 55 percent of white evangelical Protestants felt in 2012 that too many steps had been taken to establish equal rights compared to just 42 percent among white Catholics and 38 percent among white mainline Protestants. White evangelical Protestants also showed the lowest level of support for the proposition that it was acceptable for blacks and whites to date one another (cf. Pew Research Center 2012a: *American Values Survey. Question Database: 40k. I think it's all right for blacks and whites to date each other.*).

1342 McKenzie, Rouse 2013, p. 224.

religious conservatives of anti-minority and anti-statist sentiments that are as will be seen over the following pages widespread among Tea Partiers as well, quite frequently precisely because of the overlap between the two.

### The undeserving and deserving poor

In order to truly understand the Tea Party's deeply ingrained opposition to certain kinds of government spending, we need to understand the manner in which the movement's adherents approach the policy area in question. The Tea Party burst onto the political stage as a movement seeking to redefine the relationship between the government and its citizens, some of whom had – in the eyes of the Tea Party's rank and file – in recent decades become far too dependent on government handouts, a development facilitated and exploited by the liberal elites that saw an opportunity to expand their own reach by buying off the welfare underclass through the introduction of more and more entitlements – in the process draining the wallets of decent, hard-working, and self-reliant taxpayers. Not infrequently Tea Partiers see a relatively straightforward ethnic and racial separation between the two opposing camps in this struggle. When Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy gained national notoriety in the spring of 2014 as he refused to pay grazing fees to the federal government and right-wing conservatives came to his aid, Bundy openly wondered why minorities were missing among his defenders, asking “[w]here is our colored brother? Where is our Mexican brother? [...] They’re just as much American as we are, and they’re not with us. If they’re not with us, they’re going to be against us.”<sup>1343</sup> Even within the camp of Americans receiving financial support from the government, the movement tends to make a key distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor (or, more broadly speaking, recipients of government money). Core policy positions held by Tea Partiers regarding welfare and the size of the government often revolve around and can be traced back to the strict separation between those who are deemed to deserve certain federal benefits – such as for example Medicare and Social Security for those that have contributed to the system thanks to years of employment – and those who are considered to be undeserving of government help, a position dubbed “libertarianism with benefits”<sup>1344</sup> by historian Ronald P. Formisano. Those undeserving recipients are

1343 Quoted in: Barro 2014: “Cliven Bundy Accidentally Explained What’s Wrong With the Republican Party.” *The Upshot / New York Times*, April 24.

1344 Formisano 2012, p. 87. This principle of supporting libertarian positions as long as one’s own benefits are left untouched is not just found among Tea Party supporters but among elected officials as well. Formisano specifically singles out Rand Paul, elected thanks in part to the Tea Party, as one such elected official. Even though Paul considers Medicare,



usually depicted and considered to be (generally non-white) freeloaders and “moochers”<sup>1345</sup> who are – in the most extreme yet nonetheless frequently cited examples – notoriously dependent on government aid often without having worked a single day in their life.<sup>1346</sup> As Cliven Bundy continued his jeremiad about what was wrong with contemporary America he added that the one “thing I know about the Negro” was that they were spending their days “sitting on the porch” because “they didn’t have nothing to do.”<sup>1347</sup> Instead of working, “they were basically on government subsidy.”<sup>1348</sup> With his less than favorable attitude towards welfare-dependent minorities, the rancher once again perfectly summed up a widespread position among America’s contemporary conservative far-right. It comes as little surprise that such a narrative of those deserving government benefits and those undeserving of them was also employed by George Wallace who – even though having been a staunch conservative on social and racial matters – never really extend his anti-statism to programs that benefitted his own base with the governor in that regard being more of an economically liberal Democrat in the mold of FDR rather than a fiscally conservative Republican.<sup>1349</sup>

This distinction and the attempt to clearly separate those in the deserving camp from those in the undeserving one is an American variation of the notion of “welfare chauvinism” extensively described by Herbert Kitschelt<sup>1350</sup> that has become “a common denominator of all national-populist parties [in Western Europe].”<sup>1351</sup> The similarities observed among populist movements on both sides of the Atlantic when it comes to framing welfare questions has led veteran populism scholar Michael Minkenberg to conclude that the Tea Party is “the American mirror image”<sup>1352</sup> of European adaptations of the populist radical

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Medicaid, and Social Security as “technically” unconstitutional he nonetheless made use of Medicare and Medicaid programs during his time as a doctor while also opposing cuts in Medicare that were set to affect payment to doctors (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 87–88).

1345 This disdain extends even to those that are quite clearly not part of the poor underclass. Conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh for example enjoys referring to President Obama’s wife Michelle as “Mochelle.”

1346 Cf. Williamson, Skocpol, Coggin 2011: “The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism.” *Perspectives on Politics* 9(1), pp. 25–43, here pp. 32–33.

1347 Quoted in: Nagourney 2014: “A Defiant Rancher Savors the Audience That Rallied to His Side.” *New York Times*, April 23.

1348 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

1349 Cf. Horwitz 2013, p. 57 and Lowndes 2008, p. 78.

1350 Cf. Kitschelt 1995: *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*, p. 138. Welfare chauvinism allows right-wing populist parties to simultaneously appeal to more upscale voters as well as the working class by seeking to limit the welfare state to those who are considered to be contributing to it in the first place without completely discarding it.

1351 Papadopoulos 2000: *National-Populism in Western Europe: An Ambivalent Phenomenon*, p. 8.

1352 Minkenberg 2011, p. 284.

right. As is also the case among *Old World* populists, certain government programs are considered worthy of survival. The support white Tea Party members bestow upon a government program like Social Security may initially strike the outside observer as a major contradiction considering the general libertarian outlook of Tea Party members on economic matters and opposition to government spending that is far more pronounced within the Tea Party than it is among its European right-wing counterparts. The reasons behind such a stance become clearer though when the issue of race and the racialization of government programs – an approach that George Wallace excelled at so remarkably – are once again taken into account. Using data from the National Election Studies (NES), an analysis conducted by Nicholas Winter which predates the rise of the Tea Party movement by a few years revealed that racially resentful whites were actually more supportive of Social Security spending than those with lower levels of racial resentment.<sup>1353</sup> Winter sees the reasons behind this finding in the extent to which Social Security has become racialized: Contrary to general welfare benefits – such as food stamps for example – that are associated with the minority underclass, Social Security is perceived, in the words of former Social Security commissioner Robert Ball, as an “earned right”<sup>1354</sup> and as a program for hard-working and self-reliant citizens; characteristics in other words attributed by racially conservative whites in particular to whiteness.<sup>1355</sup> Respondents who would traditionally be opposed to any government entitlement programs therefore make an exception for *white* Social Security benefits because they feel that their fellow industrious white Americans are able to reap the benefits of said program – benefits they deserve. Such distinctions are not necessarily limited to Social Security. Talking about his decision to challenge Republican Senator Susan Collins from Maine in the 2014 GOP primary, right-wing candidate Erick Bennett proclaimed that “[m]y parents raised six children on less than \$900 dollars a month which my Dad received for VA [note: Veteran Affairs] disability benefits and, he never took welfare even though he was a Democrat.”<sup>1356</sup> Bennett quite clearly believes that the benefits his father received were earned and deserved while denigrating “welfare” (which one can assume refers to things like food stamps) in the same breath as something his proud father would have never touched.

Proponents of the Tea Party will most certainly suggest that these views are not based on racial but fiscal and economic conservatism, evidenced by the relative affluence of Tea Party members. The data regarding such a claim paints a

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1353 Cf. Winter 2006, pp. 414–415.

1354 Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 404.

1355 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 405.

1356 Quoted from the candidate’s campaign website, Bennett 2014: *Erick Bennett for U.S. Senate*.

slightly mixed picture. According to the 2010 ANES, 32 percent of Tea Party supporters had an annual income of \$75,000 or more compared to just 27 percent among other Republicans.<sup>1357</sup> Bryan Gervais and Irwin Morris' evaluation of the Tea Party caucus (based on Republican U.S. House representatives from the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress who opted to join the newly established Tea Party caucus in the summer of 2010) also showed that its members hailed from districts that were more economically well-off. A drop in the unemployment rate of two points from nine to seven percent for example nearly doubled the likelihood of the representative joining the Tea Party caucus.<sup>1358</sup> The authors therefore concluded that the anger which has been fueling the movement does not stem from being hit by the late 2000s recession but is instead driven by an opposition to government spending on projects and programs for less well-off areas of the nation.<sup>1359</sup> If we however change some of the variables, the results indicate a slightly more precarious economic state enjoyed by Tea Party supporters. Instead of looking at the official membership of the Tea Party caucus, an analysis drawn up by the Washington Post in 2013 sought to find out what the congressional districts of certain House Republican troublemakers looked like. The focus was placed on a group of 45 Republicans that had defied the GOP leadership on a number of key votes throughout 2013. Ten of those 45 House Republicans had chosen to oppose at least six of the seven bills analyzed<sup>1360</sup> while the remaining 35 voted against the GOP's House leadership at least half of the time.<sup>1361</sup> The districts these 45 Republicans represented appeared to have been hit harder though by the economic malaise of recent years, evidence that some of the arguments about today's anti-statism emanating from the more affluent segments of the population may have to be rethought. The median income of the districts in question was seven percent lower than the national median in 2012 while unemployment stood at an average of ten percent the same year, two percentage points higher than the national average.<sup>1362</sup> In the context of this book it is interesting to note that the Washington Post concludes that "[t]he epicenter of that economic distress lies in

1357 Cf. Abramowitz 2011, p. 22.

1358 Cf. Gervais, Bryan T., and Irwin L. Morris 2012: "Reading the Tea Leaves: Understanding Tea Party Caucus Membership in the US House of Representatives." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(02), pp. 245–250, here p. 248.

1359 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 249.

1360 These votes were (1) the fiscal cliff compromise plan, (2) the vote to elect the speaker, (3) the first "Sandy" relief bill, (4) the debt-limit suspension in late January, (5) the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, (6) the second farm bill and (7) the vote to end the shutdown.

1361 Cf. Cillizza 2013b: "The Fix's complete guide to understanding House Republicans." *Washington Post*, July 9.

1362 Cf. Tankersley 2013: "At the source of the shutdown, the economy falters – and anger at Barack Obama runs high." *Washington Post*, October 29.

the Deep South:”<sup>1363</sup> four of these 45 congressional districts are found in North Georgia while another dozen are located nearby in Alabama, Tennessee, Florida, and the two Carolinas.

Adding additional substance to the notion that today’s right-wing populist uproar does stem from parts of the population who are perhaps less well-off than the general public is data from an extensive CBS News/NY Times poll conducted in 2010. The survey showed that Tea Party supporters (or members of their immediate family) were more likely to be covered by Medicare than the nation as a whole, indicating that some parts of the movement are far from self-sufficient:

**Table II.3.1.1.a:** *Are you, or is any member of your immediate family, covered by Medicare?*<sup>1364</sup>

	Total Respondents	Tea Party Supporters
Yes, self	13 %	16 %
Yes, other	12 %	12 %
Yes, self and other	9 %	16 %
No	66 %	56 %

As the following pages will illustrate, the assertion that Tea Party opposition to welfare spending is primarily based on economic preferences and the strong (non-racist) desire to uphold quintessential American values rather than racial factors becomes rather untenable in light of the views espoused by Tea Party supporters on the matter of race despite what some of the economic data on their own personal wealth may – or may very well not – show. For Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin the conclusion on this matter appears rather clear cut: The contrast made by those on the far-right between the undeserving and deserving poor contains “racial undertones that distinguish it from a simple reiteration of the longstanding American creed [of the American Dream].”<sup>1365</sup>

### Racial resentment and persecuted whites everywhere

As we saw in chapter I.1.1, racial resentment is gauged through four propositions out of which three pertain to the question of work ethic. That racial resentment scores are higher among Tea Party supporters (see table II.3.1.1.b) should not come as much of a surprise then considering the distinction made by them between the deserving and undeserving (read: lazy) poor and the manner in

1363 Ibid.

1364 Cf. CBS News/New York Times 2010b: *The Tea Party Movement: Who they are*, April 5–12, p. 8.

1365 Williamson, Skocpol, Coggin 2011, p. 34.

which both groups are defined along clear racial lines. The views professed most certainly also help explain the Tea Party's worldview pertaining to government spending. While liberals regard the welfare state as a safety net that helps recipients bridge the gap between one job and the next (via unemployment benefits for example), conservatives on the far-right essentially consider such expenditures a waste of money seeing as the beneficiaries appear to have little desire to enter or re-enter the job market. The best solution to alleviating or eradicating unemployment and poverty according to Tea Party whites? "Redistribute my Work-Ethic."<sup>1366</sup>

A variety of data is testament to the high levels of racial conservatism that exist among Tea Party Republicans, often even vis-à-vis their non-Tea Party counterparts within the party. The 2010 ANES provides a detailed breakdown of the data pertaining to racial resentment. On all four propositions Tea Party Republicans were more likely than their non-Tea Party kin to express more racially conservative positions:

**Table II.3.1.1.b:** *Racial resentment among Tea Party Republicans and other Republicans.*<sup>1367</sup>

Racial Attitudes	Tea Party Republicans	Other Republicans
<b>Disagreement with:</b> Blacks are victims of past injustices and discrimination that have made it harder for them to work their way out of poverty.	74 %	54 %
<b>Disagreement with:</b> Blacks have gotten less than they deserve	77 %	58 %
<b>Agreement with:</b> If blacks tried harder, they would be as well off as whites	65 %	42 %
<b>Agreement with:</b> Other minorities have overcome prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.	82 %	65 %

Racial resentment and dislike for President Obama are also quite often some of the strongest predictors for Tea Party support, usually outperforming a number of other key variables such as age, income, education, or party identification.<sup>1368</sup>

1366 "A typical sign" at a Tea Party rally mentioned by Williams, Skocpol, Coggin 2011, p. 33.

1367 Cf. 2010 ANES Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, in: Abramowitz 2011, p. 22.

1368 Cf. Abramowitz 2011, pp. 13 and 23, Nteta, Greenlee 2013: "A Change is Gonna Come:

Putting the relationship into specific numbers, an extensive survey on the movement by the University of Washington found that racial resentment rose by around 25 percent as support for the Tea Party increased from its lowest to its highest value while support for the Tea Party also increased the likelihood of approving of the proposition that it was acceptable to “racially profile someone on account of their race or religion” by approximately 27 percent.<sup>1369</sup> Grouped into different factions according to their level of support for the movement, additional work by the University of Washington also revealed around 42 percent of strong Tea Party supporters to exhibit high racial resentment scores compared to 24 percent among moderates and 14 percent among skeptics of the movement.<sup>1370</sup> The racial resentment of Tea Party supporters can be triggered in an especially effective manner if faced with a situation in which their own views regarding the quintessential American work ethic appear to be violated in a particularly conspicuous manner. A recent survey experiment by Kevin Arceneaux and Stephen P. Nicholson presented respondents with two statements about assistance to the unemployed and support for people who worked hard but could not go to college.<sup>1371</sup> These statements were combined with faces that were either white, brown, or black. Results showed that support for providing assistance to the unemployed dropped by 4 points among Tea Party conservatives when the statement was attributed to a non-white face with no similar divergence found when they were faced with a person that despite working hard could not afford to attend college.<sup>1372</sup> As we have seen time and again, disentangling race from a general anti-government conservatism can be difficult. The authors for example note that while racially resentful views “appear to be broader and deeper”<sup>1373</sup> among Tea Party conservatives than they are among their non-Tea Party conservative counterparts, the general opposition towards all sorts of government assistance to people with financial difficulties shown in

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Generational Membership and White Racial Attitudes in the 21st Century.” *Political Psychology* 34(6), pp. 877–897, here p. 886 and Tope, Pickett, and Chiricos 2015: “Anti-minority attitudes and Tea Party Movement membership.” *Social Science Research* 51, pp. 322–337, here p. 330. The research of Tope et al. for example found that along with political ideology, racial resentment served as the strongest predictor for membership in the Tea Party.

1369 Cf. C. Parker 2010a: “Multi-State Survey of Race & Politics.” *University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race & Sexuality*.

1370 Cf. C. Parker, Barreto 2013, p. 92.

1371 Those statements were: “I can’t find a job and I’ve been having a hard time getting by. The government should give the unemployed a helping hand.” The second statement read: “I worked hard in school, got good grades, and got accepted to college. But I won’t be able to go without financial help. The government should help students go to college who can’t afford it.”

1372 Cf. Arceneaux, Nicholson 2012, p. 707.

1373 *Ibid.*, p. 708.

the survey by conservative Tea Party adherents – which was always higher than the level of opposition found among non-Tea Party conservatives regardless of the statement or the faces behind it – indicates a deeper level of hostility towards an activist government that has to be attributed to factors outside of the racial sphere.<sup>1374</sup>

Additional experiments do indicate though that for many on the (racial) far right “values matter a bit, and racial resentment matters enormously”<sup>1375</sup> to use the conclusion Donald Kinder and Allison Dale-Riddle arrived at regarding their own work on the topic. Not infrequently more potent than general anti-statist sentiments, high levels of racial resentment can therefore undoubtedly play a significant role in influencing or even determining preferences towards public policy, allowing adroit politicians to use this trait as a powerful tool in the electoral and legislative realms as was discussed in chapter I.1.1. An experiment conducted by Howard Lavine and David Perkins specifically sought to prime racial resentment while connecting it to the matter of government aid to homeowners. The two authors asked Tea Party and non-Tea Party respondents about their feelings towards mortgage assistance being extended to struggling homeowners by the government, one of the key issues during the early months of the Obama administration and, as Rick Santelli’s outburst proved, a primary rallying cry of the early Tea Party movement. Respondents were asked to apportion on a scale of one through seven to what extent homeowners were to blame for losing their own homes due to not being able to keep up on their mortgage payments (with one signifying no blame at all for individuals and seven meaning that the homeowner was entirely to blame). At the top of the particular part of the survey that dealt with mortgage assistance, half of respondents saw an image made up of a picture of a black man standing in front of a home next to another picture of a house with a “foreclosure” sign in front of it while for the other half of respondents, a picture of a white man was substituted for the black homeowner. Moreover, half of the sample was told in the introduction to that part of the questionnaire that “many people took out large loans and mortgages during the housing bubble that they couldn’t afford” while the other half was told that quite a few people lost their homes due to losing their jobs or reduced hours as a result of the 2008 economic crisis.<sup>1376</sup>

When presented with an introduction that blamed foreclosure on the bad state of the economy, no discernable racial bias could be found among Tea Party supporters. A gap emerged though when respondents were primed to see the homeowners as having been engaged in reckless behavior. On the afore-

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1374 Cf. *ibid.*

1375 Kinder, Dale-Riddle 2012, p. 177.

1376 Cf. Eric Black 2011: “Are Tea Partiers racists?” *Minnesota Post*, December 8.

mentioned one to seven scale, respondents associated with the Tea Party on average assigned a blame rating of 4.72 when presented with the picture of a black homeowner and 4.16 when shown the picture of the white man. Among non-Tea Party supporters, the difference was a minute 0.08 points (3.92 if shown the black homeowner, 4.0 if the white homeowner was atop the survey).<sup>1377</sup> This distinctive difference between Tea Partiers and their non-Tea Party counterparts even prevailed within the conservative subgroup,<sup>1378</sup> illustrating that, similar to Kinder and Dale-Riddle's findings, racial and not general conservatism appears to be the driving force behind the Tea Party's anti-statism. The survey also revealed that Tea Party supporters who were shown the black homeowner felt 15 percent angrier about the prospect of people receiving government assistance than Tea Party supporters that had to look at the white homeowner,<sup>1379</sup> a response one would expect given the strong ties between racial resentment and the emotional response of anger.<sup>1380</sup> The data by Lavine and Perkins as well as to a lesser extent Arceneaux and Nicholson lends strong credence to the theory that minorities are perceived to be part of the undeserving poor by many within the Tea Party (note that Tea Party supporters not only question black work ethic but the group's intelligence as well<sup>1381</sup>) – with the linkage between blacks and specific policy areas triggering both increased opposition to those policies and higher levels of anger among far-right conservatives. That such a response heightens the inability to find compromise on a variety of key legislative discussions pertaining to government and welfare spending goes without saying.

The tables have been turned

The growing empowerment of blacks undoubtedly hardened the racist sentiments of whites in the most African-American areas of the South, leading to an ever more vehement pushback against civil rights in the era preceding the eventual passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As we also saw in chapter I.1.2, this *white backlash* to the increasingly prominent role played by African Americans

1377 Cf. *ibid.*

1378 Cf. Sides 2011: "Tea Party Racism: Some Experimental Evidence." *The American Prospect*, December 12.

1379 Cf. Eric Black 2011.

1380 See "Racial resentment and its emotional foundation" in chapter I.1.1.

1381 While only 45 percent of white Tea Party supporters felt African Americans were intelligent and 35 percent perceived them to be hard-working, those respective shares stood at 59 and 55 percent among white "true skeptics" of the movement. Cf. C. Parker 2010c: "Multi-State Survey of Race & Politics: Stereotypes about Blacks and Latinos by White Tea Party Approval." *University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race & Sexuality*.



within the Democratic Party may have facilitated Republican growth across the South in subsequent decades.<sup>1382</sup> That the Tea Party along with its racial conservatism has become a major player after a black American managed to obtain the presidency for the first time in the nation's history illustrates the extent to which American politics has failed to enter a "post-racial" era – the more things change, the more they stay the same precisely because the Tea Party shares its ideological roots with those very same areas of the country that V.O. Key, Jr. defined as regions which had "the deepest and most immediate concern about the maintenance of white supremacy."<sup>1383</sup> The election of President Obama – described as "the watershed to another of America's periodic hyperracial political eras"<sup>1384</sup> by Michael Tesler and David Sears – had a dual effect on racially conservative whites. It first of all signaled the culmination of a long-term changing of the guard in America's racial power structure, brought front and center by the fact that whites had now lost the ability to elect their preferred presidential candidates, a blunt reflection of their own declining status in the political sphere.<sup>1385</sup> This realization in particular certainly helped facilitate the birth of the Tea Party as an organization to provide an already preeminent strain of conservatism within the Republican Party with even more clout. Faced with their demise in influence across the wider nation, often racially resentful but by no means politically illiterate or lower class individuals began to see the writing on the wall and decided that the time had come to push back against the steady erosion of their power as many other American far-right movements had done before them.<sup>1386</sup> To be sure, other Democratic presidents like Clinton and Carter

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1382 Cf. Hood III, Kidd, and Morris 2010, p. 377.

1383 Key, Jr. 1949, p. 5.

1384 Tesler, Sears 2010, p. 9.

1385 As Lauren Langman rightfully points out, this process had already been transpiring for a number of decades before the Illinois senator won the presidency, evidence that while Obama may have been the final catalyst for the emergence of the Tea Party, the movement's roots and its ideological foundations date back much further. Langman contends that "[w]hile the economic crisis and subsequent election of Obama may have precipitated the Tea Party, the 'normalcy' of white privilege, patriarchy and puritanical sexuality have been under attack for decades; Tea Party populism can be seen as a rearguard defensive mobilization, a resistance movement against the larger political, economic and cultural factors and social changes of the past few decades that have undermined traditional values and identities [...]" Langman 2012: "Cycles of Contention: The Rise and Fall of the Tea Party." *Critical Sociology* 38(4), pp. 469–494, here p. 478.

1386 This is what Rory McVeigh has coined as the "power devaluation theory." McVeigh sees the combined loss of political, economic, and social status as one of the prime reasons behind the political mobilization of far-right movements that have drawn a substantial amount of their support from the white middle-class such as, historically, the Ku Klux Klan and in the contemporary era the Tea Party. Cf. McVeigh 2014: "What's New about the Tea Party Movement?" In: Van Dyke, Meyer (eds.): *Understanding the Tea Party Movement*, pp. 15–34. For a more comprehensive explanation of the power devaluation theory as it pertains to

had of course also beaten the favored white candidates but only done so by close margins among white voters.<sup>1387</sup> President Obama on the other hand was the first candidate in American history to lose the white vote by double digits and still make it to the White House.<sup>1388</sup> Here was somebody who epitomized foreignness to many on the right, a person that almost half of all Tea Party supporters consider to be a Muslim (compared to just a quarter of the general electorate)<sup>1389</sup> while also expressing far higher levels of doubt about his status as a natural born citizen even when compared to other Republicans or conservatives.<sup>1390</sup> Casting doubt on the president's American credentials is not just limited to the Republican fringe – after all even Mitt Romney made a joke on the campaign trail in 2012 that no one had ever asked to see his birth certificate<sup>1391</sup> – but the Tea Party most certainly takes the race related rhetoric to a higher level, revealing its racial animosity in the process. Speaking at a rally during the 2013 government shutdown that was also attended by former Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin and two of the primary architects behind the shutdown, Senators Ted Cruz and Mike Lee, right-wing activist Larry Klayman claimed that President Obama “bows down to Allah”<sup>1392</sup> while also calling on the president “to put the Quran down [...] get up off his knees and [...] figuratively come out with his hands up.”<sup>1393</sup> That such sentiments are not caused by genuine concerns about the constitutionality of Obama's presidency are made glaringly obvious by

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the Ku Klux Klan cf. McVeigh 1999: “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915–1925.” *Social Forces* 77(4), pp. 1461–1496, in particular pp. 1473 ff.

1387 President Clinton lost the white vote by two points on both occasions while Jimmy Carter lost whites by four points to President Ford in 1976. Cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.

1388 Cf. Brownstein 2012b: “The American Electorate Has Changed, and There's No Turning Back.” *National Journal*, November 8.

1389 Cf. Abramowitz 2013c.

1390 Data assembled by Parker and Barreto revealed that while 52 percent of non-Tea Party conservatives believed the president was a natural born citizen (i. e. that he had been born in the U.S.), this share dropped to just 38 percent among Tea Party conservatives. All in all, Parker and Barreto's analysis demonstrated that Tea Party allegiance decreased the probability of believing President Obama to be a Christian and an American citizen by 29 and 24 percent respectively. Cf. C. Parker, Barreto 2013, pp. 211 and 215. Data from the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study also showed that 51 percent of Tea Party Republicans believed the president had been born in another country. Those shares stood at just 37 percent among non-Tea Party Republicans and 22 percent among the general public. Cf. Bradberry, Jacobson 2014: “The Tea Party and the 2012 presidential election.” *Electoral Studies* XX, pp. 1–9, here p. 3.

1391 Cf. Haake 2012: “Romney in Michigan: ‘No one has ever asked to see my birth certificate.’” *NBC News, First Read*, August 24.

1392 Quoted in: Alman 2013: “Larry Klayman Tells Obama ‘To Put The Quran Down’ At Veterans Rally.” *Huffington Post*, October 13.

1393 Quoted in: *Ibid*.

the movement's support for Ted Cruz. Just like Obama, Cruz has an American mother and a non-American father. Unlike Obama though, the Texas senator was most definitely born outside the United States, in Calgary, Canada. The primary difference between the two – aside from ideological beliefs – appears to be that Cruz's father is not a black Kenyan but a white evangelical Cuban, who himself jumped on the Tea Party bandwagon in 2013 as well, arguing that “if the winds shift” the president “would side with the Muslims”<sup>1394</sup> while expressing the desire “to send [Barack Obama] back to Kenya.”<sup>1395</sup>

At the same time though, the election of a black person with an, in the eyes of the Tea Party, un-American background solidified and confirmed the closely held belief of racially conservative whites in particular that minorities had no justification for non-success anymore. If a black person could after all obtain the highest office in the nation what sort of excuse was there for not getting a regular job aside from possessing a lackluster work ethic?<sup>1396</sup> Polling data attests to the assertion that such positions are particularly widespread among Tea Party supporters. Asked who had a better chance to get ahead in today's American society, 73 percent of Tea Party supporters felt both whites and blacks had the same opportunities compared to just 60 percent among all Americans and 55 percent among non-Tea Party whites. A mere 16 percent of Tea Party members thought whites still had a better chance to get ahead in today's society compared to 36 percent among non-Tea Party whites.<sup>1397</sup>

This equality has by no means come about through the merits of minorities alone though. For many within the Tea Party the government has gone even a step further, turning an equality of opportunities into a society in which the playing field is unjustly tilted in favor of non-whites through the preferential treatment of minorities. White Tea Party supporters are for example one and a half times more likely than whites in general to hold the view that the country has “gone too far in pushing for civil rights.”<sup>1398</sup> A significant degree of agreement in opinion on the matter of the government providing preferential treatment to minorities also exists between Tea Party supporters and white Americans that

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1394 Quoted in: Kludt 2013b: “Ted Cruz's Dad Suggests Obama Is A Muslim.” *Talking Points Memo*, October 1.

1395 Quoted in: Ca. Thompson 2013: “Ted Cruz's Dad: I'd Like To See Obama 'Go Back To Kenya.’” *Talking Points Memo*, October 31.

1396 Increases in support for the general thesis of the *Protestant work ethic* and decreased support for measures to alleviate racial inequality could be noted not just among Tea Party supporters in the wake of President Obama's election. Cf. Kaiser, Drury, Spalding, Cheryan, and O'Brien 2009: “The ironic consequences of Obama's election: Decreased support for social justice.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45, pp. 556–559.

1397 Cf. CBS News, New York Times 2010a, p. 9.

1398 The margin stood at 62.8 to 39.4 percent. Cf. Zeskind 2012: “A Nation Dispossessed: The Tea Party Movement and Race.” *Critical Sociology* 38(4), pp. 495–509, here p. 503.

can be considered part of the broader religious right. While just 37 percent of the general population agreed that the government had paid too much attention to the problems of minorities, 56 percent of white Tea Party supporters and 50 percent of white Christian conservatives expressed this position.<sup>1399</sup>

The Tea Party's position on the evolution of racial opportunities does not end at this point though. While President Obama's election may have heralded a new post-racial era in the eyes of some, to many Tea Party supporters it beckoned the beginning of a new era in which whites had been relegated to a status below that of minorities who were now running the country in the nation's capital. Non-whites (with some help from their white liberal collaborators) were from now on in charge of public policy and they were determined to use their position at the levers of power to their advantage, redistributing wealth and influence from hard-working taxpaying whites to the undeserving poor minority underclass. In that sense the average Tea Party voter indeed represents the twenty-first century mirror image of the "symbolic figure" standing at the center of George Wallace's anti-government populism as depicted by Joseph Lowndes. The figure Wallace always purported to fight for was initially personified by "the white southerner under attack from the federal government" and – as Wallace broadened his electorate – evolved into "the white middle-class male from every region who is pushed around by an invasive federal government, [...] discriminated against by affirmative action, and surrounded by increasing moral degradation."<sup>1400</sup> Few Tea Partiers would object to being described in a similar manner. The basis of this worldview and the resultant pushback against minority empowerment seems to be the interpretation of politics as a zero-sum game that is so integral to the racial threat hypothesis, a theory many of today's Tea Party adherents appear to subscribe to and perfectly summed up by a Republican campaign aide from Alabama in a conversation with James Glaser that predates the Tea Party by over two decades:

*"Nothing against the black folks from around here. They're a genteel people on the whole. But when you bring some folks up, when you try to equalize them, you've got to bring other folks down. And we're tired of being brought down."*<sup>1401</sup>

And being brought down they are, at least in the eyes of the Tea Party *and* white Evangelicals. While 44 percent of all Americans felt discrimination against whites was a major problem in a poll from November of 2010, that share rose to 61 percent among Tea Party supporters and 57 percent among white evangelical Protestants.<sup>1402</sup> Taking it even a step further and asking if discrimination against

1399 Cf. Jones, Cox 2010a, p. 30.

1400 Lowndes 2008, p. 79.

1401 Quoted in: Glaser 1994, p. 23.

1402 Cf. Jones, Cox 2010b: "Old Alignments, Emerging Fault Lines: Religion in the 2010 Elec-

whites had reached the level of discrimination that minorities were faced with, 63 percent of Tea Party supporters and 60 percent of Republicans felt that such a state had been reached while just 46 percent of the general public did so as well with 51 percent instead disagreeing.<sup>1403</sup> Data such as these illustrate the uncanny similarity Tea Party adherents share with earlier incarnations of populist movements as described by Richard Hofstadter. “Systematized delusions of persecution”<sup>1404</sup> are after all part of the clinical definition of paranoia as well as Hofstadter’s political one.

It does not come as much of a surprise that President Obama takes a central role in this supposed crusade against whites. In August of 2013, Maine’s Tea Party governor Paul LePage allegedly accused the president of hating white people,<sup>1405</sup> a common theme in the Tea Party’s criticism of the president that first emerged right after the movement appeared on the political stage and has been an integral part of their opposition to the president and his policies ever since. 25 percent of Tea Party supporters for example accused the president of favoring blacks over whites, a charge made by just 7 percent of non-Tea Party whites.<sup>1406</sup> Some Tea Party supporters take this argument even a step further, making allusions to a modern day slave system in which the white man is at the lower end of the social food chain, subject to persecution at the hands of liberal slave masters. Signs such as “Obama + Marxism = Slavery,”<sup>1407</sup> “Congress = Slave Owner, Taxpayer = Nigger [sic],”<sup>1408</sup> “Obama’s Plan: White Slavery,”<sup>1409</sup> or the usage of holocaust imagery through the claim that “American taxpayers are the Jews for Obama’s ovens”<sup>1410</sup> serve to illustrate this sentiment quite vividly as does the rhetoric by leading conservative talking heads such as Glenn Beck who quite possibly personifies the paranoid qualities of the movement more than anybody else. Speaking at a Tea Party rally in front of the capitol building in Washington, D.C. in June of 2013, Beck warned the congregation of con-

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tion and Beyond. Findings from the 2010 Post-Election American Values Survey.” *Public Religion Research Institute*, November, p. 16. Other data also attests to this. In 2012, 43 percent of white evangelical Protestants also felt that “discrimination against blacks [was] rare today” compared to 35 percent among white mainline Protestants, 34 percent among white Catholics and 26 percent among unaffiliateds. Cf. Pew Research Center 2012a: *American Values Survey. Question Database: 40 m. Discrimination against blacks is rare today.*

1403 Cf. Jones, Cox, Galston, and Dionne, Jr. 2011, p. 9.

1404 Hofstadter 1965, p. 4.

1405 Cf. Walsh 2013a: “GOP racism of 2009: Still alive and well.” *Salon*, August 20.

1406 Cf. CBS News, New York Times 2010a, p. 10.

1407 Quoted in: Zeskind 2012, p. 501.

1408 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

1409 Huffington Post 2011: *10 Most Offensive Tea Party Signs and Extensive Photo Coverage from Tax Day Protests*. May 25.

1410 Cf. Flickr 2009: “The American Taxpayers are the Jews for Obama’s Ovens.” Uploaded by: *Idiot Protesters*, August 20.

servatives that “chains [were] being forged for a new generation of slaves” while calling on Tea Party members to “rise up against the intimidation” of the nation’s new “circus masters”<sup>1411</sup> – rhetoric itself eerily reminiscent of Wallace’s.<sup>1412</sup>

The importance of such rhetoric and its underlying perception of American politics today as a constant battle between different ethnicities in which programs supposedly beneficial to one group in particular inevitably prove harmful to the other main community should not be underestimated and its far-reaching impact on the general state of America’s political system always remembered. A widespread sense of persecution and the feeling that the federal government is hell-bent on redistributing wealth (through for example providing citizens with supposedly free health care) along with a predilection for painting conflict in such visceral and apocalyptic terms as Glenn Beck did above of course fuel the complete opposition many on the far-right have towards compromising with their liberal opponents, a trademark of the Tea Party as we will see in chapter II.3.3.

## Conclusion

The impact of decades of using racial animus to gain the votes of (Southern) white conservatives along with a primary electorate that contained a disproportionate amount of Tea Party supporters could be felt in the 2012 presidential race as well. With the Tea Party having played such a crucial role in the 2010 congressional election, Republican presidential candidates knew that gaining the support of the staunchly conservative wing of the party was going to be pivotal in shoring up the party’s presidential nomination. Contrary to having entered a post-racial era with the election of President Obama, the topic of race, racially charged language, and the Republican Party’s “dark vein of intolerance”<sup>1413</sup> have therefore come back with a vengeance in recent years, with President Obama at its center. On the campaign trail, Romney’s most resilient rival Rick Santorum for example argued that the president wanted to help “black

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1411 Beck 2013.

1412 Speaking about the 1964 civil rights act on July 4<sup>th</sup> of the same year, the Alabama governor also portrayed the federal government as an institution that sought to impose a kind of slavery on white Americans. The act, as Wallace claimed, was going to “enslave our nation” and “force us back into bondage [...] to a tyranny more brutal than that imposed by the British monarchy.” Wallace 1964.

1413 Former Secretary of State Colin Powell accused the Republican Party of harboring such sentiments in an interview on NBC’s Meet the Press in January of 2013. Cf. and quoted in: G. Gibson 2013: “Powell: GOP has ‘a dark vein of intolerance.’” *Politico*, January 13.

people [...] by giving them someone else's money,"<sup>1414</sup> specifically singling out African Americans as beneficiaries of the welfare state, just as so many other Republicans had done before him. Numerous other Republicans have taken the rhetoric to a more personal level, often employing stereotypes that play on the supposedly lackluster work ethic of minorities to depict President Obama as just another "freeloader," fitting in with his African-American compatriots. Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma for example expressed the belief that the President wanted to spread "dependency" on government aid because "it worked so well for him [...] [a]s an African-American male."<sup>1415</sup> John Boehner commented that the president had "never even had a real job,"<sup>1416</sup> while former Republican Senator John Sununu argued the president's subpar first presidential debate performance in 2012 was due to him being "lazy and disengaged,"<sup>1417</sup> sentiments shared by the president of Fox News, Roger Ailes, who claimed in his biography that President Obama had "never worked a day in his life. [...] He's lazy but the media won't report that."<sup>1418</sup> Not to be outdone, Newt Gingrich referred to President Obama as the "food-stamp president,"<sup>1419</sup> with the former House speaker thereby using the tried and tested approach of focusing on a welfare program that has in the minds of whites become synonymous with African Americans more so than any other social policy; just think of Ronald Reagan's use of the infamous welfare queen or the "young buck" buying T-bone steaks with his food stamps, a strategy that has always carried "racial overtones that are none too subtle."<sup>1420</sup>

Even after the primary season had finally come to its overdue conclusion, Mitt Romney continued to link President Obama to welfare with one notable ad accusing the president of presiding over the creation of an entitlement society while dismantling work requirements that had been introduced in the late 1990s, moves that now allowed people to once again stay home and just collect a welfare check every month<sup>1421</sup> – a claim that was seen to "[in]flame] old resentments

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1414 Quoted in: Madison 2012: "Santorum targets blacks in entitlement reform." *CBS News*, January 3.

1415 Quoted in: Walsh 2013b: "The real story of the shutdown: 50 years of GOP race-baiting." *Salon*, October 3.

1416 Quoted in: Sink 2012: "Speaker Boehner: Obama has 'never even had a real job, for God's sake.'" *The Hill*, August 2.

1417 Quoted in: Tau 2012: "Sununu calls Obama lazy, disengaged and incompetent." *Politico*, October 4.

1418 Quoted in: Cooper 2013: "Why Are Conservatives Calling Obama Lazy?" *National Journal*, March 14.

1419 Quoted in: Bjerga, Oldham 2012: "Gingrich Calling Obama 'Food-Stamp President' Draws Critics." *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 25.

1420 Huckfeldt, Kohfeld 1989, p. 107.

1421 Cf. Romney 2012: *Right Choice*. August 7.

about able-bodied adults sitting around collecting public assistance.”<sup>1422</sup> Said advertisement did indeed stand in the tradition of previous incarnations of Republican ads influenced or shaped by the party’s Southern Strategy as it triggered racial resentment. This trait was evidenced by a survey in which half of all respondents saw the ad while the other half did not. Among those who came into contact with the advertisement’s claims, racial resentment became a predictor of the respondents’ position on whether or not they thought Governor Romney’s policies would help or hurt the poor, the middle class, and African Americans – on the other hand almost no relationship between racial resentment and the position respondents took existed among those who failed to see the ad.<sup>1423</sup> The focus on welfare did not end there. During the height of the campaign season in August, five of the Romney camp’s twelve most recent ads were about welfare, more than about health care (4), the economy (1) or the introduction of the freshly chosen running mate Paul Ryan (1).<sup>1424</sup> The defeat in November did not cause the former Massachusetts governor to strike a more conciliatory tone either. In a fitting end to the Republican campaign, Romney asserted his loss at the ballot box was primarily caused by President Obama essentially bribing his core constituencies of younger voters and minorities through providing them with “generous” “gifts”<sup>1425</sup> while also accusing the Democratic Party of employing “the old playbook of giving a lot of stuff”<sup>1426</sup> to groups that the party had wanted to get to the polls, a stance that no doubt once again fed into the old stereotype often used to the GOP’s advantage that minorities are dependent on government handouts and can be bought off by promising they will be able to keep those entitlements under a Democratic administration. As has already been described in the chapter on coded language (I.1.4), Romney’s vice presidential running mate proved to be even more candid and reminiscent of Wallace’s criticism of minorities with a thinly veiled attack on the African-American community’s work ethic. Musing about how to best combat poverty and unemployment in early 2014, Paul Ryan singled out certain segments of the population for their supposed culture of laziness, making the point that any real reform of welfare had to take into account the “tailspin of culture, in our inner cities in particular” where Ryan spotted “men not working and just generations of men not even thinking about working or learning the value and the culture of

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1422 Moorhead 2012.

1423 Cf. Tesler 2012b: “Testing the Racializing Influence of Romney’s Welfare Ad.” *YouGov*, August 20.

1424 Cf. Klein 2012: “Race and the 2012 election.” *Washington Post*, August 27.

1425 Quoted in: A. Parker 2012: “Romney Blames Loss on Obama’s ‘Gifts’ to Minorities and Young Voters.” *New York Times*, November 14.

1426 Quoted in: Reston 2012: “Romney attributes loss to ‘gifts’ Obama gave minorities.” *Los Angeles Times*, November 15.



work.”<sup>1427</sup> These comments are of course eerily similar to the previously mentioned remarks made by Nevada farmer Cliven Bundy who complained about “the Negro” spending his days “sitting on the porch” while being on “government subsidy.”<sup>1428</sup> As we also already saw in chapter I.1.4, there are few more potent triggers of racial resentment among whites than the “inner city” cue.<sup>1429</sup>

Why do even the most prominent Republican candidates revert to the rhetoric of Wallace even at the onset of the twenty-first century? The answer has been made clear by the data in this chapter. Racial resentment along with its core belief of certain ethnicities not sharing the white Anglo-Saxon community’s work ethic are far more widespread among Tea Party supporters than they are in other parts of the electorate so priming it can pay off handsomely in certain electoral environments such as primaries or low turnout elections. The sense of anger and outrage is driven by some of the same sentiments that have traditionally played an integral role in shaping Southern whites’ opinion towards the notion of an activist government in the nation’s capital, namely the belief that any expansion of government assistance has to be rejected not necessarily because it will have a negative impact on the country’s economic well-being but rather because such programs are perceived to inevitably lead to minorities receiving favorable treatment at the expense of whites. The election of the first black president has reignited some of those traditional fears. Fox News’ conservative luminary Bill O’Reilly perfectly put the widespread apprehensions of the right into words on the night of President Obama’s re-election. Asked to present an answer as to why President Obama had managed to overcome the supposedly unfavorable odds and won another four-year term, O’Reilly’s answer was as simple as it was revealing: “50 percent of the voting public [...] want stuff”<sup>1430</sup> – and the president was the one that provided those parts of the electorate with their desired benefits and entitlements. Who exactly were those 50 percent that could be bought off with government money though? While O’Reilly did not come out and explicitly mention African Americans and Hispanics, he left little doubt as to what groups are considered to be the takers in the eyes of America’s right: “[I]t’s a changing country, the demographics are changing. It’s not a traditional America anymore. [...] The white establishment is now the minority.”<sup>1431</sup> Unsurprisingly, similar lamentations that demonstrate the deep-seated fears of an alien takeover are frequently voiced by Tea Party candidates as well. Chris McDaniel, who sought to unseat six-term Mississippi

1427 Quoted in: Volsky 2014.

1428 Quoted in: Nagourney 2014.

1429 Cf. Hurwitz, Peffley 2005 and I. White 2007.

1430 Fox Nation 2012: *Bill O’Reilly: ‘The White Establishment Is Now The Minority.’* November 6.

1431 Ibid.

Senator Thad Cochran in a 2014 primary contest, mourned on the campaign trail that “[m]illions in this country feel like strangers in this land.”<sup>1432</sup> While “[a]n older America [was] passing away” the new, less white America that appears to increasingly possess an appetite for big government offered little appeal to the proud Southerner. “We recoil from that culture. It’s foreign to us. It’s offensive to us,”<sup>1433</sup> is the judgment he bestowed upon twenty-first century America.

Continued high levels of racial conservatism and resentment among the base present Republican candidates with an opportunity while simultaneously endangering the party’s future. Just as Wallace did with his electorate in the 1960s and ’70s, contemporary Republicans know that they can trigger support for their own policies through framing policy debates in a certain racialized context. Equating the Affordable Care Act with welfare while making the case that minority freeloaders are the principal beneficiaries can provide an ample payoff, particularly in a primary setting as we will see in the chapter on Tea Party activism. At the same time though, this kind of rhetoric provides a major impediment to making gains among minority and younger voters, even among whites in younger cohort groups. A closer assessment of racial attitudes among different white age cohorts by Tatishe Nteta and Jill Greenlee showed that young white adults which had come of age during the Obama presidency and his 2008 campaign exhibited far lower levels of racial resentment than previous generations with the authors concluding that “the election of President Obama may have been a transformative historical event for today’s youngest voters.”<sup>1434</sup> If the GOP fails to transform itself it may very well find it increasingly difficult to appeal to a sizeable part of the white electorate as well.

### II.3.1.2 Social and religious conservatism

The deeper we delve into the issue positions of Tea Party supporters and activists, the more difficult it becomes to defend the assertion that the movement is a libertarian one which has picked up Goldwater’s torch and is now holding it high in the twenty-first century. While there can be little doubt that it does espouse some libertarian views on economic matters<sup>1435</sup> (although we have seen that a fair degree of those positions may at least be influenced by racial conservatism) the claim of it standing in the tradition of Barry Goldwater is dispelled when posi-

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1432 Quoted in: Galston 2014: “‘Strangers in This Land’ – the Tea Party’s Lament.” *Brookings Institution*, March 28.

1433 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

1434 Nteta, Greenlee 2013, p. 890.

1435 For a general overview of the Tea Party’s libertarian views cf. David Kirby, Emily Enkins 2012: “Libertarian Roots of the Tea Party.” *Cato Institute Policy Analysis* 705.

tions on some of the key contemporary culture war battles are assessed in more detail. Instead of being “dyed-in-the-wool Goldwaterites”<sup>1436</sup> we see a movement standing in the tradition of the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition, and far from wanting to keep the government at bay it instead calls on it to take a more proactive approach on socio-cultural matters, demanding it legislate morality. A number of scholarly studies serve to illustrate this shared mindset. Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox of the Public Religion Research Institute for example note that, “[o]n nearly all basic demographic characteristics, there are no significant differences between Americans who identify with the Tea Party movement and those who identify with the Christian conservative movement,”<sup>1437</sup> while Cas Mudde aptly arrives at the conclusion that “there is no Tea Party without (extreme) social conservatism.”<sup>1438</sup> Whether it is abortion or gay marriage, there is a significant degree of overlap between the Tea Party and evangelical Protestants, highlighting once again how the Tea Party’s establishment is closely intertwined with the topic of the Republican Party’s *Southernization* and incorporation of Christian conservatives into its fold. Wallace himself also conflated the issue of religion with his vehement anti-statism, depicting government institutions as harbingers of moral depredation. Speaking about the 1964 Civil Rights Act while lambasting the Supreme Court, Wallace pledged that children in Alabama would continue to read the Bible in school even if the Supreme Court said otherwise, accusing the court of “[contributing] to the destruction of the concept of God and the abolition of religion.”<sup>1439</sup> Michael Lienesch’s description of the Christian Right in the early 1980s also matches that of many contemporary Tea Party supporters in particular and other adherents of populism in general. According to Lienesch, the Christian conservatives of the time when he wrote his assessment were “predisposed to status anxiety”<sup>1440</sup> and worried about preserving their own values and standing in a society that was increasingly alien (in this case secular) to them.<sup>1441</sup> Such fears appear to have subsided little over the past three decades among Christian conservatives while also featuring prominently in the mindset of many Tea Party supporters who see their own values under attack by a society and government that have lost their traditional American values and ways.

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1436 Haney López 2014, p. 152.

1437 Jones, Cox 2010a, p. 5.

1438 Mudde 2012: “The end of the Tea Party?” *Extremis Project*, November 8.

1439 Wallace 1964.

1440 Lienesch 1982, p. 411.

1441 Cf. *ibid.*

## Religious conservatism

For the Christian Right, religion and politics have always been joined at the hip with the former driving positions pertaining to the latter. The Tea Party is in many ways no different. One particular survey is able to provide us with insights into what Tea Party supporters believed in before there even was a movement bearing its name. Having interviewed 3,000 Americans in 2006 and re-interviewing many of them five years later allowed the survey's authors to trace the sentiments and traits of those respondents who would go on to become supporters of the Tea Party. The survey's findings revealed that after Republican affiliation, the strongest predictor for Tea Party membership in 2011 was the belief in 2006 that religion should play a prominent role in politics.<sup>1442</sup> In other words, views that form an integral part of religious conservatism – and not libertarianism – were at the heart of the Tea Party from the very beginning of the movement, illustrating its roots within the wider *Evangelicalization* process of the GOP. Such a strong correlation between religion and Tea Party membership is not surprising considering the basic composition of the movement's supporters and activists who are significantly more likely than other Republicans to be evangelical Protestants. 52 percent of Tea Party Republicans described themselves as Born-Again/Evangelical in the 2010 ANES Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, compared to a share of 38 percent among “other Republicans” while 47 percent of the former also subscribed to the belief that the Bible represented the actual word of God compared to just 34 percent among the latter.<sup>1443</sup> Consequently, those Tea Party Republicans are also notably more religious than the remaining Republicans: 40 percent of Republicans that support the Tea Party described themselves as “strongly religious” in the 2012 ANES, compared to shares of 31 and 26 percent among other Republicans and the general public respectively.<sup>1444</sup> Unsurprisingly this leads to a higher frequency of visiting religious services: 50 percent of Tea Party supporters reported to attending church every week or almost every week in a 2010 survey, compared to 35 percent among the general public.<sup>1445</sup>

The role and importance of religion is not confined to the private sphere. Just as is the case with the Christian Right, Tea Partiers place a far bigger emphasis on religion than the wider public does when it comes to making up their minds on a variety of key topics, particularly in the socio-cultural sphere. On same-sex marriage and abortion 53 and 46 percent of Tea Party supporters respectively

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1442 Cf. Campbell, Putnam 2011: “Crashing the Tea Party.” *New York Times*, August 16.

1443 Cf. Abramowitz 2011, p. 22.

1444 Cf. Abramowitz 2013c.

1445 Cf. CBS News, *New York Times* 2010b, p. 9.

answered that religion represented the most important influence on their opinion regarding these matters, compared to 37 and 28 percent among the general public.<sup>1446</sup> As we will see in even more detail later on in this chapter when we have a more in-depth look at the social conservatism of the Tea Party, supporters of the movement are sometimes indistinguishable from what we can broadly call members of the Christian Right with a significant degree of overlap between both factions of the Republican Party. Data from the Public Religion Research Institute for example showed that 57 percent of all Christian Tea Party supporters (who themselves make up 81 percent of the movement) also regarded themselves as part of the Christian conservative movement.<sup>1447</sup> This is also reflected in their attitude towards the fusion of politics and religion, leaving non-religious candidates or public officials with a severe handicap if they wish to gain the support of the Tea Party. Asked to choose what worried them more, public officials who “[did] not pay enough attention to religion” or were “too close to religious leaders,” 50 percent of white Tea Party supporters chose the former along with 59 percent of Christian conservatives; among the general public a mere 34 percent were more worried about the lack of religiosity among public officials.<sup>1448</sup> When it came to the question of whether the United States was a Christian nation, Tea Party supporters were even more likely to acknowledge the country’s Christian roots and their continued existence than their counterparts from the religious right as 55 percent of the former supported the statement that “America has always been and is currently a Christian nation” while just 49 percent of Christian conservatives agreed with this proposition; members of the religious right on the other hand were more likely than Tea Party supporters to believe that while the country had been Christian in the past it had now lost that status.<sup>1449</sup> These strong levels of religiosity are also reflected among public officials that have been elected on a Tea Party ticket. Data from 2011 showed that around 45 percent of the members of the Tea Party caucus in the House of Representatives were evangelical Protestants, compared to a share of 13 percent among other members of the House. Another 30 percent described themselves as mainline Protestants while just 15 percent of the caucus’ members were Catholics compared to a 32 percent share among the remaining House members.<sup>1450</sup> In light of the aforementioned data it does not come as a surprise that scholars like Michael Minkenberg have therefore concluded that today’s Tea Party

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1446 Cf. Clement, Green 2011: “The Tea Party and Religion.” *Pew Research Center*, February 23.

1447 Cf. Jones, Cox 2010a, p. 7.

1448 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 31.

1449 Cf. *ibid.*

1450 Cf. Grant 2011: “Evangelicals and Tea Party Overlap in Congress, Public.” *Christianity Today*, February 25.

members fail to differ substantially in their basic demographic composition from the supporters of the Christian Right a few decades ago.<sup>1451</sup>

The arrow of support does not just point from the Tea Party in the Christian conservative direction though. Among the nation's key demographic groups, white Evangelicals have been shown to express the highest levels of support for the movement with no other group coming even close to the degree of approval the Tea Party elicits among the Christian Right's core constituency:

**Table II.3.1.2.a:** *Support for the Tea Party among different religious groups:*<sup>1452</sup>

Religious denomination	% Agree	% Disagree	% No opinion/ Haven't heard/ Refused
Protestant	31	21	48
<b>White evangelical</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>48</b>
White mainline	30	26	44
Black protestant	7	37	56
Catholic	29	23	48
White non-Hispanic	33	22	45
Jewish	15	49	35
Unaffiliated	15	42	43
Atheist/Agnostic	12	67	20
Nothing particular	16	32	52

While the agreement-disagreement gap shown in table II.3.1.2.a stood at a mere +4 points among white mainline Protestants and +11 points among white non-Hispanic Catholics, it rose to a remarkable +36 points among white evangelical Protestants. The same survey also serves to buttress the thesis that support for the Christian Right is a strong predictor for Tea Party affiliation: 69 percent of respondents who agreed with the Christian conservative movement professed to also agree with the Tea Party while a mere 4 percent disagreed.<sup>1453</sup>

### Religion as the basis for American greatness and prosperity

As addressed already in the chapters on the *culture of non-compromise* and the economic views of white evangelical Protestants, many of today's religious conservatives see a strong correlation between America's mantra of free enter-

1451 Cf. Minkenberg 2011, p. 290.

1452 Cf. Clement, Green 2011.

1453 Cf. *ibid.*

prise and the nation's supposedly divinely ordained exceptionalism that has led it to become the world's premier superpower. Take measures to curtail one and you will inevitably also diminish the other. A fine basis for this ideological outlook that fuses religious with economic conservatism can be found in W. Cleon Skousen's *The 5000 Year Leap*, considered by Glenn Beck to be the most important book he has ever come across in his life<sup>1454</sup> and referred to by one Tea Party supporter as "one of our Bibles."<sup>1455</sup> Skousen hypothesizes that freedom cannot be sustained without religion, that prosperity always reaches its highest level in a free-market economy, and that the United States still possesses a manifest destiny to become a shining example of God's law for the rest of the world.<sup>1456</sup> According to Skousen, these beliefs, including the sense that they were on a divine mission, were shared by the Founding Fathers and they constitute the basis for the 5000 year leap in progress that the United States managed to undergo in a mere 200 years.<sup>1457</sup> Numerous Tea Party groups have adopted Skousen's central thesis wholesale. Members attend seminars on the book and are called upon to teach its lessons of "where the founding Fathers got their ideas for sound government and how a return to these ideas can solve our nation's problems today"<sup>1458</sup> to their fellow citizens. Just as is the case with Christian conservatives, for many within the Tea Party movement religiosity and patriotism are thus inextricably linked to one another. When Glenn Beck sought to provide his listeners and viewers with a blueprint on how to become better Americans, his first piece of advice was for them to "get the 5,000 Year Leap. Over my book or anything else, get the 5,000 Year Leap."<sup>1459</sup> The second task to be fulfilled: "[R]econnect with God if you haven't already [...] and listen to his promptings."<sup>1460</sup> In such an environment then, increased faith invariably makes you a better American.

In his endeavor to tie Christian conservatives to the Republican Party, Ronald Reagan also went to great lengths to make the case that American exceptionalism and the nation's greatness were ultimately rooted in the faith of the Founding Fathers. Speaking at an ecumenical prayer breakfast in August of 1984, he proclaimed that "[t]hose who created our country – The Founding Fathers and

1454 Cf. Berlet 2012b: "Reframing Populist Resentments in the Tea Party Movement." In: Rosenthal, Trost (eds.): *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*, 47–66, here p. 54.

1455 Arizona Tea Party supporter Gloria Ames, quoted in: Skocpol, Williamson 2012: *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, p. 51.

1456 Cf. Berlet 2012b, p. 54.

1457 For a complete list of the 28 principles that the Founding Fathers supposedly subscribed to and form the basis for any prosperous and free society cf. National Center for Constitutional Studies 2014: *The 5000 Year Leap – A Miracle that Changed the World*.

1458 The Whatcom Tea Party 2014: *The 5000 Year Leap*.

1459 Beck 2008: "Are you a Sept. 12th person?" *Glenn Beck*, December 18.

1460 Ibid.

Mothers – understood that there is a divine order which transcends the human order,” pointing out that “James Madison in the Federalist Papers admitted that in the creation of our Republic he perceived the hand of the Almighty.”<sup>1461</sup> Such an intricate connection between the Almighty and America is unsurprisingly also shared by Tea Party candidates like Dean Young whom we already met in the chapter on the *culture of non-compromise*. In the eyes of Young, America’s declaration of independence from Great Britain also constituted a “declaration of dependence on God.”<sup>1462</sup> The subsequent chapter of the Tea Party’s opposition to compromise (II.3.3) will show just how significant this fusion of religion, the free market, individualism and America’s political system is, particularly in light of recent budgetary battles in the nation’s capital. If the central tenets of America’s political order and constitution are traced back to the divine will that inspired and guided the Founding Fathers, finding a compromise with opponents from across the political aisle (or even within your own party) is next to impossible seeing as political adversaries are perceived and portrayed as enemy combatants who not just defy the Founding Fathers and their vision of what America ought to look like but also in essence ignore God’s will if one concludes that divine inspiration provided the Founders with the blueprint for America’s constitutional composition. One will be hard-pressed to find a more intolerable offense for highly religious political activists like the Tea Partiers.

### Social conservatism

The Tea Party may have entered the world of politics as a movement wanting to conduct a crusade against excessive government spending – Amy Kremer, former chairwoman of the Tea Party Express, for example declared that the movement was “not about social issues” but “all about fiscal issues”<sup>1463</sup> instead – but its conservative vigor most certainly has not stopped there. In a day and age in which it has become increasingly difficult to disentangle religious or social conservatism from its economic cousin it should probably come as no surprise that Tea Partiers subscribe to such far-right positions on socio-cultural matters as well, especially in light of the movement’s religious composition that we have just addressed. Deeply conservative positions are not just prominent at the base but are expressed even by candidates standing for some of the highest offices in the land which puts the movement’s position on a particularly prominent pedestal. Nevada’s Sharron Angle – one of the movement’s more high-profile

1461 Reagan 1984, p. 137.

1462 Quoted in: The Economist 2013e: *Right v really right*. November 6.

1463 Quoted in: Rapoport, Dost, Lovell, Stone 2013, p. 9.



candidates who lost to Senate majority leader Harry Reid in the 2010 senate race in the state – for example declared that she would refuse to accept any money from groups supporting homosexuality.<sup>1464</sup> Numerous other prominent politicians associated with the movement – such as former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin or Texas senator Ted Cruz – also express views on cultural matters that can hardly be described as libertarian. This uniquely fervent social conservatism illustrates that when it comes to the question of who can be regarded as the ideological godfather of the movement – the bespectacled Arizona senator or the pugnacious Alabama governor – the far more accurate answer would have to be George Wallace. Scholars tend to agree that the movement would offer a less than appealing home for a libertarian such as Barry Goldwater who reacted to the growing influence of social and religious conservatives within his party with a more fervent rejection of any attempts by the government to legislate morality on divisive issues such as abortion or same-sex marriage. When it comes to Tea Party ideology, Kevin Arceneaux and Stephen P. Nicholson conclude that “the conservative impulse underlying the movement extends beyond fiscal matters into social and racial policies as well.”<sup>1465</sup> Moreover, far from being a minor part of the Tea Party platform, socio-cultural issues represent a central plank. Assessing the 2010 election campaign of Tea Party candidates, Thomas J. Keil and Jacqueline M. Keil for example found that “[o]ne of the strongest areas of commonality among the Tea Party candidates was that they were all overwhelmingly Pro-Life; and they took great pains to present their overall opposition to abortion.”<sup>1466</sup>

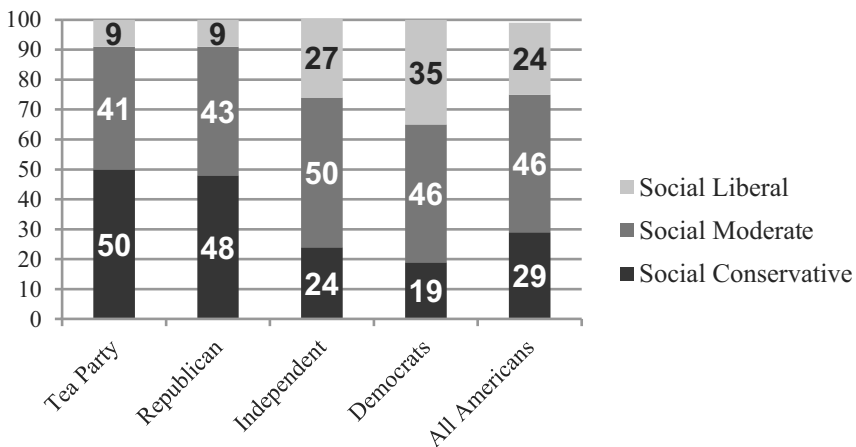
Numerous surveys and polls attest to the social conservatism and distinct lack of (social) libertarianism of the movement. Seeing as they virtually all paint a similar picture, the focus will be on a select few to show the gap between the Tea Party and other Republicans as well as the general electorate which demonstrates the Tea Party’s detrimental impact on the Republican Party’s chances of appealing to a broad segment of the electorate. The following pages will serve to highlight that the Tea Party and its views on social matters are a corollary of the increasing prominence both the South and white evangelical Protestants have managed to obtain within the Republican Party. The gap that is in place between adherents of the far-right populist movement and the general public will therefore provide us with a number of key answers in the quest to find out if the nation has indeed been lost through the conquest of the South and the region’s subsequent colonization of the GOP.

1464 Cf. C. Parker, Barreto 2013, p. 173.

1465 Arceneaux, Nicholson 2012, p. 708.

1466 Keil, Keil 2012: “The Characteristics of the Congressional District and Tea Party Victories in 2010.” *Ethnicity and Race in a Changing World: A Review Journal* 3(1), pp. 43–46, here p. 43.

Contrary to what we would expect to see if the Tea Party was a truly libertarian movement standing in the tradition of Barry Goldwater, its supporters are if anything slightly to the right of the Republican Party in general on socio-cultural matters (see figure II.3.1.2.a). According to a survey by the Public Religion Research Institute, half of Tea Party Republicans can be classified as “social conservatives” on the two central issues of gay marriage and abortion, a share more than twice as high as the one found among Independents and over 20 percentage points higher than the share of the general electorate that holds social conservative positions. The impact decades of growth in (socially conservative) Southern clout within the Republican Party have had is also revealed when GOP members are compared to some of the key other electoral groups. On social matters, the rift in place between the Republican Party and Independents as well as the overall electorate is far bigger than the gap between the Democrats and those two groups, a testament to the (pernicious) influence Christian conservatives and their ideological brethren in the Tea Party wield over the contemporary Republican Party.

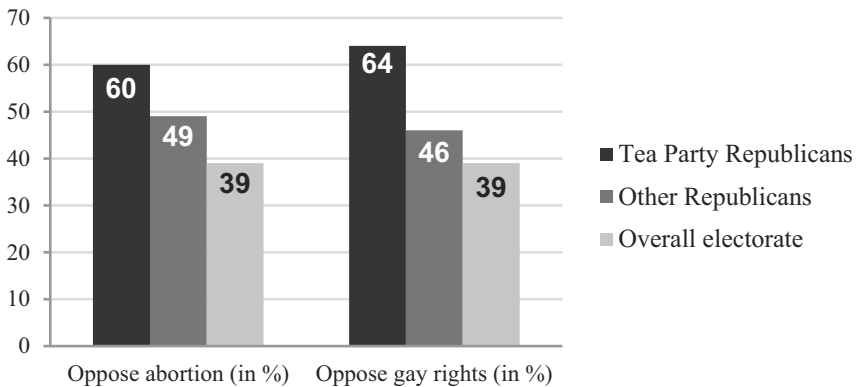


**Figure II.3.1.2.a:** Social orientation of select political groups (in percent). Based on the views of respondents pertaining to the legality of same-sex marriage and abortion.<sup>1467</sup>

Few issues galvanize the Christian conservative base of the GOP like gay marriage (and by extension gay rights in general) and abortion, arguably the two most bitter and enduring battlegrounds of the culture wars that have been waged for close to half a century now. And contrary to the Tea Party playing the role of moving the party in a more libertarian – and therefore more appealing to younger voters – direction, its supporters do the exact opposite as they

<sup>1467</sup> Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera, Dionne Jr., and Galston 2013b, p. 31.

represent the moral conscience of the Republican Party regarding these matters. Both on abortion and gay rights, Tea Party Republicans express significantly higher levels of opposition than non-Tea Party Republicans. According to the 2012 ANES for example, 60 percent of Tea Party Republicans opposed abortion compared to 49 percent of their fellow non-Tea Party Republicans while the gap was even larger on gay rights (see figure II.3.1.2.b). Keeping in mind the GOP's prevailing position on both issues, the data moreover demonstrates that within the Republican universe, the preferences of Tea Party Republicans are far from what one could call extremist – if anything they are much more representative of the wider Republican Party's stance on those policy questions than the views of non-Tea Party Republicans. Such conclusions also highlight that the Tea Party is the consequence of the decades-long embrace of Southern and evangelical positions on socio-cultural issues by its Republican host rather than a nascent fringe movement. Or, to put it slightly differently, the Tea Party is a reflection of these overarching developments more so than a radicalization catalyst.



**Figure II.3.1.2.b:** Views on salient social issues, Tea Party Republicans, other Republicans, and general electorate (in percent).<sup>1468</sup>

A variety of other polls are testament to the social conservatism of the movement on a divisive matter like abortion which ultimately serves to drag the party ever further from the political and ideological center of the nation. 53 percent of Tea Party supporters for example also regarded the Supreme Court ruling of *Roe v. Wade* to be a “bad thing,” a sentiment shared by 45 percent of Republicans in general and 34 percent of the entire public.<sup>1469</sup> Even among conservatives, the Tea Party stands out for its vehement opposition to abortion: 72.6 percent of con-

<sup>1468</sup> Cf. Abramowitz 2013c.

<sup>1469</sup> Cf. CBS News, New York Times 2010a, p. 7.

servative “strong” Tea Party supporters felt abortions should either never be permitted or only allowed in cases of rape, incest or threats to the mother’s health. Among conservatives that did not show such high levels of Tea Party support, a mere 57.9 percent took such a hardline stance.<sup>1470</sup>

On gay rights, a number of other surveys also buttress the findings displayed in figure II.3.1.2.b. According to data from the Pew Research Center for example, support for gay marriage stood at 21 (2012) and 24 percent (2013) among Republican Tea Party supporters while coming in at 37 (2012) and 39 percent (2013) among those Republicans not associated with the Tea Party.<sup>1471</sup> Other gay rights, such as the question of whether or not gays ought to be allowed to serve openly in the military or the ability of same-sex couples to adopt children also received far less support among adherents to the movement<sup>1472</sup> – 71 percent of Tea Party Republicans for example voiced opposition to ending the military policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” which forced gay members of the armed forces to hide their sexuality while just 44 percent of “other Republicans” felt the same way according to data from 2010.<sup>1473</sup> Just as is the case on abortion, members of the Tea Party tend to stand out even within the conservative subgroup. According to Christopher Parker and Matt Barreto’s analysis, 37 percent of non-Tea Party conservatives supported gay marriage compared to a mere 25 percent among their Tea Party counterparts.<sup>1474</sup>

By most accounts today’s Republican Party is a bastion of conservatism on social matters. For many Tea Party supporters though, decades of moving ever further to the right are still regarded as insufficient. On the issue of abortion, a plurality of Tea Partiers (44 percent) felt in 2013 that the Republican Party’s position was “about right” while a sizeable minority of 32 percent nonetheless wanted the GOP to move in an even more conservative direction (see figure II.3.1.2.c). On same-sex marriage, the share of Tea Party supporters who felt the party had to adopt an even more conservative position (35 percent) actually exceeded that of those who thought the party had no need to adjust its stance (32 percent) while also being substantially higher than the share who argued the party’s position was too far to the right (22 percent). Almost four in ten non-Tea Party Republicans on the other hand saw the party’s position on same-sex marriage as too conservative while only half as many argued for a further shift to

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1470 Cf. Arceneaux, Nicholson 2012, p. 704.

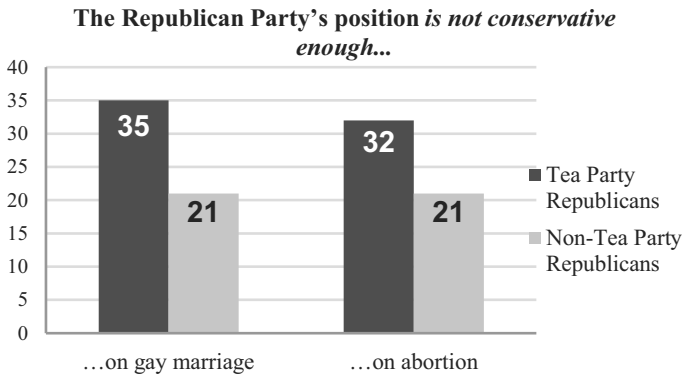
1471 For 2012 data cf. Pew Research Center 2012d: *Two-Thirds of Democrats Now Support Gay Marriage*, July 31, p. 23; for 2013 data cf. Pew Research Center 2013q, p. 14.

1472 For data on adoption by gays cf. C. Parker 2010b: “Multi-State Survey of Race & Politics: Attitudes Toward Blacks, Immigrants, and Gay Rights, by Tea Party Approval.” *University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race & Sexuality*.

1473 Cf. ANES Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, in: Abramowitz 2011, p. 22.

1474 Cf. C. Parker, Barreto 2013, p. 180.

the right, the same percentage who also called for a more conservative position on abortion.<sup>1475</sup>



**Figure II.3.1.2.c:** Attitudes towards the Republican position on gay marriage and abortion among Tea Party and non-Tea Party Republicans.<sup>1476</sup>

The already mentioned extensive survey conducted by the Washington Post and Kaiser Family Foundation in 2012 provides further evidence to bolster the assertion that today's Tea Party supporters more than anything else represent a twenty-first century reincarnation of the Christian Right of yesteryear. Grouped by the pollsters into a variety of different categories, the data shows (Republican) adherents of the Tea Party to be as conservative if not even more conservative than so called Republican "Religious Values Voters" when being confronted with a number of questions pertaining to one's socio-cultural stance (see table II.3.1.2.b). On both abortion and gay marriage, Tea Party Republicans actually expressed a more socially conservative position than their Christian conservative brethren within the GOP while moral values and abortion also played a marginally more important role in the electoral decision making process of the former.

1475 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013k, p. 6.

1476 Cf. *ibid.*

**Table II.3.1.2.b:** *Views on salient socio-cultural questions among different electoral groups:*<sup>1477</sup>

Question	Tea Party Movement	Religious Values Voters	Independents	All Adults
Do you think abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases or illegal in all cases? / NET ILLEGAL	88 %	76 %	39 %	42 %
It is important for organized religious groups to stand up for their beliefs in politics / AGREE	84 %	82 %	38 %	42 %
The government should take special steps to protect America's religious heritage / AGREE	70 %	80 %	36 %	40 %
Would you rather see religious and spiritual values have more influence in politics and public life than they do now, less influence, or about the same influence as they do now? / MORE INFLUENCE	74 %	75 %	26 %	30 %

<sup>1477</sup> For all data cf. Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation 2012.

*((Continued))*

Question	Tea Party Movement	Religious Values Voters	Independents	All Adults
The world is always changing and we should adjust our morals and values to those changes / AGREE	6 %	20 %	47 %	47 %
Americans are too tolerant and accepting of behaviors that in the past were considered immoral or wrong / AGREE	90 %	92 %	57 %	61 %
OTHER than the economy and jobs what will be the most important issue in your choice for president? / Answered "Moral Values" + "Abortion"	14 % (9 % + 5 %)	11 % (9 % + 2 %)	4 % (3 % + 1 %)	4 % (3 % + 1 %)
Do you think it should be LEGAL or ILLEGAL for gay and lesbian couples to get married? / ILLEGAL	94 %	84 %	39 %	42 %

The emergence of the movement and its social conservatism may very well have had a prominent impact on American politics beyond the issue of curtailing deficits. As already noted, the last few years have seen a marked rise in anti-abortion legislation at the state level, a development that has coincided with the establishment of the Tea Party indicating that the Christian Right's renewed success on the matter can perhaps in part be attributed to the activism and organizational capabilities of Tea Party supporters as well as the shared positions the two groups hold in these policy areas. It is most certainly interesting to note that outside of the South some of the states – such as the perhaps more

unusual suspects of Michigan, New Hampshire, or Wisconsin – in which the Christian Right is considered to exert a “high influence” on the local GOP state branches also often have a Republican state party that is strongly associated with the Tea Party.<sup>1478</sup>

## Conclusion

The social and religious conservatism that are a central tenet of the Tea Party and its members highlight that the group is well and truly the legitimate heir to the Christian Right. The *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party have led to the development of a remarkably conservative movement that – while being at the ideological heart of the party rather than representing an extremist fringe – is increasingly out of step with the positions of the American public on a variety of salient social issues. The Tea Party’s hidebound ideology on gay marriage and abortion in particular along with the movement’s high levels of activism create an ever larger rift between the GOP and the broader electorate – a development unlikely to reverse in the foreseeable future. As we will see when the demographic future of the U.S. is assessed in closer detail, younger voters are after all notably to the left of the country at large on social issues. The Tea Party thus puts its Republican home at odds with a substantial number of today’s and many of tomorrow’s voters. This central problem is perfectly summed up by right-wing populism scholar Cas Mudde who, as already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, concluded that “there is no Tea Party without (extreme) social conservatism.” Quite importantly Mudde adds that “there is no GOP national majority with (extreme) social conservatism,”<sup>1479</sup> buttressing the assertion that the Tea Party’s decidedly non-libertarian positions on central socio-cultural issues exacerbate the position the national GOP finds itself in. This has not gone unnoticed within the Republican Party. A scathing report commissioned by the Republican National Committee and released in the wake of the 2012 electoral defeat on the state of the GOP arrived at the conclusion that “we do need to make sure young people do not see the Party as totally intolerant of alternative points of view,” adding that policy questions surrounding gay rights and abortion represent “a gateway [for many younger voters] into whether the Party is a place they want to be.”<sup>1480</sup> On its part, the Tea Party undoubtedly represents a prime reason for the increasing per-

1478 For states with high influence of Christian Right cf. Wilcox, Robinson 2011, p. 105. The governors in all three states are commonly considered to be part of the Tea Party as well, although to varying degrees.

1479 Mudde 2012.

1480 Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, McCall 2013, p. 8.



ception among younger voters in particular of the GOP as being “totally intolerant” as both the movement’s base as well as politicians associated with it have come to represent the Republican Party’s quasi-official position on socio-cultural matters.

### II.3.2 Activism

As we have now seen over the previous pages, the Tea Party undoubtedly is a child of the Republican Party’s *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization*. Far from being an extremist fringe movement, it represents the GOP’s conservative core. If we assume for a moment that in order to forge (presidential) majorities in future years the Republican Party has to tone down its vehement anti-statism and social conservatism, the party’s elected officials would somehow have to navigate around this nonetheless distinctive conservatism of the movement. A new Republican image, fashioned to win over young voters and minorities would require the establishment of a cadre of centrist Republicans that win elections by appealing to more moderate parts of the Republican base. This is far from an easy endeavor though. On top of representing a significant faction of the Republican Party (usually around a third to half of all Republicans depending on the survey and its definition of Tea Party membership), Tea Partiers are moreover some of the most politically engaged Republicans with their level of activism quite possibly providing the movement’s adherents with the most important tool they possess in their arsenal to influence the GOP’s future path. Any candidate wishing to stand for public office on the Republican side has to inevitably make some concessions to the Tea Party and the views its supporters espouse before these candidates can move on to the general election. In today’s Republican Party, the Tea Party resembles something akin to the description Nicol C. Rae bestowed upon the Southern members of the Republican House Conference after the 1994 elections:<sup>1481</sup> they are the party’s conservative conscience, ensuring conservative voting records by Republican members of Congress through the movement’s staunch conservatism coupled with its incredibly high levels of activism.

Numerous studies and surveys attest to the movement’s activism. The data depicted in table II.3.2.a – compiled in 2010 – for example shows that Tea Party Republicans were more than twice as likely as other Republicans to have contacted a public official, donated money to a campaign, attended a rally, or displayed a sign or bumper sticker.

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1481 Cf. Rae 2001, pp. 135 and 139.

**Table II.3.2.a:** *Political activities of Republican Tea Party supporters and other Republicans.*<sup>1482</sup>

Activity	Tea Party supporters	Other Republicans
Registered to vote	92 %	75 %
Contacted public official	44 %	20 %
Given money to campaign	22 %	9 %
Attended rally/meeting	24 %	7 %
Displayed sign/bumper sticker	25 %	11 %

This sort of activism was also on display during the 2013 government shutdown. While only 13 percent of all adults and 11 percent on non-Tea Party Republicans answered that they had contacted a public official or signed a petition to express their opinion about the shutdown, that share doubled to 24 percent among Tea Party Republicans, making them by far the most active group in the dataset.<sup>1483</sup> Along with the strong conservatism and lack of willingness to compromise (see subsequent chapter II.3.3) this of course has the effect of presenting Republican public officials with a somewhat distorted picture of what members of their own party actually want.

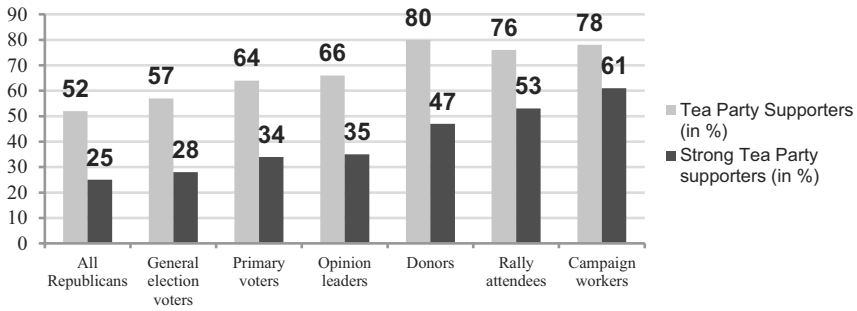
Data from the 2012 ANES (see figure II.3.2.a) shows the disproportionate weight Tea Party supporters have within the Republican Party even in a presidential election year with a relatively high turnout; in off-year elections or the midterms Tea Party supporters may wield even more influence as Alan Abramowitz rightfully points out.<sup>1484</sup> While Tea Party supporters made up 52 percent of all Republicans and Republican leaning independents, their share was notably higher in other key areas. They for example made up close to two thirds of the party's primary electorate and opinion leaders, that is to say people who attempt to convince friends, relatives, or co-workers to vote Republican.<sup>1485</sup> The last two characteristics illustrated in figure II.3.2.a in particular highlight just how politically engaged Tea Party supporters are. Even though "strong" Tea Party supporters made up a mere quarter of all Republican identifiers, they comprised over half of all Republican rally attendees and three fifths of all GOP campaign workers, making them a valuable asset most Republican candidates would love to have in their corner.

1482 Cf. 2010 ANES Evaluations of Government and Society Survey, in: Abramowitz 2011, p. 24.

1483 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013o, p. 6.

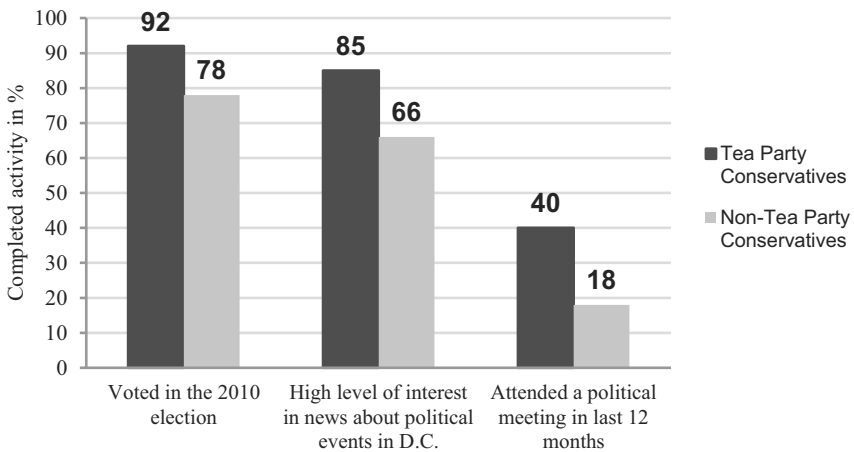
1484 Cf. Abramowitz 2013c.

1485 Cf. *ibid.*



**Figure II.3.2.a:** *Tea Party supporters/strong Tea Party supporters and their share of selected groups of the Republican Party.*<sup>1486</sup>

As is the case on issue preferences, we once again also see differences within the conservative subgroup (see figure II.3.2.b), illustrating the Tea Party’s unique blend of conservatism *and* activism that has made it such a potent force in American politics. 92 percent of Tea Party conservatives for example reported to have voted in the 2010 midterm elections, compared to 78 percent of non-Tea Party conservatives. More than twice as many Tea Party conservatives as non-Tea Party conservatives also declared that they had visited a political meeting over the past 12 months in Parker and Barreto’s analysis.



**Figure II.3.2.b:** *Political interest and participation by Tea Party support.*<sup>1487</sup>

While some studies come up with numbers that are slightly different to the ones depicted in Figure II.3.2.a – according to a 2013 survey by the Pew Research

1486 Cf. 2012 ANES, in: Ibid.

1487 Cf. C. Parker, Barreto 2013, p. 234.

Center 49 percent of all Republican primary voters were Tea Party supporters while this latter group only made up 37 percent of all Republicans and Republican leaners<sup>1488</sup> – they all paint a similar picture. When it comes to choosing Republican candidates, the Tea Party has an inordinate amount of influence even if it is not able to select its preferred candidate. The 2012 presidential primaries most certainly are a testament to this disproportionate weight even though the arguably most moderate viable candidate in Mitt Romney managed to eventually come out on top – a favorable outcome for the centrist faction of the GOP that was most certainly also aided by the lack of a clear Tea Party opponent that the movement could coalesce around. A closer look at some of the Republican primaries of 2012 (see table II.3.2.b) visibly demonstrates the clout Tea Party supporters had in these contests (particularly in the South), with their weight particularly striking if one takes into consideration that on Election Day 2012 only 21 percent of the electorate supported the Tea Party according to CNN's presidential exit poll.<sup>1489</sup>

**Table II.3.2.b:** *Support for Tea Party in 2012 Republican primaries and caucuses until the suspension of Rick Santorum's campaign on April 10. Net support total may differ from percentages of strong and somewhat columns due to rounding:*<sup>1490</sup>

Primary	Strongly support Tea Party	Somewhat support Tea Party	Net support for Tea Party
Iowa	34 %	30 %	64 %
New Hampshire	22 %	29 %	51 %
South Carolina	33 %	30 %	64 %
Florida	35 %	30 %	65 %
Nevada	43 %	31 %	75 %
Arizona	31 %	30 %	60 %
Michigan	28 %	24 %	52 %
Georgia	41 %	29 %	69 %
Massachusetts	19 %	27 %	46 %
Ohio	29 %	30 %	59 %
Tennessee	32 %	29 %	62 %
Oklahoma	38 %	30 %	68 %
Virginia	30 %	29 %	59 %
Alabama	36 %	27 %	62 %
Mississippi	37 %	29 %	66 %
Illinois	30 %	26 %	56 %
Louisiana	49 %	25 %	74 %

1488 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013k, p. 4.

1489 Cf. CNN 2012l.

1490 All data cf. CNN 2012a: *2012 Primaries and caucuses results*. Exit polls were not conducted for states not included in list.

((Continued))

Primary	Strongly support Tea Party	Somewhat support Tea Party	Net support for Tea Party
Maryland	35 %	27 %	63 %
Wisconsin	33 %	23 %	56 %

As arguably the most moderate candidate, Romney tended to do far worse among Tea Party supporters than he did among those who were either neutral or opposed to the movement. The electoral draw between the former Massachusetts governor and Rick Santorum in the primary season's first contest in Iowa can largely be attributed to Romney's weak showing among strong (30 to 14 percent in favor of Santorum) and somewhat strong (27 to 24 percent in favor of Santorum) supporters of the Tea Party. At the other end of the spectrum, Romney managed to win the "somewhat opposed" subgroup in Iowa by a considerable margin of 48 to 11 percent over Santorum.<sup>1491</sup> In Florida – one of the two Southern states Romney won before Rick Santorum suspended his campaign in early April – the only subgroup Romney lost in the Tea Party exit poll sample<sup>1492</sup> were those who "strongly supported" the movement (45 to 33 percent in favor of Newt Gingrich with this group of voters comprising 35 percent of the Sunshine State's primary electorate).<sup>1493</sup> Even in his home state of Michigan, Romney also lost the strong Tea Party vote to Rick Santorum by a margin of 45 to 37 percent, once again the only group in the Tea Party section that he had to concede.<sup>1494</sup> Tennessee serves to perfectly illustrate the problems the establishment candidate Romney faced among Tea Party supporters and the role their size and political preferences played in prolonging the 2012 primary season:

**Table II.3.2.c:** *Tennessee Republican primary 2012. Support for candidates by Tea Party support:*<sup>1495</sup>

Opinion of Tea Party Movement	Romney	Santorum
Strongly Support (32 %)	21 %	40 %
Somewhat Support (29 %)	29 %	37 %
Neutral (25 %)	28 %	39 %
Somewhat Oppose (4 %)	50 %	28 %
Strongly Oppose (6 %)	34 %	29 %

1491 Cf. CNN 2012c.

1492 Strongly Support / Somewhat Support / Neutral / Somewhat Oppose / Strongly Oppose.

1493 Cf. CNN 2012f: *Florida Exit/Entrance Polls*, January 31.

1494 Cf. CNN 2012h: *Michigan Exit/Entrance Polls*, February 28.

1495 Cf. CNN 2012i.

In such an environment it appears that candidates eyeing a future presidential run who move to the center do so at their own peril. As already pointed out in the chapter on Tea Party views regarding immigration, Senator Marco Rubio (who played an integral role in drawing up a bipartisan bill on comprehensive immigration reform) saw a stunning nosedive in the polls throughout 2013<sup>1496</sup> leading to a reversal of his views towards the bill and the general topic of immigration reform.<sup>1497</sup> Such U-turns most certainly demonstrate the impact the Republican base's views and its activism have on candidates and their policy preferences. Scholarly analysis does attest to the – sometimes unique – influence Tea Party activism has on the actions of legislators, particularly on the salient issue of government spending. Assessing key pieces of legislation such as the Continuing Resolution passed on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to avert a government shutdown and the raising of the debt ceiling in August the same year, an analysis of the congressional roll call votes in question by Michael Bailey, Jonathan Mummolo, and Hans Noel showed that increases in Tea Party activism in a representative's home district also increased the likelihood of a member voting in line with the Tea Party's stance on both legislative issues with similar independent variables – such as the favorability of the Tea Party in a given representative's district or the endorsement received by the Tea Party organization "FreedomWorks" – not exerting the same kind of impact and influence.<sup>1498</sup>

## Conclusion

What verdict should we arrive at then regarding Tea Party activism? The emergence of the movement has most certainly provided staunch conservatives – that had already been a part of the Republican fold beforehand – with an organizational network that has allowed them to play a more influential role within the GOP in recent years. Just as is the case regarding so many other matters surrounding the Tea Party, the repercussions of this development have been a mixed blessing. The fusion of the movement's rabid conservatism and its high levels of activism can most certainly be used to the Republican Party's advantage, particularly in low turnout elections where some of the more Democratic parts of the electorate – namely younger voters and minorities – tend to stay home in larger numbers. That the Tea Party's first "official" participation in a nationwide election in 2010 led to the then largest Republican U.S.

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1496 Cf. Edsall 2013a and Huffpost Pollster 2013.

1497 Cf. Sarlin 2013.

1498 Cf. Bailey, Mummolo, Noel 2012: "Tea Party Influence: A Story of Activists and Elites." *American Politics Research* 40(5), pp. 769–804, here pp. 788–790.

House majority since the late 1940s and GOP gains in state legislatures that even outpaced those obtained during the 1994 Republican landslide<sup>1499</sup> most certainly attests to the positive impact the organization does possess (although a variety of other factors undoubtedly also tilted the playing field in the GOP's favor that year<sup>1500</sup>). At the same time though, a number of winnable races, in the Senate in particular, were arguably lost due to Tea Party backed candidates defeating more moderate Republican opponents in the primaries in both 2010 and 2012.<sup>1501</sup> There is some evidence to buttress the assertion that the movement's activism and its hidebound ideology in a number of issue areas can have quite devastating consequences for the Republican Party as well, particularly in a moderate political environment with tight primary races. Using data from primary elections and roll call votes from the U.S. House between 1980 and 2010, Andrew Hall shows that nominating an extremist candidate over a more moderate one in an extremely close "coin-flip" primary causes a twelve percentage point drop in the party's subsequent vote share and a 38 to 46 percent decrease in its probability of winning the general election.<sup>1502</sup> This obviously has severely negative consequences for Republican voters who wish to see conservative legislation enacted upon in Washington, D.C. Actual data shows that a competitive district's average DW-Nominate score moves to the left by 0.30 to 0.55 points if an extremist Republican primary candidate goes on to win the nomination.<sup>1503</sup> The ironic consequence of Tea Party success in the primaries leading to the eventual representation of the district by a liberal candidate is not present in safer conservative districts though where extremist candidates have a good chance of not only winning the primary but also the subsequent general election and then going on to more accurately represent the partisan ideological positions of the primary crowd in the House of Representatives than a more moderate Republican candidate would do.<sup>1504</sup> With congressional districts having become more

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1499 Cf. Jacobs 2010: "Devastation: GOP Picks Up 680 State Leg. Seats." *National Journal*, November 4. After the 2010 elections, the GOP held 3,941 seats in state legislatures across the country, the most since 1928 when they managed to cross the 4,000 mark. Cf. Storey 2010: "GOP Makes Historic State Legislative Gains in 2010." *Rasmussen Reports*, December 10.

1500 According to RealClearPolitics' composite of presidential approval ratings, President Obama had a net disapproval rating of 3.8 percentage points on the day of the 2010 midterms (November 2). In other words, substantial losses could have been expected even without the Tea Party's organizational muscle. Cf. RealClearPolitics 2014: *President Obama Job Approval*. October 29.

1501 At least five races – Colorado, Delaware, and Nevada in 2010 and Indiana and Missouri in 2012 – are usually considered to be in that category.

1502 Cf. A. Hall 2013: *What Happens When Extremists Win Primaries?* November 19, p. 9.

1503 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

1504 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 16.

partisan and far less competitive in recent years,<sup>1505</sup> the movement's prospects for future electoral success beyond the primaries and continued influence on the House GOP Conference therefore look rather promising. As a result, we can most likely expect the remaining more moderate Republicans to respond by moving further away from the political center as well in an effort to increase their chances of warding off conservative challengers and opponents.

### II.3.3 Views on compromise

*"I don't think what Washington needs is more compromise, I think what Washington needs is more common sense and more principle."*<sup>1506</sup>  
 Senator Ted Cruz, January 2013

Addressing the 1964 Republican national convention, Barry Goldwater uttered a line that would be relevant to American politics to this day when he reminded the delegates that had just selected him as their presidential candidate that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice" while "moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."<sup>1507</sup> Half a century later, as highlighted by the words of Ted Cruz above, those very same values have become a central pillar of how the contemporary American right conducts political business. This attitude of putting ideological extremism in the defense of dearly held values on a pedestal is particularly widespread among the more orthodox representatives of this political faction. "The members of this movement do not accept the logic of compromise, no matter how sweet the terms,"<sup>1508</sup> is how New York Times veteran journalist and commentator David Brooks for example described the Tea Party. One will be hard pressed to find a more fitting and succinct summary of the basic positions of Tea Partiers who epitomize the *culture of non-compromise* more so than virtually any other current or recent political movement – aside from the Christian Right of course. Its vehement opposition to compromise is rooted in a black and white approach towards politics and political conflicts that it shares with many previous incarnations of right-wing movements and serves to render them almost indistinguishable from those very same organizations. The manner of achieving one's own political goals in an environment overrun by enemies has also remained largely unchanged. As Richard Hofstadter already observed half a century ago, those who subscribe to the "paranoid style" of seeing the world

1505 Cf. Wasserman 2013a.

1506 Quoted in: Peck 2013: "Tea Party Senator: 'I Don't Think What Washington Needs Is More Compromise.'" *ThinkProgress*, January 6.

1507 Quoted in: Kazin 2013: "A Kind Word for Ted Cruz: America Was Built on Extremism." *The New Republic*, October 29.

1508 Brooks 2011: "The Mother of All No-Brainers." *New York Times*, July 4.



around them feel that to defeat a political enemy one needs to employ “not the usual methods of political give-and-take, but an all-out crusade.”<sup>1509</sup> His observation that “the paranoid tendency is aroused by a confrontation of opposed interests which are [...] totally irreconcilable and thus by nature not susceptible to the normal political processes of bargain and compromise”<sup>1510</sup> also appears to be as appropriate today as it was when penned during the early 1960s. In this crusade, Tea Party supporters see themselves as the guardians and last line of defense of the traditional American – read: White Anglo-Saxon Protestant – values of individualism, religiosity, and a fierce distrust towards the government; they are in the words of Hofstadter “manning the barricades of civilization.”<sup>1511</sup> “We must stop them now for they are many and they are blind or ignorant or complicit to the threat we face and we are few,”<sup>1512</sup> is how one Tea Party supporter described his position in this battle during the 2013 government shutdown. These adherents to anti-statist right-wing populism consider themselves to be part of a select few and are, to once again use Hofstadter’s words, “member[s] of the avant-garde who [are] capable of perceiving [a] conspiracy before it is fully obvious to an as yet unaroused public.”<sup>1513</sup> The answer to the question of whether someone who perceives a vast conspiracy intended to destroy everything one holds dear can still reach across the political aisle and find a compromise acceptable to both sides should be obvious to anyone.

The solutions therefore provided in this clash of cultures and battle for the heart and soul of the nation are straightforward, some might call them simple, and uncompromising because the Tea Party perceives today’s political disputes to be a struggle between good and evil, framing conflicts in the nation’s capitals and town halls as grandiose yet grim zero-sum showdowns in much of the same manner as George Wallace did when he described the 1964 Civil Rights Act as a “law that is going to destroy individual freedom and liberty in this country” and “enslave our nation.”<sup>1514</sup> Just as the Christian Right has forged an ingenious ideological philosophy that has fused economic with moral conservatism, Tea Party supporters see both issue areas as part of a larger interconnected conflict that requires them to pick up the mantle from America’s independence fighters, as indicated quite vividly by the movement’s most basic feature, its name. For these new populist soldiers (as illustrated in chapter II.3.1.2) the greatness of

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1509 Hofstadter 1965, p. 29.

1510 Ibid., p. 39.

1511 Ibid., pp. 29–30.

1512 Quoted in: Judis 2013b.

1513 Hofstadter 1965, p. 30–31.

1514 Wallace 1964.

America is traced back to the Founding Fathers and their “divinely inspired”<sup>1515</sup> quest to establish a nation in the new world free from government meddling with right-wing populists thus in the process establishing a direct link between America’s political system in its original form – at least as romanticized by the movement – and God’s will that guided the Founding Fathers. For Tea Party supporters the quintessential American values of individualism and an unwavering support for the free market appear under attack by liberal legislators in Washington, D.C. and across the land – legislators who represent a party that is now winning elections thanks to the support it receives from minorities at the ballot box. In the eyes of many on today’s right fringe, the Founders would undoubtedly shake their heads at socialized medicine and an activist government while chastising the nation for having strayed from a righteous religious path. Just as is the case when political opponents are regarded as part of a vast liberal conspiracy, framing issues in such a manner will obviously have devastating consequences for compromise and the governing of the nation that invariably depends on fashioning them. Any attempts to disassemble or weaken the free-market and the country’s individualist foundations that have been bestowed upon the American people by the Founders (and by extension God) through policies like supposedly free and socialized health care for all are, in the eyes of Tea Partiers, tantamount to literal heresy as is a willingness to compromise on these issues.

What we therefore have to recognize if we wish to better understand where the movement is headed and what sort of impact it will have on the Republican Party’s ability to forge future majorities is that the Tea Party’s steadfastness and opposition to compromise are not mere tactical ploys to achieve their means, a stance that could hypothetically be abandoned once a favorable deal has been obtained or altered if it is shown to not deliver the desired results. The uncompromising views that culminated in the 2013 government shutdown are not part of a simple game of brinkmanship; instead they represent the deep-seated belief that one is fighting for the future of the nation against an enemy willing to discard of everything that has made America exceptional and great.

Talking about the fiscal cliff negotiations in late 2012 and early 2013, Tea Party Express Chairwoman Amy Kremer flat out stated that she “hate[d] the word compromise.”<sup>1516</sup> This attitude is most certainly not limited to the upper echelons of the movement and it is a trait that puts them – and by extension the Republican Party – at odds with large swathes of the American public. A Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation survey from the summer of 2012

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1515 Keil and Keil 2012 point out in their analysis of the websites of Tea Party candidates that this was a frequently expressed opinion (p. 43).

1516 Quoted in: Rapoport, Dost, Lovell, Stone 2013, p. 32.

found 73 percent of Tea Party Republicans felt it was more important for the party to stick to its positions rather than cooperate with their Democratic opponents with just 54 percent of all Republicans preferring the same kind of hardline stance,<sup>1517</sup> mirroring a 2011 poll from Gallup which concluded, after assessing the views of various political subgroups, that “Tea Party supporters stand out as the sole group that shows a clear preference for sticking to beliefs rather than compromising.”<sup>1518</sup> This attitude is, unsurprisingly, even more pervasive among some of the more committed Tea Partiers. A survey of 12,000 FreedomWorks members revealed that almost two thirds either agreed (33.3 percent) or agreed strongly (31.9 percent) with the statement that “when we feel strongly about political issues, we should not be willing to compromise with our political opponents.”<sup>1519</sup> Subsequent follow up work conducted around 18 months later (in the spring of 2013) showed that those very same FreedomWorks members had become even more reluctant to compromise as 46 percent (instead of the earlier 32 percent) now strongly agreed with proposition. Disagreement of any degree on the other hand had almost halved from 16 to 9 percent.<sup>1520</sup>

One would have a rather difficult time attempting to depict the contemporary Republican Party as the party of compromise, something that has not gone unnoticed across the wider electorate as a Gallup poll from March of 2013 revealed the GOP’s lack of willingness to compromise to be the single largest complaint Americans levied against the party.<sup>1521</sup> Yet, a mere three months later when Republicans themselves were asked about their elected officials and the level of cooperation they had displayed in dealings with their Democratic opposites, 53 percent of Tea Party Republicans felt their representatives had compromised too much with just 22 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans feeling the same way. At the other end of the spectrum just 12 percent Republicans affiliated with the Tea Party called for more compromise compared to 39 percent among non-Tea Party Republicans.<sup>1522</sup> This rift also became evident during the 2013 shutdown showdown. During the negotiations to avert a closure of the federal government, 71 percent of Tea Party Republicans demanded that their representatives stand by their principles even if this entailed a shutdown; among non-Tea Party Republicans that share was virtually halved as just 38 percent took the same hardline position with a majority of 54 percent instead arguing that compromises ought to be made even if this meant a budget they

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1517 Cf. Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation 2012.

1518 Newport 2011b: “Americans Again Call for Compromise in Washington.” *Gallup*, September 26.

1519 Cf. Rapoport, Dost, Lovell, Stone 2013, p. 32.

1520 Cf. Rapoport, Dost 2013, p. 15.

1521 Cf. Saad 2013.

1522 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013k, p. 7.

disagreed with would be passed. This was an approach roughly in line with the preferences of the general electorate and Independents where 57 and 52 percent respectively wanted a compromise to be forged in order to avoid a government shutdown.<sup>1523</sup> Little to no changes could be seen in this dynamic even after the shutdown had come to a conclusion and most of the polling evidence showed that the GOP's resolute and inflexible approach had if anything backfired. Asked if their party should compromise to finally agree on a comprehensive budget – which congressional Republicans eventually did in December of 2013 – close to two thirds (64 percent) of Tea Party Republicans wanted the GOP to stick to its positions while just 31 percent argued for a less rigid stance in these negotiations. Among non-Tea Party Republicans on the other hand the shares were essentially reversed as 60 percent argued for more compromise while a third (33 percent) wanted to maintain an unyielding attitude.<sup>1524</sup>

Any Republican leader wanting to adopt a more conciliatory approach in such an environment treads on dangerous and potentially lethal ground, something former Speaker John Boehner had to find out the hard way as growing discontent among conservative Republicans eventually cost him his job. The first half of 2013 appeared to herald the end of the Hastert Rule and Tea Party Republicans did not respond well to this at all. The approval rating of the GOP congressional leadership among Tea Party Republicans took a nosedive from 42 percent in early February of 2013 to 27 percent seven months later. Among non-Tea Party Republicans though a contrasting pattern could be seen as a more bipartisan course correlated with an increase (albeit minor) in approval of three percent, rising from 39 to 42 percent.<sup>1525</sup> The subsequent course correction to the right by both John Boehner and House Majority leader Eric Cantor during the negotiations to keep the government open did pay off, but only did so among Tea Party Republicans where 64 percent approved of their handling of the shutdown crisis in early October of 2013 while only 27 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans voiced such support with 61 percent instead disapproving.<sup>1526</sup>

Hand in hand with an objection to compromise goes a Tea Party predilection for ideologically purist candidates that undoubtedly have a far lower likelihood of conniving with the political opposition – a character trait shared with Southern Republican activists (particularly those who are members of the re-

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1523 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013n: *Blame for Both Sides as Possible Government Shutdown Approaches*, September 23, p. 2.

1524 Cf. King, Jr. 2013: "Poll: Growing Number of Republicans Dislike GOP." *Wall Street Journal*, November 1.

1525 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013m: *Tea Party Increasingly Unhappy with GOP Leadership*, September 11, p. 1.

1526 Cf. Doherty 2013: "John Boehner's dilemma – in a chart." *Pew Research Center*, October 11.

ligious right),<sup>1527</sup> once again providing us with additional evidence of the strong overlap between Dixie, the Christian Right, and the Tea Party. As we already touched upon earlier, this often has a noticeable effect on Republican chances of winning elections and majorities in Congress, particularly in the Senate thanks to the extremely activist nature of many Tea Partiers. Possible losses or the failure to control the Senate do not appear to faze many on the anti-statist right though. For many within the Tea Party, electoral majorities quite frequently take a backseat to political purity, a trait deemed to be of the utmost importance in any politician. A small yet determined group of hardened conservatives is sometimes even seen as a more propitious strategy for safeguarding conservative values. In the words of the Madison Project, a right-wing organization that actively intervenes in Republican primaries on behalf of staunch conservative candidates, “[i]t does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen to set brush fires in people’s minds,”<sup>1528</sup> a quote misattributed to Samuel Adams. Former South Carolina Senator and current president of the Heritage Foundation Jim DeMint summed up his views on the matter like this: “I would rather have 30 Republicans in the Senate who really believe in principles of limited government, free markets, free people, than to have 60 that don’t have a set of beliefs.”<sup>1529</sup> Such sentiments are shared by large parts of the right-wing’s base as well. When the aforementioned FreedomWorks members were asked if they preferred a candidate who had a better chance of winning but disagreed with them on a number of key issues or a candidate who was trailing his or her Democratic opponent by a substantial margin but with whom they agreed on a number of important issues, respondents chose the candidate that shared their positions by a 3-to-1 margin.<sup>1530</sup> These kamikaze preferences have exasperated many even within the right-wing of the conservative movement. The National Review, hardly known as being a mouthpiece for RINOs, complained in the wake of the 2013 shutdown that the Tea Party and its representatives in Congress who devised the shutdown strategy that would eventually prove to backfire “[take] more satisfaction in a complete loss on supposed principle than in a partial victory.”<sup>1531</sup> Whether such objections will cause a rethink within the movement remains highly doubtful, especially in light of the reasons behind Tea Party objections as illustrated throughout the previous chapters. More moderate Republicans who stand a better chance of winning general elections are after all regarded as little more than collaborators in an un-

1527 Cf. Prysby 2004, pp. 136–140. See also chapters II.1.5 and II.2.3.

1528 Quoted used in: Madison Project 2014: *Madison Performance Index, Hall of Fame*.

1529 Quoted in: Theriault 2013: *The Gingrich Senators: The Roots of Partisan Warfare in Congress*, p. 156.

1530 Cf. Rapoport, Dost 2013, p. 16.

1531 Ponnuru, Lowry 2013: “Against Despair.” *National Review*, October 28.

American endeavor to expand the scope and size of government and as such receive similar – if not sometimes even stronger – disdain as those whose big government agenda they supposedly further through striking compromises and agreements. Legislative defeats and a backlash among moderate Republicans may, if anything, convince Tea Party activists that the conspiracy they are faced with is, as a matter of fact, so vast that it requires additional measures to purge the ranks of the party of its RINOs, ultimately hardening the resolve of anti-statist elements on the radical right. Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander, who won a third term in 2014 after fending off one of the weaker Tea Party challenges, is one of those collaborators on the right who sometimes appear to enrage Tea Partiers more so than dyed-in-the-wool liberals, with the scorn displayed against him by the movement providing us with insights into its mindset. In the run up to the Tennessee Republican primary, a number of Tea Party organizations singled out the senator for his lack of adherence to anti-government orthodoxy<sup>1532</sup> making the case in a letter addressed to Alexander that “our great nation can no longer afford compromise and bipartisanship, two traits for which you have become famous.”<sup>1533</sup> As David Brooks’ comment did at the beginning of this chapter, this sentence sums up the movement’s basic attitude towards compromise and cooperation in the bluntest yet nonetheless most precise manner possible.

## Conclusion

Time and again the point has been made over the past few chapters that the Tea Party is here to stay because it has been in the making for decades. We can draw the same kind of conclusion regarding its views on compromise that are rooted in the deeply-held belief one is fighting for the America of the Founding Fathers against a political foe doing its utmost to destroy this city upon a hill, as the noose appears to tighten ever further with each electoral and legislative disappointment. With political disputes framed in an over-the-top manner as

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1532 Senator Alexander’s conservative credentials are admittedly less than stellar. According to the Club for Growth’s 2012 Congressional Scorecard, Alexander was ranked in 39th place in the Senate, ahead of just seven other Republicans. Heritage Action’s similar ranking paints an equally moderate picture with the Tennessee senator possessing a score of 40 percent on their congressional scorecard, far below the Republican Senate average of 67 percent (accessed on September 3, 2013; cf. Club for Growth 2013b: *2012 Congressional Scorecard: Senate* and Heritage Action for America 2013: *Scorecard*). The 2012 National Journal’s Vote Rating also had him in 39th place in the Senate, making him the least conservative Southern Republican in that chamber (cf. National Journal 2013b).

1533 Quoted in: Clines 2013: “Tea Party to Lamar Alexander: Stop Compromising.” *New York Times*, August 15.

Wallace did while simultaneously adopting the Christian Right's unrelenting and unyielding fervor and displaying it not just on social but also fiscal issues, the Tea Party is not merely the rightful heir to both but also represents a major impediment in the Republican Party's attempts of changing its image among the American public as a political organization overly concerned with ideological purity and unwilling to participate in the necessary give-and-take of politics that plays such an integral role in ensuring the smooth running of government. Moreover, the ultimate failure to stop landmark liberal legislation like Obama-care and the increasing perceived powerlessness of the white Tea Party electorate in a nation that is becoming less white may also serve to actually harden the resolve of the far-right. As Richard Hofstadter observed half a century ago, a "demand for unqualified victories leads to the formation of hopelessly demanding and unrealistic goals"<sup>1534</sup> – failure to obtain these victories and goals only "constantly heightens the paranoid's frustration."<sup>1535</sup>

### II.3.4 Asset or burden?

The Tea Party could not have emerged without Goldwater's decision to "go hunting where the ducks are" or Reagan's strategy of courting both the Christian Right and Wallace-inclined voters during the 1980s. It is therefore a product of the Republican Party's *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* as adherents to the movement fight the government in a manner reminiscent of George Wallace, employing the late governor's trademark racially charged anti-statism while also bemoaning the death of Christian values. The Tea Party serves to uniquely illustrate many of the repercussions of the Republican Party's *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* as well. As such it therefore mirrors the janus-like nature of the two processes, namely that it is simultaneously an asset and a burden for the GOP. Tea Partiers are a determined group of voters that will take care of their own *get-out-the-vote* effort without requiring any sort of party prodding or support. Particularly in low turnout elections, this band of conservatives can deliver decisive votes to Republican candidates. Although it may not automatically meet a few days ahead of each election like so many of the Christian Right's members do, the emergence of what we refer to as the Tea Party has provided staunch conservatives with an organizational structure that has augmented their clout within the party not dissimilar to what groups like the *Moral Majority* and the *Christian Coalition* have done in the past and continue to do to this very day for Christian conservatives. The disproportionate number of Tea

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1534 Hofstadter 1965, p. 31.

1535 Ibid.

Party supporters among Republican primary participants also ensures the protection and survival of Wallaceist views and ideas. Those very same views and ideas stand in stark contrast with the preferences of the wider American public though, particularly those groups of minorities and today's young adults that are set to play an increasingly important role in future elections.<sup>1536</sup> As America becomes less and less white, racially conservative sentiments that are so widespread among Tea Partiers as well as their rabid anti-statism represent a major impediment to significant Republican gains among minority voters. Through the movement's deep-rooted connection to Christian conservatism it also damages the GOP's brand among an increasingly secular young electorate which finds little appeal in a political message rooted in right-wing evangelical Protestantism.<sup>1537</sup>

Recent elections also point towards the Tea Party not infrequently harming Republican chances of controlling the levers of power in Washington, D.C. and other parts of the country. One of the best recent examples can probably be found in Virginia for a variety of reasons. In 2013, the state's Republican candidate Ken Cuccinelli perfectly represented the Tea Party agenda – in the words of the chairman of the state's Tea Party Patriots branch, Cuccinelli “was a tea party person before there was a tea party.”<sup>1538</sup> Vehemently opposed to Obama-care, Cuccinelli actually sued the federal government over the health care reform legislation while also calling homosexual acts “intrinsically wrong”<sup>1539</sup> and telling the state's public colleges that they could not legally ban discrimination against gays.<sup>1540</sup> Cuccinelli's candidacy itself was a product of his Tea Party supporters enforcing a change in the nominating rules of the state's Republican Party. Instead of potential candidates running against one another in a primary, the party's 2013 gubernatorial candidates were chosen by a one day convention, a setting that favored the grassroots activists' favorites and drove the more moderate Republican Lieutenant-Governor Bill Bolling to drop out of the race.<sup>1541</sup> The Tea Party's influence and long shadow over the race would not stop there though as the government shutdown it orchestrated would play a key role in the final month of the gubernatorial race. The course of action turned out to be extremely unpopular in Virginia, home to a sizeable number of federal gov-

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1536 See chapters II.4.2 and II.4.5.

1537 See chapter II.4.6.

1538 Jamie Radtke quoted in: Helderman 2010: “Cuccinelli sues federal government to stop health-care reform law.” *Washington Post*, March 24.

1539 Quoted in: Stoeffel 2013: “Would-Be VA Governor Ken Cuccinelli Wants to Outlaw Oral and Anal Sex.” *New York*, June 28.

1540 Cf. Martin 2012: “Virginia embodies GOP's woes.” *Politico*, December 26.

1541 Cf. Pershing, Vozzella, Haines 2012: “Bill Bolling decides not to seek GOP nomination for VA governor.” *Washington Post*, November 28.



ernment employees, as polling showed that Virginians opposed the closure by a margin of two-to-one.<sup>1542</sup> Additional data also indicates that Cuccinelli's Democratic opponent Terry McAuliffe significantly widened his lead during the month of October when the shutdown transpired. The day the shutdown began, October 1<sup>st</sup>, McAuliffe's lead in the polls averaged 4.6 points. Four weeks later this margin had more than doubled to 9.6 points.<sup>1543</sup> In the end, the race turned out to be significantly tighter though as Ken Cuccinelli only lost by 2.5 points. One cannot help but wonder if the closure of the government provided McAuliffe with the necessary cushion to limp across the finish line successfully.

The 2013 elections in Virginia ultimately then provided the Republican and Tea Parties with a rather negative picture, especially considering the electoral environment these contests took place in. The odds for a Republican win in the state appeared to be relatively high, given historic trends. Terry McAuliffe's election marked the first time since 1973 that the winner of Virginia's gubernatorial election and the sitting president hailed from the same party.<sup>1544</sup> Tom Davis, who represented the *Old Dominion* as a Republican for seven terms in the U.S. House, even went as far as to argue that the election "should have been a slam dunk. [...] All we needed was a mammal up there."<sup>1545</sup> Can we therefore blame the Tea Party for Cuccinelli's defeat? Exit poll data most certainly seems to suggest that the candidate's deep conservatism did not go over too well with a significant part of the electorate that did not support the views and values of the Tea Party. Among the 42 percent of Virginians who opposed the Tea Party, Terry McAuliffe won by a remarkable 75 percentage points over Ken Cuccinelli.<sup>1546</sup> It appears then that the latter's strong ties to the movement ultimately tainted his electoral chances even in an off-year election where the Tea Party's impact is higher than in "regular" election years that draw more traditionally Democratic voters, such as minorities and young adults, to the polls.

A similar picture of the Tea Party's role in helping and hurting the GOP can be seen at the congressional level, a trait also illustrated by the 2013 government shutdown. As previously mentioned, in five senate races during the 2010 and 2012 election cycles, Tea Party/right-wing challengers defeated their more

1542 Cf. Burns 2013b: "POLITICO poll: Government shutdown backlash boosts Terry McAuliffe." *Politico*, October 7.

1543 Cf. RealClearPolitics 2013: *Virginia Gov: Cuccinelli vs. McAuliffe vs. Sarvis*. November 5.

1544 Mills E. Godwin, Jr. won in 1973 while running as a Republican – he had previously held the same office as a Democrat – with Richard Nixon in the White House. For a list of recent Virginia governors cf. National Governors Association 2013: *Virginia: Past Governors Bios*.

1545 Quoted in: Kraushaar 2013b: "Ken Cuccinelli's Problems Are a Symptom of the GOP's Woes." *National Journal*, October 30.

1546 McAuliffe won 84 percent of these voters compared to Cuccinelli's nine percent share. Cf. CNN 2013b: *2013 Exit Polls: Virginia Governor*, November 5, p. 3.

moderate (and arguably more likely to win against an eventual Democratic competitor) Republican opponents in the primary races only to then go on and lose winnable races in the subsequent general election.<sup>1547</sup> Had those five seats been added to the Republican total in the senate, the party would have held 51 seats in the upper chamber in the summer and fall of 2013 after the death of Democratic senator Frank Lautenberg and Chris Christie's decision to replace him with the state's Republican attorney general Jeffrey Chiesa. A majority in both chambers ahead of the government shutdown would probably have allowed the Republican Party to put more pressure on President Obama in its attempts to starve his health care reform of funding.<sup>1548</sup> In addition to this it would have presented a far more viable path for the preservation of the chamber's current Republican majority. In 2016, Republicans are looking at the same problem Democrats encountered two years earlier as a number of GOP Senators are running for re-election in Democratic or Democratic-leaning states.<sup>1549</sup> Should the Democrats retain the presidency in 2016, Republicans can only afford to lose three seats.

Despite those shortcomings, there are some facts to support the assertion that the Tea Party has been able to deliver on central ideological policy matters close to the heart of the average white Southerner, indicating that even as Republicans find it harder to gain presidential majorities they are still able to obtain significant legislative victories thanks to a movement that can trace its lineage to the South. Data from 2013 for example showed that the reduction of the federal deficit since 2010 had been faster than in any other three-year period since the demobilization after World War II as Republicans have continued to pursue an ever more vehement anti-statist agenda.<sup>1550</sup> On this primary battleground of government spending, the ideological transformation of the GOP along with the subsequent emergence of the Tea Party have forced even their Democratic opponents to shy away from large spending proposals. The Democratic Continuing Resolution passed by the senate in September of 2013 to keep the government

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1547 The five races usually mentioned are Colorado, Delaware, and Nevada in 2010 as well as Indiana and Missouri in 2012.

1548 As John Judis (2013a): "The Last Days of the GOP." *The New Republic*, October 10) rightfully mentions, the Tea Party also helped elect a number of Senators such as Pat Toomey, Marco Rubio, Rand Paul, Ted Cruz, or Jeff Flake. One can certainly make the case though that moderate Republicans would have had a similarly promising shot at winning those races as well (particularly in deeply Republican places like Kentucky, Texas, and Arizona).

1549 Seven Republican Senate seats from states that were won by Barack Obama twice are on the 2016 schedule. Those states are: Florida, Illinois, Iowa, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Excluding Florida, Democrats have won roughly 90 percent of all presidential elections in those six states since 1992 (32 out of 36).

1550 Cf. Coy 2013: "The Tea Party's Pyrrhic Victory." *Bloomberg Businessweek*, October 17.

funded for a temporary period set aside discretionary funds at an annualized total of \$986 billion, a decrease of 17 percent compared to the 2010 numbers when the party controlled both houses of Congress.<sup>1551</sup> As a matter of fact, this aforementioned Continuing Resolution passed by a Democratic-controlled chamber allowed for federal spending that was five percent lower than the 2014 discretionary funding levels envisioned by the Republican poster boy for fiscal frugality, Paul Ryan, in his 2011 budget plan that was far from being considered a moderate proposal at the time.<sup>1552</sup> Even the more comprehensive Democratic senate budget proposal plan for the 2014 fiscal year from April of 2013 that was not passed at the last minute with the intent of placating conservatives in the House and therefore represents a more accurate depiction of Democratic spending wishes contained discretionary spending levels only marginally higher than the original Ryan budget,<sup>1553</sup> highlighting the extent to which Tea Party brinkmanship has yielded success on the budgetary front. After the 2013 federal shutdown, journalist Peter Coy thus recognized “[t]he true believers [of the Tea Party] are winning their battles in Washington,”<sup>1554</sup> even though to the casual observer the two-week closure had delivered few tangible results for the anti-statist wing of the GOP.

The battle for the soul of the GOP rages on...or does it?

During every primary season, political commentators and analysts are now keeping track of the score between Republican “establishment” candidates and their Tea Party opponents. Every time a Tea Party challenger fails to unseat a Republican incumbent, headlines are churned out about the decline of the Tea Party and the simultaneous rise of Republican moderates. It is a narrative that makes for interesting reading while allowing journalists to add increased importance to every primary race. As the preceding chapters have shown though, the Tea Party is not some outside force that emerged in the wake of the *Great Recession* to take over the GOP. Its ideological traits are rooted in the history of the Republican Party of the past half a century. Its ideological views are not part of the Republican fringe but instead located at its core due to the GOP’s steady *Southernization*. The vote to end the 2013 Tea Party-orchestrated government shutdown in the U.S. House, not infrequently portrayed as the eventual victory of

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1551 2010 funding levels in 2014 dollars. Cf. Linden, Stein 2013: “The Senate Continuing Resolution Is Already a Compromise.” *Center for American Progress*, September 30, corrected December 11.

1552 Cf. *ibid.*

1553 Cf. *ibid.*

1554 Coy 2013.

the centrist Republican faction over its Tea Party counterpart, highlights this quite well: A mere 38 percent of all Republicans in that chamber supported reopening the government. The vehement anti-statism put on display in the weeks leading up to and during the shutdown is therefore hardly confined to the radical right.

What sort of final verdict can we arrive at then? While Michael Minkenberg considers the Tea Party to “[mark] the merger of the Christian Right with Southern conservatism,”<sup>1555</sup> I would slightly rephrase this conclusion. The Tea Party embodies the fusion of Wallaceist racially charged anti-government populism with the immovable, purity-obsessed and uncompromising ideological underpinnings of the Christian Right while also sharing many of the positions of the latter on a variety of socio-cultural issues, dispelling the myth that it is at its heart a libertarian movement. The Tea Party therefore perfectly epitomizes and symbolizes the *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* the wider Republican Party has undergone over the past fifty-odd years. Precisely because the trajectory the GOP has been on since the days of Goldwater and the subsequent embrace of George Wallace’s agenda of racially resentful anti-statist populism by Ronald Reagan has led it towards spawning the Tea Party, one can therefore only conclude that the movement – or perhaps more precisely its mindset – is here to stay. Even if the Tea Party label was to lose its meaning entirely (it has indeed received hardly a mention in the 2016 presidential race), the ideology standing behind it will not fade away because it has been an integral part of the Republican Party for a number of decades now – or to phrase it somewhat differently, the Tea Party is the *consequence* of the Republican Party’s steady rightward shift rather than its *cause*.

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1555 Minkenberg 2011, p. 283. Of course one can contend that the Christian Right already accurately represented conservative Southern views on a variety of topics, both within the social as well as the economic realm.



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## II.4 The Changing Face of America and what it means for the GOP

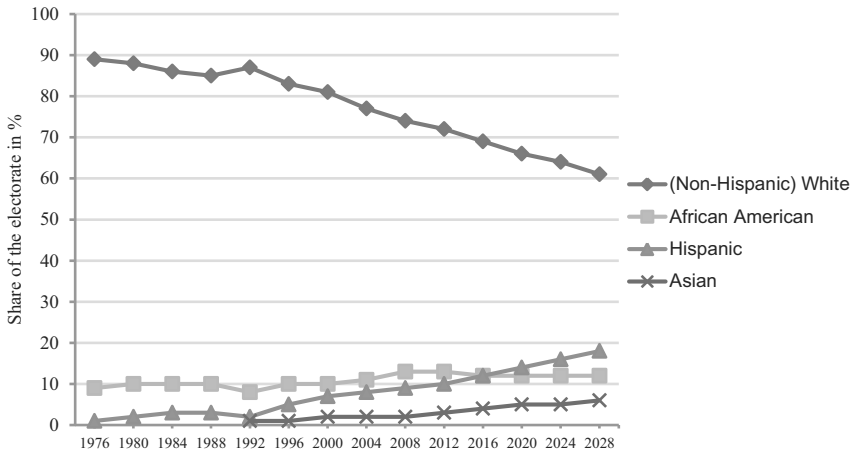
America's electorate has undergone momentous and far-reaching demographic changes over the past few decades. Those developments and the simple fact that they are set to continue largely unabated provide the Republican Party with a major impediment in its attempts to retake the White House. As subsequent chapters on the emerging "majority-minority" nation, Millennial voters, and secularization of America demonstrate, shifts in the demographic composition along with the views espoused by these growing groups have substantially altered the manner in which majorities are obtained today and will be forged tomorrow, tilting the playing field in favor of the Democrats and their coalition of young, secular whites and liberal minorities while making it ever harder for a *southernized* Republican Party dependent on the support of Christian conservative, anti-government, sometimes racially resentful and often older whites to create broad majorities of their own. Gone are the days when winning 60 percent of the white vote would provide a candidate with a comfortable path to the presidency – materialized has an era in which any party perceived to be the spokesperson of the Christian white man will find itself at an increasing disadvantage, particularly in presidential elections. Put simply, the Republican Party "[has] a winning message for an electorate that no longer exists,"<sup>1556</sup> while even leading Republicans, such as Dick Wadhams, former chairman of the Colorado Republican Party, acknowledge that the GOP "[d]emographically [...] cannot survive on the trajectory it's taken."<sup>1557</sup> While it is always challenging to forecast how certain groups may behave in future elections – after all this book is a testament to the momentous shifts in partisan affiliation we can see over the course of a generation or two – we can with a fair degree of certainty predict what America's future population is set to look like. A look at the recent past in figure

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1556 Gerson, Wehner 2013: "How to Save the Republican Party." *Commentary*, March 1.

1557 Quoted in: West 2013: "Republican Party divide increasingly a matter of region." *Los Angeles Times*, January 5.

II.4 already illustrates the underlying shifts in the demographic composition of the electorate over the past few decades that are set to continue in future years.



**Figure II.4:** Ethnic composition of the electorate in presidential elections (in percent), 1976–2028.<sup>1558</sup>

Since 1976 the white vote has decreased on average by 1.9 percentage points each presidential election cycle, dropping from 89 percent of the electorate when Jimmy Carter won the presidency to an all-time low of 72 percent in 2012. While the share of African Americans has gone up in recent years – increasing from eleven percent in 2004 to thirteen percent in both 2008 and 2012, a phenomenon that may to a certain extent be explained by the presence of one of their own at the top of the ticket – the most notable change has occurred among Hispanics. Making up a mere two percent of the electorate in the 1992 presidential election, their share has increased fivefold to ten percent 20 years later. As the graph also highlights, since the uptick in the white vote in 1992 (largely the result of a strong third party candidate in Ross Perot who brought some of the more politically apathetic white voters to the polls) the white vote has decreased rather steadily, demonstrating that this trend is not just a side-effect of a minority candidate or a particularly well-oiled Democratic “get-out-the-vote” machine. In other words, even future white Democratic candidates will be able to count on reaping the benefits of the underlying demographic trends showcased in this chapter. The fact that the GOP has on the other hand failed abysmally at addressing these changes becomes obvious when looking at the demographic composition of both parties. Between 2000 and 2012 the share of whites in the Democratic Party

<sup>1558</sup> Data 1976–2012 from presidential exit polls. For data cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014. 2016–2028 forecasts from Frey 2015: *Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America*, p. 225.

decreased by nine percentage points, dropping from 64 to 55 percent, in line with the national changes seen in figure II.4. Among Republicans, this share on the other hand remained virtually unchanged, standing at 88 percent in 2000 and 87 percent in 2012.<sup>1559</sup> Similarly remarkable are changes in average age: While the average age of a Democrat increased by just 0.7 years over the twelve year period, it rose by 4.2 years among Republicans.<sup>1560</sup> Contrary to most of the other demographic trends assessed in this chapter, this graying trend within the GOP may actually be of an advantage considering that the nation itself is also set to become older (see chapter II.4.8).

Recent changes in the ethnic composition of the country have had a crucial impact on the outcome of presidential elections, a development that becomes clear if one tries to ascertain what the 2012 election would have looked like had the ethnic breakdown of its electorate looked more similar to previous ones. As the conservative *National Review's* Henry Olsen had to acknowledge ahead of the November contest between Romney and Obama, the former was successful at “almost recreat[ing] the Reagan coalition, but in today’s America that is no longer enough.”<sup>1561</sup> Mitt Romney’s 59 percent showing among the white electorate amounted to the largest share won by any candidate in that demographic since George H. W. Bush managed to carry 60 percent of the white vote in 1988 – Romney’s 20 point lead over his Democratic opponent also equaled Ronald Reagan’s winning margin among white voters in the 1980 presidential election that the latter carried comfortably by almost ten percentage points.<sup>1562</sup> With Mitt Romney’s winning margins among the different ethnic groups, a (Republican) candidate would have won the 2000 presidential election by a comfortable 3.5 points when white voters comprised 81 instead of 72 percent of the total electorate. That hypothetical Republican candidate in other words would have fared substantially better in the popular vote than George W. Bush actually did. In 1988, those same exact winning margins would have yielded a GOP victory of 7.0 points, similar to the actual winning margin of 7.7 points.<sup>1563</sup> The remarkably similar outcome is elucidated if we have a closer look at the actual voting patterns among the different ethnic groups in that year’s presidential election (see table II.4). Both Michael Dukakis and Barack Obama won around 40 percent of the white and 70 percent of the Hispanic vote with President Obama slightly improving upon Dukakis’ margins among African Americans. Over the course of less than a quarter of a century then, a Republican landslide of around eight

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1559 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012c: *Partisan Polarization Surges in Bush, Obama Years*, June 4, p. 14.

1560 Cf. *ibid.*

1561 Olsen 2012: “Twilight or Breaking Dawn?” *National Review*, November 5.

1562 Cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.

1563 Own calculations based on exit poll data obtained from *ibid.*



points turned into a relatively comfortable Democratic victory of four points primarily thanks to changes in the ethnic composition of the voting population. The data also is a testament to the enduring ties between the Democratic Party and the Hispanic community. As the following chapters make abundantly clear, Republican attempts to pry away this group of voters will only have a chance of succeeding if policy adjustments within the party, particularly on matters related to the role and size of government, are thorough and broad.

**Table II.4:** Comparison of ethnic voting patterns; share of the vote won by Democratic candidates in percent, 1988 and 2012:<sup>1564</sup>

Ethnicity	Dukakis (1988)	Obama (2012)
(Non-Hispanic) White	40	39
African-American	89	93
Hispanic	70	71
Total	46	51

According to some calculations, Mitt Romney would not even have had to go back to 2000 to find an electoral environment that would have delivered the keys to the White House to the former Massachusetts governor with his performance among the different ethnic groups. Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Nate Cohn estimated that if the ethnic make-up of the 2004 “voting population” – which was 79.2 percent non-Hispanic white instead of the 73.7 percent whites actually made up in 2012<sup>1565</sup> – had still been present in 2012, Mitt Romney’s winning margin in the popular vote would have stood at 0.6 points.<sup>1566</sup> The underlying trend illustrated by these calculations paints a fairly straightforward picture though: With each election an electoral strategy focused on the white vote yields increasingly smaller returns.

The reason why Democratic candidates have been able to count on a large segment of the minority electorate in the past and, more importantly, why they will in all likelihood continue to win large majorities among the burgeoning segment of the Hispanic electorate as well can be found in the basic economic and social values these groups hold. These positions as they pertain to the Hispanic community will be illustrated in closer detail in chapter II.4.2. They most certainly should not make for comfortable reading for conservatives. Contrary to Ronald Reagan’s belief – some might consider it a delusion – that Hispanics would eventually join the GOP thanks to their shared social con-

1564 Data from Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.

1565 Cf. File 2013: “The Diversifying Electorate – Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections).” *United States Census Bureau*, May, p. 5.

1566 Cf. Cohn 2013a: “The New Census Data That Should Terrify Republicans.” *The New Republic*, May 8.

servative credentials, Hispanics are still one of the staunchest Democratic voting blocs and there appears little reason to conclude that these preferences will be altered substantially in the near to mid-term future. At the same time though, the dominance of Southern anti-statist sentiments in the Republican Party presents a major impediment to any attempts by GOP moderates to move the party's ideological center of gravity into a position that would make it a more appealing choice to Hispanic and other minority voters. Contrary to Southern whites, Hispanics simply see the government as a potential force for good.

The chapters over the following pages will not just look at ethnic shifts (which will be addressed in chapter II.4.1) although the momentous increase in the nation's Hispanic population deserves most of our attention (chapters II.4.2 through .4). There is a myriad of other demographic factors that can sometimes aid but more often than not hurt the GOP's chances of coming out on top of elections. Throughout the analysis of these far-reaching transformations the guiding question will be how and to what extent a reliance on the South – white, anti-statist, and religiously conservative – has proven and will continue to serve as a drag on the Republican Party. Therefore, we will look at trends in religiosity (chapter II.4.6), attitudes towards the government and its role among younger voters (the so called “Millennials”; chapter II.4.5) and a host of other factors – such as for example the steep rise in unmarried voters over the past few decades which might initially not be considered a dramatic alteration of the electorate but which upon closer inspection has put the GOP at a disadvantage as well (chapter II.4.7). The data will leave but one conclusion: Demographic changes in conjunction with a continued trend of intra-party *Southernization* present the Republican Party with a sizable predicament and a major obstacle in its quest for future majorities because on a variety of issues the electorate of the future (i. e. minorities and today's younger voters) and white Southern conservatives stand diametrically opposed.

#### **II.4.1 Changing demographics and the emerging majority-minority nation**

In order to comprehend what sort of changes America has undergone and will undergo as it further heads down the path towards becoming a “majority-minority” nation we need to first understand the basic categories used to describe the different ethnicities. The U.S. census provides the population with the opportunity to define themselves along racial but also ethnic lines. In a first step respondents are asked if they are of “Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin” while a second question asks those surveyed to name their race – such as white, black,

American Indian or something else. Anybody who does not tick the “white” box, ticks more than one box on the race question, or checks yes on the Hispanic question is considered to be a member of the country’s minority community while those who only check the white box on the race question and profess to not be of Hispanic origin represent America’s majority population and are defined as *non-Hispanic white alone*.<sup>1567</sup> When referring to “whites” in the context of exit polls or other surveys that make the distinction between the white and Hispanic populations, *white* in those instances actually stands for *non-Hispanic whites*. The arrival of a majority-minority nation therefore means nothing more than that the share of single-race non-Hispanic whites in the American population has dropped below the 50 percent mark, an event estimated to occur in 2043.<sup>1568</sup> As we progress through the following chapters and attempt to predict the future of the Republican Party it is always important to note that a majority of Hispanics are also white. Just as everybody else, Hispanics – who represent something akin to an ethnic group rather than a separate race<sup>1569</sup> – are asked by the U.S. Census Bureau to provide information about their racial background. By far the two most widespread options are “white alone” and “some other race alone” with the latter appearing to be the preferred choice for those who continue to harbor some doubts about belonging to the white community in a country in which “white” is still synonymous with *non-Hispanic white*. In the 2010 census, around 53 percent of Hispanics identified their own racial background as white and no other race while 37 percent classified themselves as belonging to “some other race alone,”<sup>1570</sup> with the respective shares still standing at 48 and 42 percent a decade earlier.<sup>1571</sup> The Pew Research Center estimates that out of the 35 million people who identified as Hispanics in the 2000 U.S. census, a net of 1.2 million

1567 Cf. Teixeira 2013a: “Defining ‘White’ And ‘Hispanic’ In Majority-Minority America.” *ThinkProgress*, June 18.

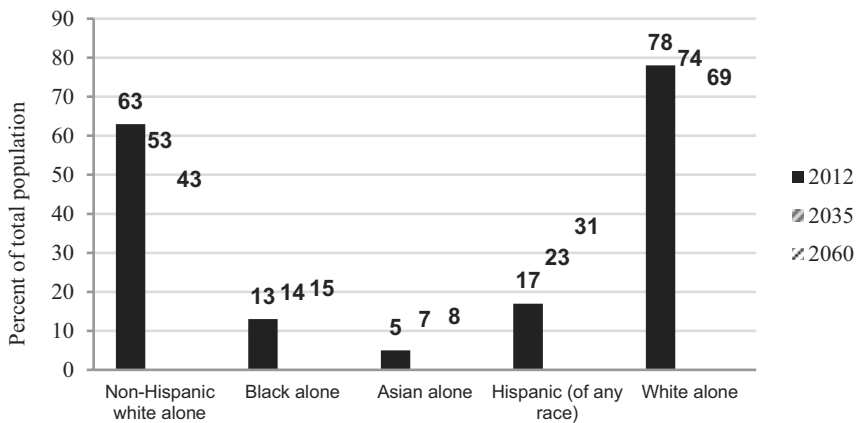
1568 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2012d: *U.S. Census Bureau Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation a Half Century from Now*. December 12.

1569 Of course contrary to “traditional” ethnic groups in the U.S. – e.g. German, Italian, or Irish-Americans – Hispanics have a far more diverse background (in terms of region and race) with ties to one another that are at the most basic level largely based on language and sometimes little else. For more on the Hispanic “identity conundrum” rooted in the group’s different ethnic and racial backgrounds cf. Taylor 2014: *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown*, pp. 97–99. For data on how Hispanics see their own background in terms of ethnicity and/or race, cf. Gonzalez-Barrera, Lopez 2015: “Is being Hispanic a matter of race, ethnicity or both?” *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, June 15. While 11 and 19 percent of Hispanic respondents answered in 2015 that “being Hispanic is part of their” “racial” or “ethnic background” respectively, 56 percent instead considered it to be part of both.

1570 Around six percent of Hispanics reported to belonging to multiple races. Cf. Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert 2011, p. 15.

1571 Cf. Grieco, Cassidy 2001: “Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin – Census 2000 Brief.” *United States Census Bureau*, March, p. 10.

proceeded to shift their racial background from “some other race” to “white” between 2000 and 2010.<sup>1572</sup> We are in other words seeing a trend among Hispanics to increasingly define and see themselves as white. Such modifications in self-perception may very well significantly alter voting patterns in a country where race represents a key partisan cleavage and therefore force scholars and analysts to rethink and adjust their own predictions regarding future political majorities. This is obviously a noteworthy development for a party like the GOP that has done extremely well among whites in recent years. For the purpose of drawing up projections, the U.S. Census Bureau often considers the Hispanic group defining itself as “some other race alone” to be within the white camp as well, bringing the white share within the Hispanic community to around 90 percent. As indicated by the majority share whites (*including* Hispanic ones) will represent within the U.S. even towards the latter part of this century (illustrated in figure II.4.1), notions about and the definition of exactly what constitutes a majority-minority nation may thus be subject to change over the coming decades.



**Figure II.4.1:** *Changing demographic composition of the United States: Percentage of total population by selected ethnic groups, actual and projected.*<sup>1573</sup>

Still, if we only focus on the non-Hispanic part of the nation’s white population, the data and projections illustrate the group’s “long, slow decline [...] which is

1572 Cf. D. Cohn 2014: “Millions of Americans changed their racial or ethnic identity from one census to the next.” *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, May 5.

1573 For 2012 data cf. United States Census Bureau 2012d. For 2035 and 2060 data cf. United States Census Bureau 2012c: *Table 6. Percent of the Projected Population by Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2015 to 2060 (NP2012-T6).*

going to characterize this century.”<sup>1574</sup> According to data and projections from the U.S. Census Bureau (figure II.4.1), the non-Hispanic white population will decrease substantially over the next 50 years, dropping from 63 percent of the total population at the time of Barack Obama’s re-election to 43 percent by 2060. Standing at 197.8 million in 2012, it will reach a peak of 199.6 million by 2024 before dropping by 20.6 million until 2060.<sup>1575</sup> The Hispanic population on the other hand is set to increase from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million by 2060,<sup>1576</sup> almost doubling its share of the American population from 17 to 31 percent. Other minority groups will also see expansions in size. America’s black population is set to rise from 41.2 million to 61.8 million during the same period with the Asian-American population – which supported President Obama by an even wider margin than their Hispanic counterparts in 2012<sup>1577</sup> – more than doubling from 15.9 to 34.4 million.<sup>1578</sup> Focusing solely on the “white alone” population (i.e. if the *non-Hispanic* moniker is dropped) on the other hand makes the transformation of America’s population appear far less momentous. Standing at 78 percent of the total population in 2012, it will decrease by a mere nine percentage points over the coming five decades, with whites of all ethnic backgrounds still making up more than two thirds of America’s population by 2060. This latter piece of information is of particular importance for the future of the Republican Party. Ethnic identities have always been in flux. While in the mid-eighteenth century, non-English white ethnic groups such as the French, Germans, Italians, or Slavs were – in the words of Benjamin Franklin – considered to

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1574 Brookings Institution demographer William Frey quoted in: Morello, Mellnik 2013: “Whites’ deaths outnumber births for first time.” *Washington Post*, June 13.

1575 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2012d.

1576 Cf. *ibid.*

1577 73 percent of Asian Americans voted for President Obama, compared to 71 percent among Hispanics. Cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014. For explanations behind the strong liberal lean of Asian Americans despite their relatively high levels of affluence cf. Kuo, Malhotra, and Hyunjung Mo 2014: *Why Do Asian Americans Identify as Democrats? Testing Theories of Social Exclusion and Intergroup Solidarity*, February 20. The authors note that Asian Americans often associate feelings of social exclusion related to their racial and ethnic background with the Republican Party. At the same time, Asian Americans also often exhibit a strong belief that they share common interests with minority groups that already staunchly support the Democratic Party. Such bonds with other minority groups therefore also drive up Asian-American Democratic affiliation. Cf. also Gelman 2014: “Why do Asian Americans mostly vote for Democrats?” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, March 19. Gelman for example points out that a third of Asian Americans live in California alone while the Golden State along with New York, New Jersey, and Hawaii are home to around half of the nation’s Asian population. Considering that these areas are the epicenters of liberalism in the United States it does not come as much of a surprise then that Asian Americans have in recent years been one of the most reliably Democratic demographics.

1578 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2012d.

be of a “swarthy Complexion,”<sup>1579</sup> they nonetheless eventually managed to become an integral part of the general white fold, adjusting their voting patterns accordingly. Historic precedents therefore indicate that Hispanics may potentially follow a similar trajectory which could provide today’s party of whites with a glimmer of hope.<sup>1580</sup>

Recent changes in the country’s demographic composition have been equally as impressive as those expected to transpire in the coming decades. Between 2000 and 2010, racial and ethnic minorities accounted for a staggering 91.7 percent of the United States’ population growth.<sup>1581</sup> 15.2 million of the 27.3 million that were added to the population of the United States between 2000 and 2010 were Hispanics alone, meaning that this particular group by itself already accounted for roughly 56 percent of the country’s population growth during that decade.<sup>1582</sup> Over the course of just two decades, the Hispanic population in the United States has grown by a remarkable 126 percent, rising from 22.4 million (and representing 9.0 percent of the population) in 1990 to 50.5 million (comprising 16.3 percent of the population) by 2010.<sup>1583</sup> In the meantime, the non-Hispanic white population is suffering from some of the same demographic challenges many other white western populations have to contend with. 2012 marked the first time in the nation’s history that non-Hispanic white deaths outnumbered non-Hispanic white births, an event that will take place more frequently in future years as the median age of non-Hispanic whites in 2012 stood at 42 years, compared to under 32 years for African Americans and under 28 years for Hispanics.<sup>1584</sup> The same year, the Hispanic community moreover also accounted for over 60 percent of the nation’s “natural population change” (i. e. births minus deaths).<sup>1585</sup>

A look at the nation’s younger age brackets provides us with a good indicator of where the nation will be heading in terms of its ethnic composition over the coming decades. Between 2000 and 2012 for example, the white share of the voting population among voters 30 and older decreased by just six points (going from 82 to 76 percent), below the nine-point drop whites saw within the overall electorate during the same period. The largest impetus for change thus ema-

1579 Quoted in: The Economist 2013a: *Some other race*. February 9.

1580 Cf. Haney López 2014, pp. 216–218.

1581 Between 2000 and 2010, the U.S. population grew by around 27.32 million people out of which minorities accounted for 25.06 million. Cf. Humes, Jones, Ramirez 2011, p. 18.

1582 Cf. Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert 2011, p. 6.

1583 For 1990 data cf. Guzmán 2001: “The Hispanic Population – Census 2000 Brief.” *United States Census Bureau*, May, p. 4. For 2010 data cf. Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert 2011, p. 6.

1584 Cf. Morello, Mellnik 2013.

1585 That change stood at 1.44 million with the natural population change among Hispanics standing at 872,800. Cf. Washington Post 2013: *How the U.S. population changed in 2012*. June 13.

nated from voters aged between 18 and 29 where the white share fell by 16 points over the course of a dozen years, declining from 74 to 58 percent while the Hispanic share almost doubled from ten to 18 percent.<sup>1586</sup> As our previous look at the 1988 and 2012 presidential elections already demonstrated, such shifts have allowed Democratic candidates to compensate for losses among the white community. While President Obama carried whites aged 18 to 29 by ten points in 2008, he lost that same group by seven points four years later. Overall losses among 18 to 29 year olds were manageable thanks to younger Hispanics remaining staunchly in his camp – support levels for the president only dropped from 76 to 74 percent in this group – and their increased weight within this demographic segment as their share of the young adult electorate rose from 14 to 18 points between 2008 and 2012.<sup>1587</sup>

The younger the population, the more striking the changes America has undergone become.<sup>1588</sup> As we can see in table II.4.1, ten percent of the Hispanic population in the United States is below the age of five while a mere 5.1 percent of the non-Hispanic white population is that young.

**Table II.4.1:** *Hispanic and non-Hispanic white population (in million) in different age brackets (2012).*<sup>1589</sup>

	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic Whites	# of Non-Hispanic Whites for every Hispanic (Ratio Non-Hispanic Whites/Hispanics)
<b>Total</b>	52.36	195.15	3.73
<b>Under 5 years</b>	5.21	10.02	1.92
<b>Under 10 years</b>	10.2	20.67	2.03
<b>Under 15 years</b>	14.86	31.93	2.15

While there were 3.73 non-Hispanic whites for every Hispanic among the general population in 2012, that ratio dropped to a mere 1.92 among under five year olds. 2012 as a matter of fact marked the year in which non-Hispanic whites no longer constituted a majority in that age bracket, with all minorities combined

1586 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012j: *Young Voters Supported Obama Less, But May Have Mattered More*, November 26.

1587 While the swing among younger whites stood at the aforementioned ten points, Obama's overall loss was contained to six points (declining from 66 to 60 percent). Cf. *ibid.*

1588 Between 2000 and 2010 for example, the population of non-Hispanic whites below the age of 18 decreased by over 4.3 million. At the same time though, the Hispanic under-18 population rose by 4.8 million. Data from 2000 and 2010 U.S. censuses in Frey 2015, p. 22.

1589 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2013e: *Table 1. Population by Sex, Age, Hispanic Origin, and Race: 2012*. December.

constituting 50.2 percent of all under five year olds in the United States.<sup>1590</sup> Among the entire population under the age of 18, the U.S. Census Bureau projected in 2013 that non-Hispanic whites will become a minority in 2018 or 2019.<sup>1591</sup>

The potential impact of Hispanics is not just limited to the growth of the community though. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau for the 1996 through 2012 presidential elections attests to the rather dismal turnout record displayed by Hispanics that leaves a lot of room for improvement. In every single one of the five presidential elections covered by the data, the Hispanic share of the voting population – i. e. the people who turned out on Election Day – was below their share of the eligible electorate (the citizen voting age population). While Hispanics for example constituted 10.8 percent of the eligible electorate in 2012, they only accounted for 8.4 percent of all ballots cast in the presidential election.<sup>1592</sup> Turnout rates among Hispanics have consistently been far lower than those of both African Americans and non-Hispanic whites, lagging by an average of around 17 percentage points behind the latter in the presidential contests from 1996 through 2012.<sup>1593</sup> An increased effort by Democrats to get largely liberal Hispanics (see next chapter) to the ballot box could yield important gains, particularly in currently Republican states that are slated to become battleground states in the not too distant future, such as Arizona and Texas in particular.

Even without additional measures to boost Hispanic turnout, shifts in the ethnic composition of the electorate create an increasingly steep slope for Republican presidential candidates. While Barack Obama won twice despite losing the white vote by twelve and twenty points – the first candidate ever to lose white voters by double digits yet still win a presidential election<sup>1594</sup> – future Democratic candidates have an even easier path to the presidency. If minorities make up 30 percent of the next presidential electorate in 2016<sup>1595</sup> which would be in line with

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1590 10.095 million of the 20.11 million under five year olds were minorities according to the definition laid out earlier on in this chapter. Cf. *ibid.*

1591 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2013c: *International Migration is Projected to Become Primary Driver of U.S. Population Growth for First Time in Nearly Two Centuries*. May 15.

1592 Cf. *File* 2013, p. 5.

1593 In both 1996 and 2000 the gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white turnout stood at 16.7 points, widening to 20 points in 2004 before dropping for 16.2 and 16.1 points in 2008 and 2012. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.

1594 Cf. Brownstein 2012b.

1595 The Pew Research Center estimates that non-Hispanic whites will constitute 69 percent of the electorate in 2016. While the number of eligible non-Hispanic white voters will have grown by only 2 percent between 2012 and 2016, the Hispanic and Asian voting age population will have risen by 17 and 16 percent respectively. Cf. Krogstad 2016: “2016 electorate will be the most diverse in U.S. history.” *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, February 3.



recent increases and vote in a similar manner to 2012 (i.e. 80 percent Democratic), a Democratic candidate could lose the white vote by almost 25 points and yet still come out on top in the popular vote.<sup>1596</sup> Aside from an increasing minority clout, what ought to worry Republicans is the remarkable stability of minority voting habits over the years, as also highlighted in table II.4. Since 1976, every Democratic candidate has won between 78 and 82 percent of the two-party vote among minorities, with the sole exception coming in 2004 when George W. Bush's strong performance among Hispanics held John Kerry to a share of 71 percent.<sup>1597</sup> It does not take a math wizard to figure out what this means for the prospects of Republican candidates once America has become a majority-minority nation.

## II.4.2 Hispanics – Republicans who just don't know it yet?

The demographic changes we have just seen illustrate quite vividly that the key to forging future electoral majorities will be found within the Hispanic community. Parties and candidates that disregard the views of this burgeoning group do so at their own peril seeing as winning less than a third of the Hispanic vote could very well consign a party to a permanent minority status at the presidential level. Whenever we do assess the impact the Hispanic community is going to have it is nonetheless important to remember that Republican paths to victory do not require winning an outright majority of the Latino electorate. Even though different ethnic compositions vary from state to state, the rule of thumb generally is that Republicans have to win around 40 percent of the Hispanic vote if they wish to win presidential majorities.<sup>1598</sup> Seeing as Mitt Romney failed to get even close to that magic mark – winning a mere 27 percent of Hispanics – Republicans have begun to recognize the difficult situation that they find themselves in but their solutions nonetheless still appear to fall well short of what is required to win over the Hispanic community. The GOP's *Growth & Opportunity* report called on members of the party to “embrace and champion

1596 According to my own calculations, a 62 to 36 percent white vote in favor of the Republican Party would essentially yield a tied result if minority voters stuck to their 2012 preferences – which at least among African Americans is not necessarily a given. Abramowitz and Teixeira 2013 (“Is Doubling Down on White Voters a Viable Strategy for the Republican Party?” *Sabato's Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, July 11) put the margin at 24 points while Brownstein 2013 (“Bad Bet: Why Republicans Can't Win With Whites Alone.” *National Journal*, September 5) estimates that a Democratic candidate can retain the presidency for the party in 2016 if he or she wins 37 percent of the white vote.

1597 Cf. Brownstein 2013.

1598 Cf. Resurgent Republic 2012b: *Post-Election Survey of Hispanic Voters*. December 12.

comprehensive immigration reform”<sup>1599</sup> due to the policy matter “[having] become a litmus test, measuring whether we are meeting [Hispanics] with a welcome mat or a closed door,”<sup>1600</sup> apparently believing this to be the key reason behind the less than amicable ties between Hispanics and the Republican Party. As the following pages will elucidate though, this analysis fails to grasp the width of the rift between the GOP and the Hispanic community, especially on economic issues.

One of the key misjudgments that appears to guide Republican hopes for an Hispanic Republican awakening pertains to the broad concept of “family values.” Scott Baugh, chairman of the Republican county branch in once deep red Orange County, California, exemplifies a widely held position within the party by echoing the findings of the *Growth & Opportunity* project through exclusively focusing on immigration reform when pressed about the necessary changes that need to be undertaken by the party. According to Baugh, “[i]t’s game on again in terms of a competition of ideas and values”<sup>1601</sup> after immigration reform has been addressed. Once this roadblock is out of the way, Hispanics will be free to join the Republican ranks seeing as “the values they have are the values we have.”<sup>1602</sup> An explanation for such a misunderstanding can be found in the differing interpretations between both groups of just what constitutes “traditional family values.” John Echeveste, founder of a Hispanic marketing firm in southern California, makes the case that “[w]hat Republicans mean by ‘family values’ and what Hispanics mean are two completely different things.”<sup>1603</sup> While the Republican core constituency of white evangelical Protestants primarily defends such family values through combatting perceived moral depredation caused by advances in gay rights and access to abortion, Hispanics have a much more lenient position on such issues; instead they possess something that could be better described as “community values” in which they *and* the government lend a helping hand to those in need instead of berating them for past mistakes that are no one’s fault but their own.<sup>1604</sup> Claims like Baugh’s about a supposedly shared conservatism also fail to stand up to closer scientific scrutiny. Asked to

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1599 Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, McCall 2013, p. 8.

1600 Ibid., p. 15.

1601 Quoted in: Goffard 2012: “For O.C. Republicans, party’s immigration stance is a millstone.” *Los Angeles Times*, November 20.

1602 Quoted in: Ibid.

1603 Quoted in: Mac Donald 2012: “Why Hispanics Don’t Vote for Republicans.” *National Review*, November 7.

1604 Hispanics (including strongly religious ones) are for example much more compassionate towards the poor than whites while also expressing high levels of support for government action to lift people out of poverty. Cf. McKenzie, Rouse 2013, pp. 229–231 and Pew Research Center 2007: *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion*, April 25, p. 73.

describe their general ideology for example, 30 percent of Hispanic adults considered themselves to be liberal, compared to a nationwide share of 21 percent in a 2011 Pew survey.<sup>1605</sup> Even regarding the one policy area that Republicans continually bank on as a potential opening – cultural conservatism – the opportunities appear rather limited (as also illustrated in the following paragraphs). While 31 percent of whites and 30 percent of African Americans were classified as social conservatives on a composite “social orientation scale”<sup>1606</sup> drawn up in a 2013 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute, just 25 percent of Hispanics fell into that category with about six in ten (57 percent) instead firmly rooted in the center.<sup>1607</sup>

The terminology in subsequent chapters is as follows: “Native-born” Hispanics have been born in the United States or were born abroad to at least one American parent. First generation Hispanics have been born abroad (a group that is also commonly referred to as “immigrants” or “foreign-born”) while those part of the second generation have been born in the United States to at least one first generation parent. Third and higher generation refers to people who have been born in the U.S. with both parents also having been born in America. Whenever a reference is made to “third” generation Hispanics this also includes subsequent generations.<sup>1608</sup>

## Social issues

Delving deeper into the realm of socio-cultural issues we find a somewhat mixed picture regarding the potential openings that Republicans may find within the Hispanic community. As just mentioned, their general outlook on social issues places Hispanics at the center of the ideological spectrum. Other studies have nonetheless shown that on the key issue of abortion for example, Hispanics are sometimes to the right of the general population:

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1605 Cf. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, and Velasco 2012: “When Labels Don’t Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity.” *Pew Research Center*, April 4, p. 30.

1606 Based on views pertaining to the legality of same-sex marriage and abortion.

1607 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera, Dionne Jr., Galston 2013b, p. 30.

1608 Cf. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, Velasco 2012, pp. 6–7.

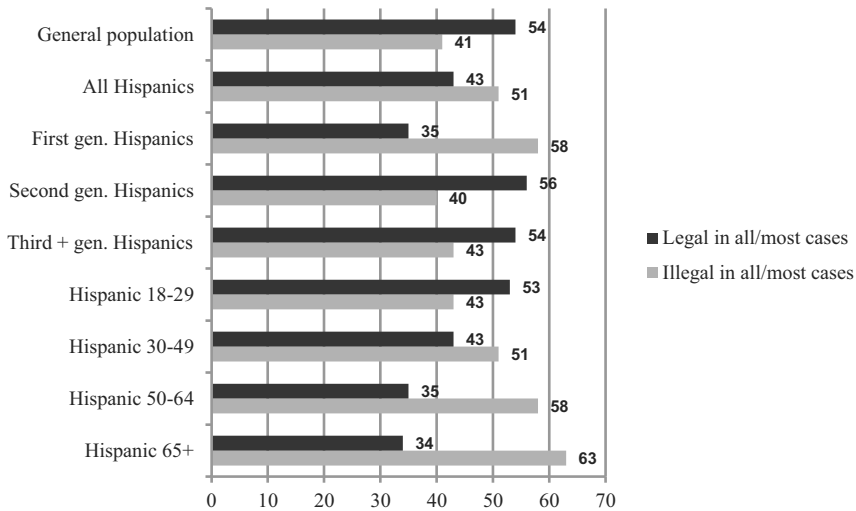


Figure II.4.2.a: Do you think abortion should be legal or illegal (in percent)?<sup>1609</sup>

First generation and older Hispanics are particularly conservative on the issue while more integrated generations are roughly in line with the stance expressed by the general population, as majorities of both second and third generation Hispanics possess a pro-choice position. Younger Hispanics are also by far the most liberal on the matter. As we have already seen, such a trend of younger cohorts espousing more liberal positions on abortion is not replicated within the white Christian conservative community, indicating that in this particular policy area the rift between Hispanics and the Republican Party may if anything widen.

Despite a degree of overlap on the issue of abortion, a number of key impediments should prevent the GOP from using the topic as a means of siphoning Hispanic votes off their Democratic opponents. First of all, despite being to the right of the country at large according to the survey shown in figure II.4.2.a, one should not forget that Hispanics are still notably more liberal on abortion than the GOP's core constituency of white evangelical Protestants. Composite data from 2011 and 2012 showed that while 54 percent of Hispanic Catholics voiced opposition to the legality of abortion, that share stood at 64 percent among white evangelical Protestants.<sup>1610</sup> Moreover, Hispanics also tend to put far less stock in social issues when making up their minds at the ballot box than whites in general

1609 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32.

1610 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012b, p. 8.

and white Evangelicals in particular do.<sup>1611</sup> According to the Public Religion Research Institute's (PRRI) 2013 Hispanic Values Survey, 72 and 65 percent of Hispanic adults regarded jobs and rising health care costs respectively as critical issues that the country was facing. Socio-cultural issues close to the heart of the Christian Right such as abortion (32 percent) and same-sex marriage (22 percent) were considered to be of a far smaller importance and prominence.<sup>1612</sup> Data from the 2006 Latino National Survey also exhibits the general indifference Hispanics have towards moral matters. In it, a mere 0.9 percent felt abortion and morality/moral values represented the nation's most pressing problem while 0.7 percent regarded them as the most pressing problem for the Hispanic community.<sup>1613</sup> This is also reflected when asked to what extent a candidate's position on abortion would impact their electoral choice. While 63 percent of white evangelical Protestants answered that a candidate's pro-choice opinion would make them less likely to cast their ballot for him or her, just 26 percent of Hispanic Catholics chose the same stance with a sizeable majority of 56 percent instead arguing it would have no effect on their vote choice.<sup>1614</sup> Part of the reason behind this degree of insouciance on the matter of abortion appears to be rooted in the different approaches the two communities have towards this divisive matter. As we already saw earlier on, for many white Evangelicals – often particularly younger ones – abortion is a monolithic issue that leaves little room to stray from the widely held opinion within their religious community that ending a pregnancy prematurely is to be opposed regardless of the circumstances surrounding it.<sup>1615</sup> While majorities of both white evangelical Protestants and Hispanic Catholics do consider abortion to be morally wrong,<sup>1616</sup> the latter tend to not assess the issue with one set of inflexible values. For around half (48 percent) of Hispanics their moral evaluation of abortion depends on the situation at hand with the share rising to 55 percent among Hispanic Catholics.<sup>1617</sup> That abortion is often considered to be a personal matter and not necessarily an issue that requires strict obedience to an officially mandated position is also

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1611 Cf. Teixeira 2010: "Demographic Change and the Future of the Parties." *Center for American Progress Action Fund*, June, p. 8.

1612 Cf. Jones, Cox, and Navarro-Rivera 2013: "2013 Hispanic Values Survey: How Shifting Religious Identities and Experiences are Influencing Hispanic Approaches to Politics." *Public Religion Research Institute*, September 27, p. 14.

1613 Cf. Fraga, García, Hero, Jones-Correa, Martínez-Ebers, and Segura 2012: *Latinos in the New Millennium: An Almanac of Opinion, Behavior, and Policy Preferences*, p. 347.

1614 Cf. Jones, Cox 2010a, p. 14.

1615 Cf. Hoffmann, Mills Johnson 2005, p. 178.

1616 In a 2013 survey, 75 percent of white evangelical Protestants considered abortion to be morally wrong while 64 percent of Hispanic Catholics shared that stance. Both were considerably above the national average of 49 percent. Cf. Pew Research Center 2013l, p. 3.

1617 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera 2013, p. 21.

reflected by the finding that almost 40 percent of Hispanic Christians expressed the belief in the same survey that it was possible to disagree with the church's teachings on abortion yet still be a good Christian.<sup>1618</sup>

The strict Republican opposition to abortion even in cases of what we might call mitigating circumstances that has been primarily driven by the white evangelical base has made the GOP a less than attractive option even among members of the Hispanic community who do feel abortion should be illegal. The fact that when asked who would be better equipped to handle the issue of abortion, both parties were essentially tied among Hispanics who believe abortion should be illegal in most or all cases according to the PRRI's 2013 Hispanic Values Survey illustrates the lack of appeal a rigid evangelical approach to the matter has even among socially conservative Hispanics.<sup>1619</sup>

Appealing to Hispanics through anti-gay rhetoric offers even less of a prospect of electoral success as the Hispanic community is as accepting of homosexuality as the wider population. While 58 percent of the general population believed homosexuality should be accepted in a 2011 survey, 59 percent of Hispanics felt the same way (see figure II.4.2.b). Even first generation Hispanics – who stand out on abortion for their social conservatism – are not significantly more opposed to homosexuality as a majority of them also argues in favor of accepting it.

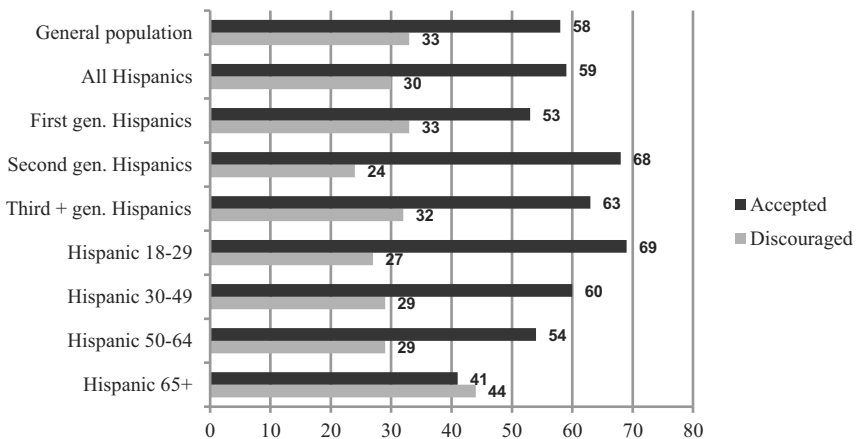


Figure II.4.2.b: Should homosexuality be accepted or discouraged by society (in percent)?<sup>1620</sup>

1618 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22.

1619 22 percent answered that Democrats would handle the issue better while 23 percent preferred the Republican Party with the remaining respondents feeling both parties would do an equally good or poor job. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 33.

1620 Cf. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, Velasco 2012, p. 33.

A particularly stark contrast appears when Hispanics are once again compared to white Evangelicals. When the latter are asked about how society ought to respond to homosexuality, the shares depicted in figure II.4.2.b are essentially reversed as white evangelical Protestants believe homosexuality should be discouraged by a margin of 59 to 30 percent.<sup>1621</sup> This difference in opinion also emerges on one of the basic questions surrounding homosexuality: Are people born gay or does their environment have an influence on their sexuality? 51 percent of Hispanic Catholics answered in a 2014 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute that they believed homosexuality to be an inherent trait while just 27 percent saw external factors as the determinant, roughly in line with one of the least religious (and most Democratic) demographic groups, unaffiliated adults. White evangelical Protestants though overwhelmingly blamed a gay person's environment and upbringing for their sexual preferences (54 percent) while a mere 25 percent believed homosexuals to be born this way.<sup>1622</sup>

Similar to the trend that has materialized among most segments of American society in recent years, Hispanics have also become far more accepting of same-sex marriage. Numbers from 2012 showed that 52 percent of Hispanics supported the legalization of gay marriage while just 34 percent voiced opposition, a remarkable turnaround and almost complete reversal from six years earlier when opposition still stood at 56 percent while support came in at less than a third (31 percent).<sup>1623</sup> Composite data from even more recent surveys conducted in March and May of 2013 also do their part in laying to rest the claim that Hispanics are social conservatives as support for same-sex marriage in their community (54 percent) was higher than the levels found among non-Hispanic whites (50 percent) and African Americans (38 percent).<sup>1624</sup> Unsurprisingly, the gap is even wider when the Hispanic community is compared to white evangelical Protestants, who opposed same-sex marriage by a margin of 72 to 23 percent in the same survey.<sup>1625</sup>

Hispanics themselves recognize the rift between themselves and the GOP even on social issues. Asked if they agreed or disagreed with either party on social and cultural issues, 23 percent of Hispanics mostly or totally agreed with the Republican Party while that share almost doubled to 42 percent with regards to the

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1621 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013i, p. 19.

1622 Cf. Jones, Cox, and Navarro-Rivera 2014: "A Shifting Landscape: A Decade of Change in American Attitudes about Same-sex Marriage and LGBT Issues." *Public Religion Research Institute*, February 26, p. 29. Among all Hispanics, the breakdown was 43 to 37 percent in favor of the argument that homosexuality is an innate trait.

1623 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012h: *Latinos, Religion and Campaign 2012*, October 18, p. 6.

1624 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013i, p. 24.

1625 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 25.

GOP's Democratic counterparts.<sup>1626</sup> To therefore label Hispanics as “social conservatives” who cannot wait to join the Republican Party as soon as it changes its stance on immigration appears to be a rather misguided conclusion, particularly in light of the fact that social issues play at best a secondary role when it comes to Hispanics making up their minds at the ballot box.

### Economic issues

The rift on social issues might even be manageable were it not for the huge ideological clash pertaining to the role of government that has emerged between both the GOP and Hispanics as a result of the *Southernization* of the former. The visceral hatred for an activist government that is so widespread among both white evangelical Protestants and Tea Party supporters is completely alien to most Hispanics who do see the government as a potential force for good and actively support its role as a key player in the day to day running of the nation: “We are a very compassionate people, we care about other people and understand that government has a role to play in helping people,”<sup>1627</sup> is how the earlier mentioned John Echeveste accurately puts it. Underlying the support for an activist government is a basic difference in attitude between the Hispanic community and white Southern Evangelicals towards the poor and poverty in general. Contrary to many white Evangelicals (see chapter II.2.4), the Latino community broadly speaking does not see poverty as a sign of personal failings and instead places at least part of the responsibility elsewhere. 64 percent of Hispanics for example supported the argument in a 2006 survey that poor people face hardships due to a lack of government services, a view shared by just 48 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 42 percent of white Evangelicals.<sup>1628</sup> Poverty therefore can and more importantly *should* be mitigated by government action in the eyes of many Hispanic-Americans. Such a visceral clash of cultures between whites and minorities can also be found when respondents are asked about their basic attitude towards the institution of government. While 42 percent of white respondents subscribed to the Reaganite view in a 2011 poll that “government is not the solution to our economic problems; government is the problem,” a mere 17 percent of African Americans and 25 percent of Hispanics shared this kind of anti-statist attitude.<sup>1629</sup>

More so than on socio-cultural issues then where a semblance of con-

1626 Cf. NBC News, Wall Street Journal, and Telemundo 2013: *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey/Telemundo: Study #13127, Hispanic/Latino Oversample*, April 5–8, p. 4.

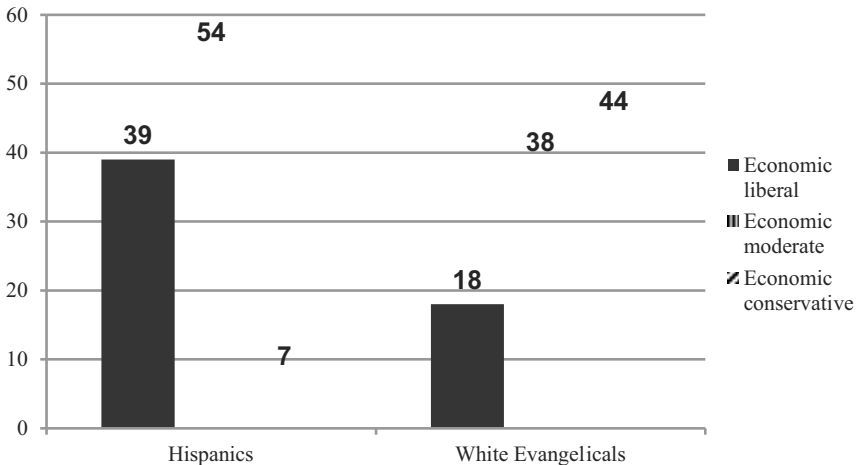
1627 Quoted in: Mac Donald 2012.

1628 Cf. Pew Research Center 2007, p. 73.

1629 Cf. Brownstein 2011: “Race to the Top.” *National Journal*, June 3.



servatism remains present among quite a few Hispanics, the group's liberalism becomes apparent on virtually all questions pertaining to economic matters. According to the "economic orientation scale" based on six separate measures drawn up by the Public Religion Research Institute that was already mentioned in the chapter on the economic preferences of white evangelical Protestants, 39 percent of Hispanic adults were classified as economic liberals compared to a national share of liberals of 34 percent. A mere seven percent of Hispanics were deemed to be economically conservative, with 25 percent of all adults found in that category.<sup>1630</sup> Particularly the last share highlights the substantial gap between Hispanics and the GOP as 55 percent of Republicans and 63 percent of Tea Party supporters fell into the economically conservative category.<sup>1631</sup> As is the case on social issues, the two voting blocs of Hispanics and white evangelical Protestants also have significantly diverging views across a broad range of economic issues:



**Figure II.4.2.c:** *Economic orientation of Hispanics and white evangelical Protestants (in percent).*<sup>1632</sup>

These basic differences in opinion and perhaps insurmountable challenge Republicans face in attempting to appeal to Hispanics are also illustrated on a classic question that has played a defining role in American politics in recent years: the size and role of government. Hispanics overwhelmingly prefer a more proactive government even if this entails raising taxes. A 2002 survey by the Pew Research Center and Kaiser Family Foundation found that while only 35 percent

1630 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera, Dionne Jr., Galston 2013b, p. 29.

1631 Cf. *ibid.*

1632 Cf. *ibid.*

of non-Hispanic whites preferred to pay higher taxes in order to get a larger government with more services in return that share rose to 60 percent among Hispanics. One might wonder if this was just a mere artifact of the Hispanic community being less affluent than their white counterparts but at least in this particular survey no discernible economic cleavage could be detected. While 62 percent of Hispanics earning less than \$30,000 a year preferred a larger government and more taxes, 58 percent of Hispanic adults earning \$50,000 or more annually did so as well.<sup>1633</sup> There most certainly is ample data to buttress the assertion that Hispanics across a variety of generational, educational, and income brackets look extremely favorably upon government aid to the less fortunate, evidence of a deeply rooted economic liberalism that transcends usual cleavages. Asked if they supported the establishment of a social safety net in which the government provides income to those in need demonstrated that despite some minor differences in opinion “support for a social safety net among all Latinos, across generations, socioeconomic status, gender, and national origin groups, is extremely high.”<sup>1634</sup> 78 percent of Hispanics making more than \$54,000 annually for example backed such a government program.<sup>1635</sup> As we will explore in the following chapter on some of the perhaps more favorable – for Republicans – trends transpiring within the Hispanic community, there are nonetheless some indications that wealthier Hispanics and generations that have grown up in the United States are far more open to the small government and low tax policies espoused by the GOP. Still, findings like the ones above are echoed by a number of other studies, one of which put the share of Hispanics preferring a smaller government that provided fewer services at just 19 percent, compared to a nationwide share of 48 percent.<sup>1636</sup> To put this into perspective, 92 percent of Tea Party and 67 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans consider this to be the preferred type of government.<sup>1637</sup>

Such a basic difference in ideology of course also leads to a notable rift between the Hispanic community and America's white conservatives when it comes to specific questions as to how to mitigate inequality. As we saw earlier on, white Christian conservatives in particular object to measures taken by the government to reduce racial and economic inequality.<sup>1638</sup> An extensive study by the Center for American Progress provides us with additional insights into how different segments of America's population respond to what the Center in this

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1633 Cf. Pew Hispanic Center, Kaiser Family Foundation 2002: *2002 National Survey of Latinos – Summary of Findings*, December, p. 62.

1634 Fraga et al. 2012, p. 349.

1635 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 350.

1636 Cf. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, Velasco 2012, p. 31.

1637 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013q, p. 14.

1638 Cf. in particular McKenzie, Rouse 2013.

case termed a “new equity agenda.” Asked if respondents “would [...] support or oppose new steps to reduce racial and ethnic inequality in America through investments in areas like education, job training, and infrastructure improvement,”<sup>1639</sup> 89 percent of Hispanics unsurprisingly backed additional steps to reduce inequality (with 66 percent strongly supporting such measures), as did 63 percent of whites. A larger difference in opinion emerges if white conservatives are included in this comparison as only 46 percent approved of such an agenda, with a mere 19 percent strongly supporting it.<sup>1640</sup> Regardless of whether such opposition stems from racial or economic conservatism (in this case presumably a mixture of both), the fact remains that both groups have a vastly different outlook on how to tackle issues of inequality.

Are there any silver linings on the horizon for Republicans then? While Hispanics look favorably upon the notion of an activist government guiding the economy in the right direction they do also appear to be strong believers in the quintessential American mantra of hard work leading to success (see table II.4.2.a) while also endorsing the general advantages of the “free market”. While only around half of all non-Hispanic whites, African Americans, and Asian Americans *strongly* agreed in a 2004 survey that America continued to remain a meritocracy in which one could shape their own destiny through hard work, over three quarters of Hispanics shared this kind of stance on the link between assiduous work and success. Overall, 92.5 percent of Hispanics voiced varying degrees of agreement.

**Table II.4.2.a:** *Response to the proposition “America is a land of opportunity in which you only need to work hard to succeed” (in percent):*<sup>1641</sup>

Response	All adults	Non-Hispanic whites	African Americans	Hispanic or Latino	Asian Americans
<b>Strongly agree</b>	52.0	49.1	47.4	75.8	50.3
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	31.1	32.9	30.1	16.7	32.2
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	11.2	12.6	12.6	4.4	12.9
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	5.7	5.5	10.0	3.1	4.6

1639 Teixeira, Halpin, Barreto, and Pantoja 2013: “Building an All-In Nation: A View from the American Public.” *Center for American Progress, PolicyLink, in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation*, October, p. 21.

1640 Cf. *ibid.*

1641 National Politics Study 2004, in: Segura, Bowler 2011: *It’s True: Latinos are Liberals, and Other Important Matters*.

In light of this strong support for the meritocratic foundations of the United States, it is unsurprising that the same survey also revealed Hispanics to be far more likely than other major ethnic groups (including non-Hispanic whites once again) to agree with the statement that “[i]f racial and ethnic minorities don’t do well in life, they have no one to blame but themselves.”<sup>1642</sup> Other data also attest to views that do not necessarily fit into the stereotypical liberal mold being widespread within the Hispanic community. There for example is a strong belief among Hispanics in the ability of the “free market” to create ample opportunities for social mobility rather than being the reason behind poverty and inequality. Presented with two opposing propositions pertaining to this question,<sup>1643</sup> Hispanics differed little in their free market support from their non-Hispanic white counterparts while the traditional Democratic group of African Americans took a far more skeptical stance.<sup>1644</sup> Framing Republican policies and the party’s image in a different manner, such as making the case that the GOP is not the party of big business but rather the representative of hard-working middle-class Americans and small business owners with the party only working to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to harness the power of the free market may very well provide the party with a certain degree of success. Of course this will in all likelihood not suffice in winning over a majority of Hispanics but as already addressed earlier, reaching the 40 percent mark among

1642 44 percent of Hispanics “strongly agreed” with this statement, compared to a share of 30.2 percent among the general public and 27.8 percent among non-Hispanic whites. Cf. Barreto, Segura 2014: *Latino America: How America’s Most Dynamic Population Is Poised to Transform the Politics of the Nation*, p. 35.

1643 “Left to itself, the free-market economy creates more opportunities than problems because it provides the most effective way to create economic growth and allows people to rise as far as their talent and hard work will take them” and “Left to itself, the free-market economy creates more problems than opportunities because it creates too much inequality and leaves too many people in poverty.” In: Brownstein 2011.

1644 63 percent of whites and 61 percent of Hispanics supported the notion that the free market does work while just 49 percent of African Americans agreed with this proposition. Cf. *ibid.* An election night poll in a number of battleground states in 2012 (Colorado, Florida, Nevada, and New Mexico) also illustrates that significant parts of the Hispanic electorate sometimes support certain small government positions – if they are presented in the right manner. In the poll, significant minorities of 30 percent (Colorado), 34 percent (New Mexico), 35 percent (Nevada), and 40 percent (Florida) agreed with the statement that the “government is doing too many things better left to individuals and businesses.” Around 40 percent of the people in each state also supported the notion that “[t]he best way to improve the economy and increase job opportunities for Hispanics is to limit government spending, lower taxes, and reduce excessive regulations that hurt small businesses.” The wording of the last question in particular illustrates that if the GOP presents itself as the defender of *small businesses* rather than big corporations, inroads into the Hispanic community appear possible. For data cf. Resurgent Republic, Hispanic Leadership Network 2012: *Survey of Hispanic 2012 Voters in FL, CO, NM, and NV*. November 28 – December 7, pp. 3 and 9.

Hispanics immensely increases the chances of Republican presidential candidates coming out on top against their Democratic opponents.

### Hispanics and the Affordable Care Act

Seeing as virtually no other recent policy has proved to be as divisive and acerbic as the Affordable Care Act, data on the acceptance of this historic piece of legislation provides us with a deeper understanding of the differences in opinion on actual legislation. The course of action chosen by the congressional Republican Party in 2013 to shut down the government over the funding of the Affordable Care Act most certainly did not endear them to the Hispanic electorate where negative views towards the health care bill are usually confined to less than a quarter of the community.<sup>1645</sup> Hispanics are thus far more likely than their non-Hispanic white counterparts to view the piece of legislation in a more favorable light with the gap in opinion between both ethnic groups if anything widening. While 55 and 33 percent of Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites respectively approved of the health care law when it was still being debated in the halls of Congress in the summer of 2009, that gap of 22 points had expanded to 32 points by September of 2013 when 61 percent of Hispanics and 29 percent of whites expressed support for the Affordable Care Act.<sup>1646</sup> As is the case on the government helping out the poor, support for a public health care system is widespread across the Hispanic community. Over 82 percent of Hispanics with an annual income above \$54,000 for example supported “government intervention to improve access and reduce costs” in the area of health care.<sup>1647</sup>

A detailed survey conducted a mere month before the government was shut down over Obamacare moreover revealed that while 20 and 37 percent of Hispanics strongly or somewhat agreed with the Affordable Care Act, only 14 and 22 of whites showed the same levels of approval as 41 percent alone “strongly disapprov[ed]” of the law.<sup>1648</sup> The strong impact the South has had on the antagonistic stance of the Republican Party towards Obamacare is highlighted by the views expressed by regional Republican voters in the survey (see figure II.4.2.d) in which the GOP’s new heartland stands out for its strong aversion towards President Obama’s signature piece of legislation.

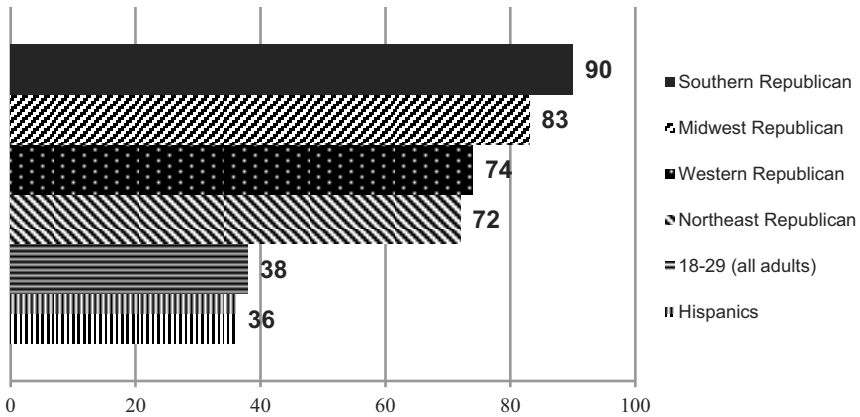
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1645 A presidential exit poll showed that just 25 percent of Hispanics wanted Obamacare to be repealed while 61 percent called for it to remain in place. Cf. *impreMedia, Latino Decisions 2012*, p. 2.

1646 Cf. *Pew Research Center, USA Today 2013c*, p. 8.

1647 Cf. *Fraga et al. 2012*, p. 354.

1648 Cf. *The Morning Consult 2013a: August 2013 Tracking Poll Memo*. September 4.



**Figure II.4.2.d:** Net percentage of respondents "somewhat" or "strongly" disapproving of the Affordable Care Act (in percent).<sup>1649</sup>

The 90 percent disapproval rate among Southern Republicans represented the most vehement opposition shown among the 125 voter subgroups covered in the poll. As we can see in figure II.4.2.d, not only does Southern anti-statism drive a wedge between the GOP and the Hispanic community but it also alienates younger voters whose views towards the Affordable Care Act are roughly in line with those held by Hispanics. Unsurprisingly, as demonstrated in table II.4.2.b, white evangelical Protestants also object to the concept of what they perceive to be socialized medicine, with Hispanics almost 40 percentage points less likely than white Evangelicals to support the notion that health care coverage is something that should be left up to individuals. Due to the developments that have taken place within the Republican Party, both at the base and within Congress, the prospect for the party changing its position on an issue as vehemently opposed by its Southern core as the Affordable Care Act is, appear rather dim.

<sup>1649</sup> Cf. *ibid.* and The Morning Consult 2013b: *Crosstabs on ACA Approval Ratings for 125 Voter Subgroups – August 2013*, pp. 1 and 3. While the survey does not provide any specifics as to how it defines its regional subgroups, one can assume that it uses the U.S. Census borders for the South.

Table II.4.2.b: *Should government play a role in providing access to health insurance?*<sup>1650</sup>

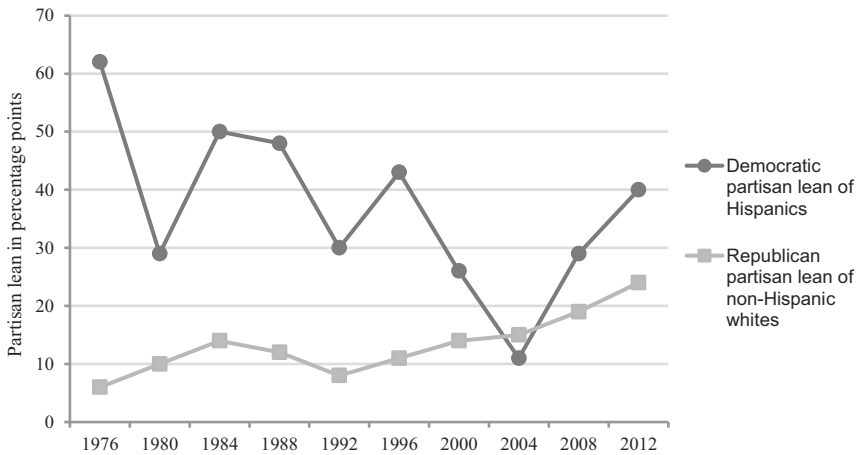
	Individuals should take responsibility for getting insurance	Government should guarantee health insurance for all citizens
All Americans	37 %	40 %
White Evangelicals	62 %	20 %
Hispanics	23 %	49 %
18–29 year olds	32 %	34 %
Northeast	31 %	43 %
Midwest	40 %	39 %
South	40 %	37 %
West	34 %	42 %

### Hispanics to the left – Whites to the right

The strong difference in opinion between Hispanics and Republicans (and by extension the latter's primary electoral bloc, non-Hispanic whites) is not just showcased through the myriad of surveys and polls we have just seen. Presidential contests over the last few decades also indicate a rift between both ethnicities that appears to have widened once again in recent years as the *southernized* Republican Party has turned away from immigration reform and embraced a more nativist approach. Hispanics have in recent decades been some of the most reliably Democratic voters, a finding attested to by figure II.4.2.e. It depicts the Democratic partisan lean of the Hispanic electorate compared to the overall electorate, calculated by subtracting the Democratic national margin from the winning margin of the Democratic candidate among Hispanic voters. For white voters their Republican lean is calculated in a similar manner by subtracting the national Republican margin from the GOP margin within the white community. The drop in Republican lean among whites seen in both 1992 and 1996 is to a certain extent attributable to the strong third party candidacy of Ross Perot who fared particularly well among white voters, thus siphoning some votes off the Republican candidates in both contests.<sup>1651</sup> As we can see both Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites have consistently leaned either to the left or right respectively of the general electorate.

1650 Cf. Brookings Institution 2013: *Survey Finds Ambivalence on Obamacare and the Proper Role of Government*, November 13. Data based on the Public Religion Research Institute, American Values Survey, October 2013.

1651 In 1992, Perot won 21 percent of white voters, compared to shares of 7, 14, and 15 percent respectively among African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans.



**Figure II.4.2.e:** Partisan lean of Hispanics (Democratic) and non-Hispanic whites (Republican) in presidential elections, 1976–2012.<sup>1652</sup>

Barack Obama's 44-point victory among Hispanics in 2012 along with his national four-point victory indicate that the Hispanic electorate was 40 points more Democratic than the wider electorate. The smallest Democratic lean of Hispanics occurred in 2004 when President Bush lost the community by just nine points which – along with his rounded down national victory of two points – constituted a Hispanic Democratic lean of eleven points. Aside from that outlier – and some scholars and analysts have disputed whether that year's exit polls accurately depicted the Hispanic vote<sup>1653</sup> – the Hispanic Democratic lean never dropped below 26 points during the period spanning ten presidential elections. On the non-Hispanic white side, we see a somewhat steady progression towards apparently increased Republicanism aside from the aforementioned elections of the 1990s. While the Republican lean of the white electorate vis-à-vis the general one came in at ten points when Ronald Reagan was first elected in 1980, it failed to expand considerably over the next two decades,

1652 Own calculations based on election results and exit poll data. For election results cf. Leip 2014, for exit poll data cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.

1653 Cf. The 45 percent share among Hispanic voters George W. Bush won according to the major exit poll conducted for the national networks received a fair bit of criticism. One key point of contention was the apparent overrepresentation of rural and suburban Hispanics which skewed the results in a more Republican direction. Cf. Leal, Barreto, Lee, de la Garza 2005: "The Latino Vote in the 2004 Election." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 38(1), pp. 41–49, here pp. 42–43. On its part, the Pew Research Center put John Kerry's lead over President Bush in 2004 at 18 points (with Bush winning 40 percent of the Hispanic vote) rather than the 9 points reported by most other exit polls, driving the Hispanic Democratic lean up to 20 points. Cf. Lopez, Taylor 2012: "Latino Voters in the 2012 Election." *Pew Research Center*, November 7, p. 4.



still standing at 14 and 15 points respectively in both 2000 and 2004. The two most recent elections have seen the emergence of a strong fault line between the two ethnicities though as white Republican leans increased to 19 and then 24 points. Looking at the actual data does indicate a degree of movement towards increased Republican affiliation among certain white segments – as already talked about in chapter II.1.3, Southern whites in particular have bucked national trends and become even more entrenched in their Republican affiliation in recent years while the trend outside the South is not as clear cut. It most certainly warrants remembering though that while the white Republican lean in 2008 was substantially higher than in both 2004 and 2000, John McCain’s winning margin among whites (twelve points) nonetheless actually stood below President Bush’s in that segment of the electorate (17 points in 2004 and 13 points in 2000) indicating that some claims about a supposed large scale white defection of the Democratic Party should perhaps be reconsidered or at least put in the context of the demographic changes that have occurred over the past few decades. The argument can most certainly be made that instead of moving into the Republican camp, increases in Republican lean among non-Hispanic whites are to a certain extent just an artifact of the increased electoral weight minorities possess with each passing election. As these largely Democratic groups constitute a larger segment of the electorate, the Republican lean of non-Hispanic whites will inevitably increase even if the voting patterns remain unchanged within the white community due to the overall electorate steadily moving to the left with each successive election as liberal-leaning minorities increase their share of it. One would for example be forgiven for thinking that the white electorate has moved substantially to the right since 1988, considering that its Republican partisan lean doubled from 12 points to 24 in 2012. Yet as we already saw in the introduction to this chapter, there was little discernible movement in partisan preferences between the two elections as whites cast around 60 percent of their vote for Republican candidates on both occasions.<sup>1654</sup>

At the same time though, the two most recent elections do reveal an interesting trend. As the Democratic lean and winning margins have once again surged among Hispanic voters, their non-Hispanic white counterparts appear to have moved in the opposite direction with Mitt Romney actually faring better among whites than George W. Bush did during both of his presidential runs – reaching electoral heights among whites that both Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush obtained in 1980 and 1988. On the Hispanic side, the apparent repercussions of the GOP’s rejection of George W. Bush ethos of “compassion conservatism” that tacitly approved of a government more involved in the battle

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1654 For similar calculations and extended analysis of white voting patterns cf. Abramowitz, Teixeira 2013.

against poverty and his failed promise of immigration reform have come to light, two course corrections to the right attributable to a lack of support found both within the *southernized* congressional GOP and at the base. It appears that we are ultimately witnessing the signs of an increasing polarization of the electorate along ethnic lines, a trend that has of course been a staple of American politics for a while now but one that may accelerate even further in the future as both parties are increasingly seen as the almost official representatives of certain racial and ethnic groups. Some analysts thus do believe that the GOP will be able to expand its margins among white voters even further in future elections which may actually suffice in getting the party's candidates past 270 electoral votes, at least in the short term.<sup>1655</sup> In order to truly find out if the white movement towards the GOP is a blip or a continued shift we will of course have to await future election results. One thing appears rather certain though: With the demographic trends being what they are, a potentially increasing ethnic and racial partisan polarization is a development that does not bode well for the GOP.

## Conclusion

As also illustrated by the once again increasing Democratic lean of the Hispanic electorate, the vast difference in opinion between themselves and the Republican Party has not gone unnoticed within the Hispanic community. The extensive 2013 Hispanic Values survey by the Public Religion Research Institute is another testament to the uphill battle that Republicans will have to fight in the coming years if not decades and the beating the party's image has taken in recent years as Southerners and Tea Partiers have moved the party's ideological foundations ever further away from George W. Bush's policy of "compassionate conservatism" which for quite a few on the populist right had always been a mere fig leaf and nice repackaging of big government conservatism. While 47 percent of Hispanics had a favorable opinion of the GOP shortly after George W. Bush had been re-elected on a platform of comprehensive immigration reform and overhauling the education system that share had halved to 24 percent by 2013, just marginally better than the Tea Party which elicited a favorable response among 20 percent of Hispanics.<sup>1656</sup> Less than a decade after President Bush won a remarkable share of Hispanic voters, today's Republican Party is widely per-

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1655 Political analyst Sean Trende puts it like this: "I don't see any compelling reason why these trends [Trende is referring to whites moving into the Republican camp] can't continue, and why a Republican couldn't begin to approach Ronald Reagan's 30-point win with whites from 1984 in a more neutral environment than Reagan enjoyed." Trende 2013b: "Does GOP Have to Pass Immigration Reform?" *RealClearPolitics*, June 25.

1656 Cf. Jones, Cox, and Navarro-Rivera 2013, p. 30.

ceived by the very same electorate as hostile towards them and the issues their community cares about.<sup>1657</sup> Asked to name the first word or phrase that entered their mind about either party, almost half (48 percent to be precise) of all associations made by Hispanics respondents regarding the GOP were negative compared to a share of just 22 percent when it came to their Democratic opponents. At the other end of the spectrum a mere 11 percent of all Hispanic adults had associations with the Republican Party off the top of their heads that were positive (such as being patriotic) while Democrats evoked positive connotations among 35 percent of those surveyed, with being “for the people” and fighting for fairness and equality coming in as the top two positive features attached to the Democratic Party.<sup>1658</sup> All in all, the primary negative responses provoked by the GOP were that it was the party of the rich and corporations (15 percent), racist, intolerant or anti-immigrant (10 percent) and old-fashioned or out of touch (5 percent)<sup>1659</sup> – one cannot help but feel that the latter traits would also spring to mind if liberals (and some moderates) were asked to describe white Southerners. Moreover highlighting that the extremism and aversion to compromise found in the South and among Tea Partiers has not gone unnoticed among Hispanics, 41 percent of them also felt that the Republican Party was the more extremist one while just 18 percent instead levied this accusation against their Democratic counterparts.<sup>1660</sup>

Contrary to the claim made by Reagan and various other Republicans since, Hispanics are not Republicans who have just failed to figure out where their natural political home is located. The data on the preceding pages as well as the electoral habits of Hispanics paint a clear and easily interpretable picture: Hispanics know exactly who are. They are economic liberals with social matters playing at best a subservient role in their decision making process – an ideological preference they are keenly aware of as evidenced by their staunch support for the Democratic Party and its candidates. Hispanics prefer an activist government that lends a helping hand to those in need while rejecting the same degree of activism when it comes to legislating morality. Cosmetic changes in the Republican approach to the role of government will not yield noticeable improvements for the party among Hispanic voters – for now.

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1657 76 percent of Hispanics for example felt President Obama cared “a lot” or “some” about the issues and concerns of the Hispanic community, as did 72 percent when asked about the Democratic Party in general. Just 39 percent felt the GOP expressed a similar degree of interest in Hispanic concerns. Cf. Lopez, Taylor, Funk, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013: “On Immigration Policy, Deportation Relief Seen As More Important Than Citizenship.” *Pew Research Center*, December 19, p. 34.

1658 Cf. Jones, Cox, and Navarro-Rivera 2013, p. 31.

1659 Cf. *ibid.*

1660 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32.

### II.4.3 Trends within the Hispanic community that could favor the GOP

Many on America's right fear that the increasing number of Hispanic citizens and voters may very well change the country beyond recognition – and not to their or the nation's advantage. The underlying fear – that is so frequently expressed by those within the Tea Party movement in particular – is one of a future United States in which the values that have made America great and exceptional, its individualism and belief in small government and the free market, are replaced by supposedly alien Hispanic values that could not only threaten to diminish America's prowess but also, according to some of the bleakest scenarios, split the country into a nation of two distinct cultural and lingual spheres with horrific consequences.<sup>1661</sup> As we have seen already in this book, conservative public officials quite often stand to gain from drumming up fear and anger over the thorny matter of immigration reform as it galvanizes a base increasingly worried about its own social status while feeling threatened by the power wielded by a burgeoning minority community. The following chapter will show though that perhaps some of those fears are unwarranted. There is ample evidence that increasing exposure to American society and its views and values correlates with a mindset in the Hispanic community that is also increasingly open to the some of the key tenets espoused by the Republican Party thanks to a significant degree of cultural assimilation. This by no means indicates that Hispanics will become glowing Reaganites over the coming decades but it does perhaps present the GOP with an opening for sufficient gains within the Hispanic community that provide the party with a path back into the White House if winning margins among non-Hispanic whites are also kept at current levels.

#### Growth in Hispanic Protestantism

Denominational changes among Hispanics could very well turn out to be the key in Republican attempts at winning over Hispanics. According to a number of Pew surveys, the share of Hispanic Catholics within the Latino community dropped from 70 percent in 2002<sup>1662</sup> to 62 percent by 2011<sup>1663</sup> before reaching a

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1661 Cf. Huntington 2004 as well as chapter II.3.1 on immigration preferences within the Tea Party.

1662 Cf. Pew Hispanic Center, Kaiser Family Foundation 2002, p. 53.

1663 Cf. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, Velasco 2012, p. 35.

new low of 55 percent in 2013.<sup>1664</sup> Conversion to Protestant denominations has allowed this type of faith on the other hand to increase its size among Hispanics. The 2013 Hispanic Values Survey by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) asked Hispanic adults for their current religious affiliation and the one they had during their childhood years. The results once again show a strong decline in Catholicism. While the share of Roman-Catholics decreased from 69 percent during their childhood years to 53 percent today, evangelical Protestant affiliation almost doubled from seven to 13 percent with mainline Protestant affiliation expanding its nine percent childhood share to twelve percent.<sup>1665</sup> This trend becomes even more pronounced if we move past changes occurring during a person's coming of age process and take a look across different generations of Hispanics that demonstrate the impact of prolonged exposure to American culture. While 69 percent of foreign-born, i.e. "first generation", Hispanics subscribed to the Catholic faith, only 40 percent of third or later generation Hispanics did so as well (see table II.4.3.a). The share of Protestants within both groups simultaneously increased from 16 percent among the first to 30 percent among members of the third generation. In almost all generational brackets Evangelicals constitute around two thirds of the Protestant Hispanic population, an important factor to keep in mind as we assess this group's positions on a variety of key policy questions over the following pages.

**Table II.4.3.a: Religious affiliation by generation among Hispanics (in percent):<sup>1666</sup>**

	U.S. Hispanics	Foreign born	Native born	Second Generation	Third + Generation
Catholic	62	69	51	59	40
Protestant	19	16	22	18	30
<i>Evangelical</i>	13	13	14	10	21
Unaffiliated	14	9	20	18	24

While the numbers in table II.4.3.a do demonstrate the significant growth in Protestantism they also reveal that increased "Americanness" is a double edged sword as the share of unaffiliated Hispanics – those who subscribe to no particular faith at all or are either agnostic or atheist – also rises substantially as we move through the generations. As we will address in closer detail in the chapter on the *secularization of America* (II.4.6), these voters are some of the most Democratic ones to be found in the electorate. The aforementioned PRRI Hispanic Values Survey also showed that the ageing process not only went hand in

1664 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014d: *The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States*, May 7, p. 6.

1665 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera 2013, p. 9.

1666 Cf. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, Velasco 2012, pp. 35–36.

hand with growth in Protestantism but correlated with a higher likelihood to be religiously unaffiliated as well: While a mere five percent of Hispanic respondents had no religious affiliation in their childhood years that share more than doubled to twelve percent in adulthood.<sup>1667</sup> This dual trend is also reflected in the beliefs – or lack thereof – of Hispanic Millennials (young adults usually between the ages of 18 and 29, in this particular survey 18 to 28) who are more likely to be Protestant *and* religiously unaffiliated than preceding generations of Hispanics – primarily of course at the expense of Catholicism. While three quarters of Baby Boomer Hispanics for example still described themselves as Catholics according to data from 2012, that share dropped to a mere third among Hispanic Millennials.<sup>1668</sup>

Why may the growth of Latino Protestantism provide Republicans with a modicum of hope though? The partisan ties of the Hispanic Protestant community to the Democratic Party are far weaker than those of Hispanic Catholics, a trend particularly pronounced among Hispanic evangelical Protestants. In 2007, 37 percent of eligible voters in the evangelical Hispanic community identified as Republicans while just 32 percent described themselves as Democrats. Among mainline Protestant Hispanics, the split in partisan identification was 42 to 22 percent in favor of the Democrats, still slightly better in Republican terms than the 48 to 17 percent Democratic margin found among Hispanic Catholics.<sup>1669</sup> President Bush also did particularly well during his 2004 re-election among Hispanic Protestants after this group had still been roughly evenly divided four years earlier.<sup>1670</sup> Data from 2012 puts Governor Romney's showing

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1667 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera 2013, p. 9. Cf. also Ghani 2014: "Different destinations for U.S. Hispanics, Latin Americans who leave Catholic Church." *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, November 24. Among former Hispanic Catholics that reside in the United States, we see an almost even split between those who are now Protestants (41 percent) and those who are unaffiliated (49 percent; data from 2013). This is in stark contrast to other former Catholics from Latin America who are far more likely to join a Protestant church than to become religiously unaffiliated.

1668 Cf. The Barna Group 2012: *A Shifting Faith*. 19 percent of Hispanic Millennials identified as Protestant in the survey, compared to shares of 17 percent among Generation Xers, 15 percent among Boomers and 11 percent among "Elders" (usually referred to as the "silent" generation by other polling firms). 21 percent of Hispanic Millennials on the other hand also answered that they subscribed to a non-Christian faith or no faith at all. Only 16 percent of Generation Xers and Elders along with 11 percent of Boomers had the same weak ties to established Christian churches.

1669 Cf. Pew Research Center 2007, p. 78.

1670 According to data from the Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics in Green, Smidt, Guth and Kellstedt 2005 (p. 2) Bush won Hispanic Protestants by a margin of 63 to 37 percent while losing Hispanic Catholics by a margin of 69 to 31 percent. The National Annenberg Election Survey came up with slightly different numbers that nonetheless paint a similar picture: Here President Bush won Hispanic Protestants by 14 points while this group had been split 50–50 in 2000 (cf. Annenberg Public Policy Center 2004: *Bush 2004*

within this demographic at around 35 to 40 percent depending on which poll one consults. According to an Hispanic presidential exit poll for example, Mitt Romney lost Hispanic “born-again” Christians by only ten points, winning 44 percent of them – a remarkable result considering the 64 point deficit indicated by the same poll among Hispanic Catholics.<sup>1671</sup> Ronald Brownstein of the National Journal claims that the governor won “just over 40 percent of Hispanic Protestants, many of them evangelical social conservatives.”<sup>1672</sup> Regardless of the specific data, these numbers serve to highlight that growth in Hispanic Protestant groups most certainly aids the GOP in its quest to get to the magic 40 percent mark among Hispanics.

The reasons for such an affinity can be found in the basic views and values of the (evangelical) Protestant Hispanic community which resemble those of their non-Hispanic white counterparts in a number of ways. 50 percent of Hispanic evangelical Protestants for example consider religion to be the most important thing in their lives with another 36 percent regarding it as one of the more important things. A mere 12 percent of Hispanic Catholics on the other hand place religion at the very top of things that matter to them with the share rising to 22 percent among Hispanic mainline Protestants.<sup>1673</sup> Religion also takes a far more central role in the decision making process of Hispanic Evangelicals. While 66 percent of both Hispanic adults and Hispanic Catholics answered in a 2006 Pew survey that religious beliefs played a very important or somewhat important role in influencing their political thinking that share shot up to 86 percent among Hispanic evangelical Protestants. Mainline Protestants on the other hand were roughly in line with the general Hispanic community, as 65 percent placed such weight on religious beliefs.<sup>1674</sup> As we can see in table II.4.3.b, the difference is particularly pronounced if we look at the extreme ends of the spectrum in terms of the importance placed on religion. While little over a third of Hispanic Catholics and mainline Protestants are heavily influenced by their religion when it comes to their own personal political views, over 60 percent of evangelical Hispanics have religion at the center of their political decision-making process.

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*Gains among Hispanics Strongest with Men, And in South and Northeast, Annenberg Data Show*, December 21, p. 4).

1671 Cf. *impreMedia*, *Latino Decisions* 2012, p. 1.

1672 Brownstein 2013.

1673 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera 2013, p. 10.

1674 Cf. Pew Research Center 2007, p. 58.

**Table II.4.3.b:** *Generally speaking, how important are your religious beliefs in influencing your political thinking?*<sup>1675</sup>

Among...	Very important	Not at all important
All Hispanics	38 %	17 %
Catholics	36 %	15 %
Evangelicals	62 %	6 %
Mainline Protestant	38 %	20 %
Secular	14 %	44 %

Unsurprisingly, Hispanic Protestants and their evangelical brethren in particular take a noticeably more conservative stance on a number of key socio-cultural issues compared to their Catholic counterparts. Similar to the trends seen in the white evangelical community, some data also indicates a hardening of positions. According to the 2000 and 2004 National Surveys of Religion and Politics, the pro-life share among Latino Protestants (this particular survey made no intra-denominational distinction) increased from 47 to 63 percent over the four-year period, making them only marginally less pro-life than white Evangelicals where the pro-life/pro-choice split stood at 70 to 30 percent in 2004. Hispanic Catholics also shifted to the right but did so in a far less pronounced manner as the share of pro-life supporters increased by six percentage points to 56 percent.<sup>1676</sup> More recent data from 2013 also serves to illustrate the split on abortion. While Hispanic Catholics were virtually evenly divided as 47 percent argued for the continued legality of abortions in most or all cases and 52 percent took an opposing position, 74 percent of Hispanic evangelical Protestants felt abortions should be illegal in most or all cases as 48 percent of them overall argued for an outright ban on abortions. Hispanic mainline Protestants were also less pro-choice than their Catholic counterparts, but only marginally so as 41 percent still supported keeping abortions legal.<sup>1677</sup> This divide is also replicated on the other key culture war issue of gay marriage. The same survey showed support for same-sex marriage coming in at 62 percent among Hispanic Catholics but standing at just 21 percent among Hispanic Evangelicals with mainline Protestants split down the middle as 47 percent supported and 50 percent opposed allowing gay couples to marry.<sup>1678</sup>

Such views extend beyond some of the more salient culture war issues into other areas of day to day life as well. While almost 60 percent of Hispanic

1675 Cf. *ibid.*

1676 Cf. Koopman 2009: "Religion and American Public Policy: Morality Polices and Beyond." In: Smidt, Kellstedt, Guth (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics*, pp. 546–572, here p. 560.

1677 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera 2013, p. 20.

1678 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 23.



Catholics for example feel it is acceptable to have a child out of wedlock only 44 percent of evangelical Hispanics take a similarly lenient position.<sup>1679</sup> The following tables illustrate that, when compared to their Hispanic Catholic and non-Hispanic white evangelical compatriots, Hispanic (evangelical) Protestants either often lean towards sharing a closer bond with their evangelical brethren or represent a middle way between the more liberal leaning Hispanic Catholic and more conservative white evangelical communities. Most of the data does not differentiate between mainline and evangelical Protestants within the Hispanic community, so their more liberal attitudes vis-à-vis white Evangelicals should not come as a surprise. As already mentioned earlier though, Evangelicals constitute around two thirds of all Hispanic Protestants and when these are polled separately, the gap between this group and white evangelical Protestants becomes even smaller (see for example table II.4.3.e). Table II.4.3.c highlights the position of Hispanic Protestants on some of the most basic socio-cultural societal questions and why the denomination's growth may very well be a boon to the GOP. Whether it is the question of new lifestyles having a detrimental impact, the importance of family ties, tolerance of other people's morals, or an adjustment of moral views to adapt to a changing world, Hispanic Protestants take a more conservative approach than their Hispanic Catholic counterparts.

**Table II.4.3.c: Societal Attitudes by Religious Tradition (percent agreeing):<sup>1680</sup>**

	New lifestyles are destroying society	Country would have fewer problems if more emphasis was put on family ties	Morals of others should be tolerated	Moral views should be adjusted to a changing world
<b>Evangelical Protestants</b>	74	86	52	35
<b>Hispanic Protestants</b>	73	77	61	50
<b>Hispanic Catholics</b>	62	72	68	68

Table II.4.3.d addresses the question of key gay rights, showcasing opposition to the right of homosexuals to adopt children and serve in the armed forces as well as resistance towards laws to ensure the protection of homosexuals against discrimination in the workplace. Similar to the data in the previous table, we see a discernible pattern as Hispanic Protestants stand in between the other two

1679 Cf. Pew Hispanic Center, Kaiser Family Foundation 2002, p. 54.

1680 2008 American National Election Study data, in: Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 184.

groups. On all three questions they are more likely to oppose gay rights than Hispanic Catholics.

**Table II.4.3.d: Opposition to Gay Rights by Religious Tradition (in percent):**<sup>1681</sup>

	Gay Adoption	Laws to protect homosexuals against job discrimination	Military service of homosexuals
Evangelical Protestants	59	34	29
Hispanic Protestants	50	32	27
Hispanic Catholics	42	26	20

Data in table II.4.3.e specifically refers to “evangelical Protestants” aside from the results in column three that address the key question if respondents believe homosexuality to be an innate trait. As one would expect instead of representing a middle way between Hispanic Catholicism and white evangelical Protestantism, Hispanic evangelical Protestants are much more in tune with non-Hispanic whites who share their faith. Religiousness plays a similarly important role for both evangelical camps in shaping their political thinking which unsurprisingly leads to quite similar partisan preferences as highlighted by the support President Bush received from both groups in the 2004 election.

**Table II.4.3.e: Political characteristics by Racial and Ethnic differences (percent agreeing):**<sup>1682</sup>

	Religious beliefs shape my political thinking	Homosexuality is a way of life that should be accepted by society	People are born gay/sexuality is due to upbringing or environment <sup>1683</sup>	Presidential vote in 2004: Bush
White Evangelical Protestants	30	27	25/54	80
Hispanic Evangelical Protestants	30	32	30/55*	70
Hispanic Catholics	9	64	51/27	42

\* denotes Hispanic Protestants

1681 Cf. *ibid.* p. 190.

1682 Data from the Pew Forum Religious Landscape Survey 2007, in: Smidt 2013, p. 204.

1683 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera 2014, p. 29.

Just as is the case with younger white evangelical Protestants, Hispanic Protestants from the same age bracket stand out when compared to the wider young adult population, which is in the case of the following survey made up of “college-age” Millennials (18 to 24 year olds). Opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage are far more pronounced among non-Hispanic white and Hispanic (evangelical) Protestants than they are among other Millennial groups, such as for example Roman-Catholics (table II.4.3.f). While 44 percent of all 18 to 24 year olds expressed a pro-life position, those shares stood at 71 and 88 percent respectively among the Hispanic Protestant and white evangelical subsamples.

**Table II.4.3.f:** *Positions of selected college-age Millennials on abortion and same-sex marriage:*<sup>1684</sup>

	Abortion should be illegal in most or all cases (in %)	Support for same-sex marriage (in %)
All college-age Millennials	44	59
Catholic millennials	51	66
White evangelical Millennials	88	27
Hispanic Protestant Millennials	71	34

Even on an issue such as the impact immigrants are perceived to have on the cultural traditions of the United States where one would probably expect as little disagreement within the Hispanic community as possible, Hispanic Evangelicals do stand out although less so than they do on the cultural issues mentioned on the previous pages. Asked if they believed that the growing number of newcomers arriving in the United States threatened America’s values or strengthened the country’s society, a third of Hispanic evangelical Protestants felt these newcomers represented a threat to the traditional customs of the nation – far less than the share of non-Hispanic white evangelical Protestants who hold such a view (58 percent according to a recent Pew survey)<sup>1685</sup> but still more than the share of Hispanics in general who expressed this belief.

1684 Cf. Jones, Cox, and Banchoff 2012, pp. 25–27.

1685 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013f: *Most Say Illegal Immigrants Should Be Allowed to Stay, But Citizenship Is More Divisive*, March 28, p. 8.

**Table II.4.3.g:** *Do newcomers from other countries threaten traditional American customs and values or do they strengthen American society (all respondents Hispanic)?*<sup>1686</sup>

Among...	Threaten	Strengthen
All Hispanics	23 %	66 %
Catholics	22 %	67 %
Evangelicals	33 %	59 %
Mainline Protestant	21 %	69 %
Secular	20 %	69 %

On social issues then, we can note that the differences in opinion highlighted earlier between the GOP and Hispanics are far smaller when Republican positions are compared to the stance taken by Hispanic (evangelical) Protestants. At the same time though, some factors do indicate that this group will take some convincing or a degree of moderation by the Republican Party on certain non-social matters if they are to play a key role in GOP efforts to win over parts of the Hispanic community. As table II.4.3.h demonstrates on arguably the most salient political issue in recent years – health care reform – evangelical Hispanics are as liberal as their non-evangelical compatriots. Support for a more active government is also equally high with Hispanic Evangelicals only standing out on the question of personal responsibility for one’s hard life as they take a less liberal position on this topic. Even here though they are noticeably more inclined to blame a lack of government services than their non-Hispanic evangelical kin are.

**Table II.4.3.h:** *Percent who say... (in percent):*<sup>1687</sup>

Among...	They favor government-guaranteed health insurance	They would rather pay higher taxes for more government services	Poor people have hard lives due to lack of government services
All Hispanics	69	64	64
Catholics	69	64	65
Evangelicals	70	66	57
Secular	75	68	66
<i>Non-Hispanic White</i>	64	<i>n/a</i>	52
<i>White Evangelical</i>	58	<i>n/a</i>	42

1686 Pew Research Center 2007, p. 64.

1687 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 73.

## Integration and assimilation

A fair degree of the fear today's conservatives have about the influx of Hispanics into the United States is based on the widely held belief that contrary to previous groups of immigrants, Hispanics possess a unique objection to integration. Samuel P. Huntington for example levied the accusation that Hispanics even took pride in retaining their Spanish language skills, with factors such as immigrant concentration often providing little incentive for immigrants and their descendants to improve English proficiency. Even worse, in his eyes, were the "irreconcilable differences" inherent to the distinctive cultural beliefs systems that separate Hispanics from "Anglos" and the "often contemptuous"<sup>1688</sup> attitude Hispanic migrants supposedly display and possess towards the customs of their new homeland. If one were to subscribe to Huntington's interpretations of U.S. culture and the static views he observes within the Hispanic community, limiting Hispanics immigration is the clear conclusion you would have to arrive at if you were a Republican legislator in particular. The problem just is that Huntington's assertions fail to stand up to closer scrutiny which should give pause to those on the right who see Hispanics as a threat to American exceptionalism and a central unshakeable pillar of future Democratic dominance.

Let us start off with English proficiency. Contrary to Huntington's claims, the spread of the English language within the Hispanic community differs little from other immigrant groups, regardless of the environment these Hispanics find themselves in. Pooled data from 2002 and 2004 showed that while a mere six percent of first generation Hispanic immigrants were "English dominant" – meaning they possessed a high degree of English proficiency and were more comfortable in using English rather than Spanish – those shares increased to 32 and 71 percent among second and third generation Hispanics respectively. A mere two percent of third or higher generation Hispanics on the other hand remained "Spanish dominant."<sup>1689</sup> Such assimilationist trends are also reflected in the support for making English the official language of the United States (see table II.4.3.i), a topic every now and then brought up by those on the right who fear for the country's cultural heritage. While only 32 percent of all Hispanics approved of such a move (far less than the 74 percent of whites) in the aforementioned dataset,

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1688 Huntington 2004.

1689 Citrin, Lerman, Murakami, and Pearson 2007: "Testing Huntington: Is Hispanic Immigration a Threat to American Identity?" *Perspectives on Politics* 5(1), pp. 31–48, here p. 36. More recent data (gathered in 2013) from the Pew Research Center paints a similar picture. It shows that among first generation Hispanics in the United States just 5 percent mainly use English – among second and third generation Hispanics those shares stand at 42 and 76 percent respectively. Cf. Krogstad, Gonzalez-Barrera 2015: "A majority of English-speaking Hispanics in the U.S. are bilingual." *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, March 24.

third and later generation Hispanics were shown to be only slightly less likely than non-Hispanic whites to support giving English the official language status.

**Table II.4.3.i:** *Support and opposition to making English the official language of the United States (in percent).*<sup>1690</sup>

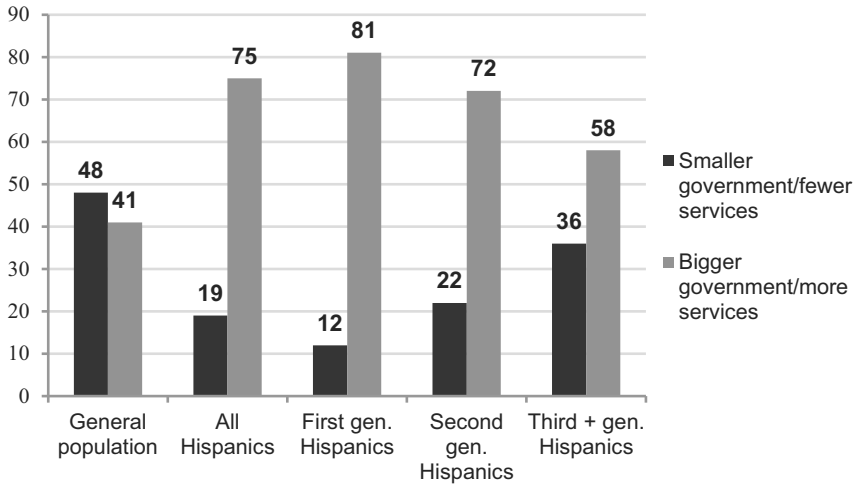
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Favor</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>White</b>	73.7	26.3
<b>Black</b>	71.2	28.8
<b>Asians</b>	69.8	30.2
<b>Hispanics</b>	32.0	69.0
<i>First generation</i>	23.6	76.4
<i>Second generation</i>	43.3	56.7
<i>Third + generation</i>	67.5	32.5

Other facts also disprove Huntington's theory of Hispanic exceptionalism. Just as other immigrant groups did before them, successive generations of Hispanics increasingly perceive themselves as American, severing (or at least loosening) the ties to their ancestral homelands. Asked to name the first or only term they use to describe themselves – the respondent's or parents' country of origin, Latino/Hispanic, or American – 68 percent of first generation Hispanics chose the country of origin in a 2002 survey while just 21 percent of third or higher generation Hispanics did so as well. Instead 57 percent of the latter preferred "American" which just six percent of first generation Hispanics picked.<sup>1691</sup> More importantly for the political parties and their future is the fact that not only are third and later generation Hispanics more proficient in English and likelier to consider themselves "American," their political preferences also provide the GOP and its policies with a more fertile political ground. While 73 percent of first generation Hispanics for example responded in a Pew survey that they were in favor of government-guaranteed health insurance, this share dropped to 60 percent among members of the third and higher generations.<sup>1692</sup> The differences in opinion between the different generations become even more apparent when we once again look at the classic question of whether one supports a bigger government with more services or a smaller government with fewer services (see figure II.4.3). As seen earlier on, Hispanics in general are notably to the left of the general population on the matter. A more detailed breakdown of the generations however illustrates a notable shift to the political center as Hispanics become more integrated into American culture.

1690 1994–2000 Los Angeles County Social Surveys, in: Citrin, Lerman, Murakami, and Pearson 2007, p. 39.

1691 Cf. Pew Hispanic Center, Kaiser Family Foundation 2002, p. 28.

1692 Pew Research Center 2007, p. 74.



**Figure II.4.3:** Preferences for bigger government and more services or smaller government and fewer services (in percent).<sup>1693</sup>

While a mere 12 percent of first generation Hispanics preferred the favored conservative option of a smaller government and fewer services, that share tripled to 36 percent among third and higher generation Hispanics. Other studies also replicate these differences in ideological preferences. The 2013 Hispanic Values Survey by the Public Religion Research Institute for example asked a similar yet slightly different question about the best way of facilitating economic growth: Higher taxes on the wealthy and using government spending to invest in a variety of areas *or* lowering taxes and cutting government spending. While 65 percent of first generation Hispanics favored a more activist government, 42 percent of third generation Hispanics believed that the supply-side approach of lowering taxes and slashing government spending made for a better strategy to achieve higher economic growth, just marginally below the 50 percent who still preferred raising taxes and increasing government spending.<sup>1694</sup> Of course this data still indicates that even among third or higher generation Hispanics majorities continue to opt for Democratic policies on economic matters but the shares found in these surveys are nonetheless close to or even above the aforementioned 40 percent mark among Hispanic voters that is viewed as the key to Republican success in presidential elections.

Another interesting – and perhaps unexpected – trend can be seen when Hispanic partisan preferences are broken down by age cohorts. Data from the Pew Research Center stemming from surveys conducted in 2014 showed that the

<sup>1693</sup> Cf. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, Velasco 2012, p. 31.

<sup>1694</sup> Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera 2013, p. 18.

biggest Democratic lead among Hispanics could be found among “older Boomers” (aged 59 to 68 at the time of the surveys) where the Democratic Party enjoyed a lead of 42 percentage points in partisan affiliation over their Republican counterparts. Among Hispanic “older Millennials” (aged 26 to 33) this lead stood at just 28 points, shrinking even further to 21 points among “younger Millennials” (aged 18 to 25).<sup>1695</sup> More research with bigger sample sizes is necessary though to confirm a possible opening for the GOP among one of the most unlikely Republican demographic groups in the country (Millennial Hispanics).

### Increased affluence and a class cleavage

Unsurprisingly, as Hispanics become more integrated into American culture and as their roots run deeper their wallets also become bigger. While 57 percent of first generation Hispanics for example had an annual household income of less than \$30,000 a year according to data from 2002, that share was substantially lower among third and higher generation Hispanics (33 percent). Almost as many third generation Hispanics had an annual income of \$50,000 or more (31 percent) while only 17 percent of first generation Hispanics reached such income heights.<sup>1696</sup> While some surveys do suggest the non-existence of a class cleavage on a basic question such as the preferred size of government<sup>1697</sup> data on partisanship and presidential voting records indicate that economically more affluent Hispanics are significantly more likely to support the GOP and its low tax policies. According to data from 2011, 70 percent of Hispanics with an annual household income below \$30,000 were Democrats or leaned Democratic. Above \$75,000 though this share dropped to 55 percent. Republican affiliation on the other hand increased by over 150 percent if the two income brackets are compared, rising from 15 to 38 percent.<sup>1698</sup> This cleavage is also evident in presidential elections. While John Kerry won Hispanics with an annual household income below \$35,000 by a margin of two to one in the 2004 presidential contest, there was an almost even split among Hispanics with a household income of

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1695 Data includes leaners. Cf. Pew Research Center 2015a: *A Deep Dive Into Party Affiliation – Detailed Tables: 2014 Party Identification*, April 7, p. 9. When entire cohort groups are assessed, the Democratic lead stands at 33 percentage points among Hispanic Baby Boomers and 24 points among Hispanic Millennials.

1696 Cf. Pew Hispanic Center and Kaiser Family Foundation 2004: *2002 National Survey of Latinos – Survey Brief: Generational Differences*, p. 3.

1697 Cf. Pew Hispanic Center, Kaiser Family Foundation 2002, p. 62.

1698 Cf. Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Motel 2011: *As Deportations Rise to Record Levels, Most Latinos Oppose Obama’s Policy*, p. 30.



\$75,000 or more.<sup>1699</sup> In 2012, President Obama carried 82 percent of Hispanics with an annual household income of less than \$50,000. Hispanics making more than this also supported the president but did so by a substantially narrower margin as only 59 percent of them cast their ballot for the incumbent while 39 percent preferred Governor Romney instead.<sup>1700</sup>

## Conclusion

Regardless of what factor in particular drives Hispanics to the center – whether it is increased affluence, membership in Protestant churches, or a general exposure to the American tenets of individualism and a belief in the strength and virtues of a free-market economy – the data should provide Republicans with at least a semblance of hope for the long term future of their party. Contrary to claims made by some on the right about the alien “big government” values and customs of Hispanics, they fail to differ substantially from previous generations of immigrants in their path towards integration. Particularly on the question of racial affiliation, future shifts may be quite substantial as Hispanics often “see race as a measure of belonging, and whiteness as a measure of inclusion, or of perceived inclusion.”<sup>1701</sup> Being the party of the white electorate may therefore in future years not represent the same kind of obstacle to winning Hispanic voters that it is today. Seeing as other white immigrant groups eventually became an integral part of today’s Republican coalition, conservatives should recognize the potential opportunities offered by the Hispanic electorate in the GOP’s quest to broaden its coalition even if the naturalization of Hispanics would in the short to near term future most certainly favor their Democratic opponents. Given the right approach, winning 40 percent of the Hispanic electorate ultimately appears at least not completely out of the question as Hispanics become more integrated into American society.

### II.4.4 Virginia, Colorado, Nevada – Who will be next to turn blue?

Comparing the 2004 and 2012 electoral maps of the United States leaves one with a picture of a red army retreating further and further towards its Southern heartland as blue troops appear to be advancing on all fronts, conquering the

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1699 Kerry won those affluent Hispanics by 52 to 48 percent. Cf. Annenberg Public Policy Center 2004, p. 4.

1700 Cf. Lopez, Taylor 2012, p. 7.

1701 Tafoya 2004: “Shades of Belonging.” *Pew Research Center*, December 6, p. 1.

parts of the peripheral South as well as the Mountain West that once upon a time used to be solidly Republican. All in all, Mitt Romney won seven fewer states than George W. Bush did eight years earlier – Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, and Virginia. In four of those states as well as North Carolina – which turned out to be Romney’s narrowest victory – the partisan shifts over a mere dozen years have been nothing short of spectacular, as indicated in the following table:

**Table II.4.4.a:** *Popular vote winning margins between the 2000 and 2012 presidential elections (winning margin of either party in percentage points).<sup>1702</sup>*

State	2000	2004	2008	2012	Diff. 00–12
New Mexico	0.06 DEM	0.79 GOP	15.13 DEM	10.15 DEM	+ 10.09 D
Nevada	3.55 GOP	2.59 GOP	12.49 DEM	6.68 DEM	+ 10.23 D
Colorado	8.36 GOP	4.67 GOP	8.95 DEM	5.37 DEM	+ 13.73 D
Virginia	8.03 GOP	8.20 GOP	6.30 DEM	3.88 DEM	+ 11.91 D
North Carolina	12.83 GOP	12.44 GOP	0.32 DEM	2.04 GOP	+ 10.79 D

All of the states have seen shifts to the left of ten or more points with particularly pronounced changes occurring in Colorado. While all five states were to the right of the nation in 2000 – with solid Republican leads in Colorado, North Carolina, and Virginia – four of the states had moved to the left of the country by 2012 as President Obama’s winning margin in those states exceeded his national lead. Even though President Obama lost North Carolina to Mitt Romney in 2012 after winning it four years earlier, it warrants pointing out that the Tar Heel state’s Republican lean was actually smaller in 2012 than in 2008.<sup>1703</sup> While Democrats managed to win just one state – by the slimmest of margins – in the ten tries during the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, this trend has completely reversed over the past two elections as it was the Republicans’ turn to experience an almost complete sweep at the hands of their opponents.

What do these states have in common? All of them have in recent years seen momentous increases in their Hispanic populations (illustrated in table II.4.4.b) with differing degrees of importance on the electoral results as we will see later on in this chapter. The actual numbers by themselves are already impressive enough nationally (as already highlighted in chapter II.4.1) as well as at the state level; increases seen in the share of the population that Hispanics constitute however provide an even better assessment seeing as they also take into account increases in the non-Hispanic population. While the Hispanic share of the

<sup>1702</sup> Data obtained from Leip 2014.

<sup>1703</sup> While North Carolina was 6.94 percentage points to the right of the nation in 2008, the margin had decreased by a full point four years later to just 5.9 points. This calculation compares the state winning margin to the national one.

United States' population increased by 90 percent between 1990 and 2013, it rose by 642 percent in North Carolina, 441 percent in Georgia, 231 percent in Virginia, 164 percent in Nevada, and 93 percent in Florida (see table II.4.4.b). States such as Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas that are included in table II.4.4.b are of course broadly speaking still (sometimes quite staunchly) Republican as indicated by their majorities at the state level but the upsurge in the Hispanic population they have experienced – and in the case of Texas will most certainly continue to see – may ultimately pave the way for turning them purple and, at least in presidential elections, eventually blue.

**Table II.4.4.b:** Increase in Hispanic population shares, 1990–2010/2013 (in percent):<sup>1704</sup>

	Hispanic share 1990	Hispanic share 2000	Hispanic share 2010 (2013)
USA	9.0	12.5	16.3 (17.1)
New Mexico	38.2	42.1	46.3 (47.3)
Texas	25.5	32.0	37.6 (38.4)
Nevada	10.4	19.7	26.5 (27.5)
Florida	12.2	16.8	22.5 (23.6)
Colorado	12.9	17.1	20.7 (21.0)
Georgia	1.7	5.3	8.8 (9.2)
N. Carolina	1.2	4.7	8.4 (8.9)
Virginia	2.6	4.7	7.9 (8.6)

Of course quite a substantial share of these Hispanics are non-citizens and therefore not able to officially take part in elections (although a recent article has claimed that a sometimes decisive share of non-citizens does vote<sup>1705</sup>). None-

1704 For 1990 data cf. Guzmán 2001, p. 4. For 2000 and 2010 data cf. Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert 2011, p. 6. For 2013 data cf. United States Census Bureau 2014b.

1705 In their analysis based on data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), Jesse Richman, Gulshan Chattha, and David Earnest reached the conclusion that 6.4 percent of non-citizens voted in 2008 while two years later that share stood at 2.2 percent. According to their calculations, non-citizens may very have played a decisive role in giving President Obama the 60<sup>th</sup> Senator in 2008 (Al Franken) as well as possibly delivering North Carolina into the Democratic camp the same year. Cf. Richman, Chattha, and Earnest 2014: “Do non-citizens vote in U.S. elections?” *Electoral Studies* 36, pp. 149–157. Future analysis and closer inspection of the authors’ findings and their methodology will reveal to what extent non-citizen voting genuinely affects the outcome of elections. Richard L. Hasen of the University of California (Irvine) has indeed found that “[u]nlike impersonation fraud, noncitizen voting cannot be dismissed as a Republican fantasy,” but that ultimately it “is a real, if small, problem.” Hasen 2012: “A Détente Before the Election.” *New York Times*, August 5. Michael Tesler on the other hand raised some questions as to whether Richman and his colleagues’ findings might lose some of their substance and usefulness if one takes into account that some of the “non-citizens” that reported to have voted may just have misreported their own citizenship status. Tesler’s analysis of the CCES

theless, Hispanics have been able to increase their clout in elections as well. In North Carolina for example, the Hispanic share of the presidential electorate rose from one to four percent between 2004 and 2012.<sup>1706</sup> In a close election, this increase can make a vital difference. Moreover, as more and more members of the Hispanic community obtain American citizenship, their role in turning former GOP strongholds into battleground states will only increase even further. At least when it comes to the two peripheral Southern states of Virginia and North Carolina though, a number of other broader demographic trends outside of the Hispanic community's growth in all likelihood played a more decisive role in making these states more competitive – factors such as the liberal values of Americans who have come of age in recent years and migration trends among younger college-educated voters who have headed to the growing South<sup>1707</sup> along with the declining share of not infrequently socially conservative less educated whites within the electorate.<sup>1708</sup> It is nonetheless worth remembering that these trends – some of which will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter – are putting the GOP at a disadvantage for reasons similar to its Hispanic problem, namely the fact that young adults find little appeal in the party's anti-statist evangelist message.

We should however not dismiss the part played by Hispanic growth in the Democratic conquest of a number of key battleground states as depicted in table

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data revealed that one fifth of survey respondents who reported to being non-citizens in 2012 re-interviews had two years earlier answered that they were citizens – Tesler therefore concludes that “[s]ince it's illogical for non-citizens in 2012 to have been American citizens back in 2010, it appears that a substantial number of self-reported non-citizens inaccurately reported their (non)citizenship status in the CCES surveys.” Tesler 2014: “Methodological challenges affect study of non-citizens' voting.” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, October 27.

1706 Cf. CNN 2004d: *North Carolina Exit Poll*, and CNN 2012k: *North Carolina Presidential Race*, November 6.

1707 For an assessment of Southern population trends cf. MacManus 2012: “The South's Changing Demographics.” In: Bullock III, Rozell (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*, pp. 47–79. Young adults have been flocking to the South since the 1980s, attracted by the region's remarkable economic growth. Three of the top five and 10 of the 20 metropolitan statistical areas with the highest migration rates for young professionals (young, single, and college-educated, in other words hardly the traditional Republican voter) could be found in the South during the 1990s and early 2000s (p. 66). M.V. Hood III and Seth McKee's analysis of North Carolina's 2008 presidential vote also arrives at the conclusion that the in-migration of northerners has strengthened the local Democratic Party, a reversal of the trend seen in previous decades when non-Southern migrants to the region tended to provide a vital foundation for the local nascent Republican parties. Cf. Hood III, McKee 2010: “What Made Carolina Blue? In-Migration and the 2008 North Carolina Presidential Vote.” *American Politics Research* 38(2), pp. 266–302.

1708 Between 1988 and 2008 for example, the share of white “working class” voters (within the overall electorate and defined by Teixeira as whites without a college degree) in Florida and Nevada declined by 17 and 24 points respectively. In both states the share of white college graduates (along with minorities of course) increased as well. Cf. Teixeira 2010, p. 13.

II.4.4.a. This apparent centrality of Hispanic growth is illustrated by the changes that have transpired in three states which have become far more Democratic at the presidential level in recent years and for which exit poll data is available for the last three presidential elections: Colorado, Florida, and Nevada (see figure II.4.4.a). In these states, the share of the white electorate decreased substantially between the 2004 and 2012 elections, dropping from 70 to 67 percent in Florida, 77 to 64 percent in Nevada, and 86 to 78 percent in Colorado. During the same period the share of the Hispanic electorate rose from 15 to 17, 10 to 19, and 8 to 14 percent in the respective three states.<sup>1709</sup> In Florida in particular these trends along with a substantial drop in support within the Hispanic community appear to have cost Mitt Romney the state in 2012. While John McCain's winning margin among white Floridians stood at 14 points in 2008, Mitt Romney managed to widen it to 24 points four years later. During the same period President Obama increased his winning margin among the Sunshine State's Hispanic population from 15 to 21 points though, carrying 60 percent of the Hispanic vote in 2012.<sup>1710</sup> Pushing the share of the Democratic vote among Hispanics down to 58 percent (in other words to roughly the same winning margins Obama achieved in 2008) would have allowed Romney to carry Florida.<sup>1711</sup> A substantial reason for this remarkable showing among Hispanics in Florida appears to be the large scale defection of quite possibly the only Hispanic group that has traditionally been staunchly Republican, Cuban-Americans. While both Al Gore and John Kerry won just 25 and 29 percent of the Cuban-American vote in the state respectively, President Obama managed to significantly improve upon those margins, winning 48 percent of them in 2012.<sup>1712</sup> These trends are also

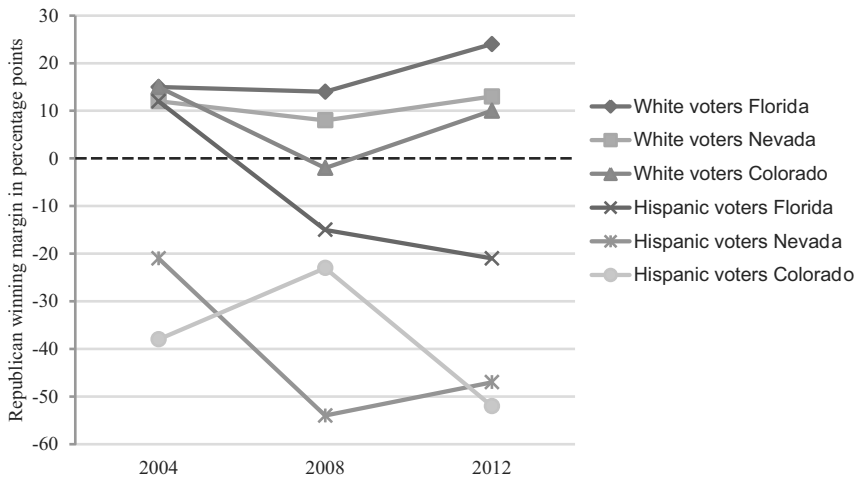
1709 Cf. New York Times 2012d. For 2004 data on Hispanic electorate in Colorado and Nevada cf. CNN 2004a and 2004c: *Colorado/Nevada Exit Poll*, November 2. According to projections by the "States of Change Project," the share of the white electorate as part of the overall electorate will have decreased to 50 percent in Colorado, 41 percent in Florida, and 31 percent in Nevada by 2060 while Hispanics will on the other hand then comprise 37, 35, and 40 percent in the respective three states. Cf. Brownstein 2015a: "The States That Will Pick the President: The Sunbelt." *National Journal*, February 4 for data on Florida and Brownstein 2015b: "The States That Will Pick the President: The Southwest." *National Journal*, February 5 for data on Colorado and Nevada.

1710 Cf. New York Times 2012d.

1711 Cf. Kopicki, Irving 2012: "Assessing How Pivotal the Hispanic Vote Was to Obama's Victory." *New York Times*, November 20.

1712 Cf. Campo-Flores 2012: "Cuban-Americans Move Left." *Wall Street Journal*, November 8. This is indicative of the broader trend of Cuban-Americans moving away from the Republican Party. While 64 percent of them (across the country) were Republicans or Republican-leaning Independents in 2002, the share had decreased to just 47 percent eleven years later as Democrats were trailing the GOP by just three points among Cuban-Americans in 2013. The reasons behind this shift can primarily be found in the more Democratic leaning partisan preferences of younger Cuban-Americans. Cf. Krogstad 2014b: "After decades of GOP support, Cubans shifting toward the Democratic Party." *Pew*

reflected in the overall winning margins obtained among Floridian Hispanics (see figure II.4.4.a). While Hispanics from the Sunshine State voted in line with their white counterparts from Florida, Nevada, and Colorado in 2004 when Bush carried these demographic groups by 12 to 15 points, they overwhelmingly supported the Democratic ticket in both 2008 and 2012. This shift presents Republicans with a formidable problem since crafting a path to the White House for a Republican without Florida is an immensely challenging endeavor. In all three states shown in the figure, Mitt Romney managed to improve upon John McCain's winning margins among white voters, even exceeding President Bush's share in Florida (by nine percentage points) and Nevada (by one point). The incredibly poor showing among Hispanic voters ensured though that both Colorado (where Romney lost Hispanics by 52 percentage points) and Nevada (where Obama carried Hispanics by 71 to 24 percent) could not even be described as competitive, seeing as President Obama carried both western states with a margin of over five percentage points.<sup>1713</sup>



**Figure II.4.4.a:** *Republican winning margins in the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections among (non-Hispanic) white and Hispanic voters in Florida, Nevada, and Colorado (in percentage points; negative winning margin indicates demographic carried by Democrat).*<sup>1714</sup>

*Research Center Fact Tank*, June 24. For a short yet general overview of other factors behind changes in Cuban-American policy and partisan preferences, cf. Bishin 2014: “The decline of the Cuban American hard-liners.” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, December 19.

1713 According to calculations by Allison Kopicki and Will Irving, Obama could have won Colorado with around 58 percent of the Hispanic vote while 54 percent of the Hispanic community's vote would have been sufficient in Nevada. Cf. Kopicki, Irving 2012.

1714 Own calculations based on New York Times 2012d, CNN 2004a, and CNN 2004c.

California – A warning from history<sup>1715</sup>

The aforementioned states are not the only ones to have arguably moved into the Democratic camp thanks to increases in the Hispanic population along with simultaneous Republican policies that have alienated this burgeoning group of voters. Undoubtedly the most notable state to have been affected by this dual development is California. Perhaps somewhat hard to believe now, the Golden State used to be one of the most reliably Republican ones in the nation. In the ten presidential elections between 1952 and 1988, it voted for a Republican candidate on nine occasions as only Lyndon B. Johnson's 1964 landslide turned the state blue.<sup>1716</sup> Since 1992 though it has voted Democratic every single time, providing President Obama with his eighth largest margin of victory in 2012.<sup>1717</sup> Scholars see one of the key reasons behind this turnaround in the state politics of the early 1990s, in particular Republican governor Pete Wilson's 1994 re-election bid which would prove to be to be "a historic turning point in the state's politics."<sup>1718</sup> In that year's election Wilson supported Proposition 187, a measure that required law enforcement officials to report any person that had violated immigration laws to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and prohibited illegal aliens from using a variety of social services in the state, such as health care and public education.<sup>1719</sup> Subsequent propositions that received popular approval and banned affirmative action (Proposition 209 [1996]) along with effectively eliminating bilingual classes (Proposition 227 [1998]) were also championed by the GOP.<sup>1720</sup> Before the Republican shift to the right on these matters, Californian Hispanics were actually moving in the direction of the GOP, partially as a result of President Reagan's approval of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act which allowed certain groups of illegal immigrants to obtain a legal status.<sup>1721</sup> 1994 changed everything though. Hispanic registration and support for Democratic candidates across the board surged: While His-

1715 For a broader overview of how the "Dixification" of California's Republican Party has hurt its chances in the state cf. Micklethwait, Wooldridge 2004, pp. 123–126. As the authors conclude, "Republicans discovered [in the early 1990s] that the two cards that had served them so well in the South – race and religion – proved disastrous in the Golden State." (Ibid., p. 123.)

1716 Barreto 2013: "The Prop 187 Effect: How the California GOP lost their way and implications for 2014 and beyond." *Latino Decisions*, October 17.

1717 Six states (Hawaii, Vermont, New York, Rhode Island, Maryland, and Massachusetts) and Washington, D.C. had a Democratic margin of victory that exceeded Obama's 23.1-point lead in California. Cf. Leip 2014 for data.

1718 Damore, Pantoja 2013: "Anti-Immigrant Politics and Lessons for the GOP from California." *Latino Decisions*, p. 1.

1719 Cf. Barreto, Segura 2014, p. 177.

1720 Cf. *ibid.*

1721 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 181.

panics made up 9.6 percent of all registered voters in California in 1992, they constituted around 14 percent by the end of the decade. Another twelve years later that share had risen to 26 percent.<sup>1722</sup> New Hispanic citizens that entered the Golden State's electorate in the wake of Proposition 187 in 1996, '98, and 2000 were Democratic by a margin of nearly six to one. Moreover, those naturalized and registered in that decade were far more likely to turn out than other groups of Hispanic voters, a development directly attributed to the anti-immigrant positions and ballot measures championed by California's Republican Party that galvanized these new Latino voters into action.<sup>1723</sup>

Losses were not just sustained at the presidential level. As the Hispanic community increased in size and moved (back) into the Democratic camp, Republicans at the state level began to feel the repercussions of their immigration positions. Before Governor Wilson's support for Proposition 187, the GOP controlled 50 percent of the state's U.S. House seats and 43 percent of California's state senate seats. Two decades later those respective shares had dropped to 28 and 25 percent.<sup>1724</sup> David Damore and Adrian Pantoja therefore unsurprisingly arrive at the conclusion that “[w]hat California Republicans did in 1994–1998 effectively doomed their chances in any future state elections.”<sup>1725</sup> Republicans themselves have acknowledged this as well. Jim Brulte, chairman of the state's GOP, recognizes that “Republicans in California ignored demographic changes. As a result, we're a significant minority.”<sup>1726</sup> With California's 55 electoral votes safely within the Democratic camp, the negative impact of vehement anti-immigrant positions in a changing demographic landscape is apparent.

### Can Republicans successfully play “Texas hold 'em”?

The big prize in the political and demographic battles of future election cycles will be the state of Texas. As the Lone Star state's popular motto goes “everything is bigger in Texas” and the state's population growth has been no exception. Between 2000 and 2010, Texas' population grew by 20.6 percent compared to a

1722 Cf. Damore, Pantoja 2013, p. 14. Cf. also Barreto, Segura 2014, p. 178. While the Hispanic population in the state of California grew by 31 percent between 1994 and 2004, the number of registered voters within the Hispanic community jumped by 68.7 percent.

1723 Cf. Damore, Pantoja 2013, p. 2. The best predictor for Hispanic turnout in 1996 and 2000 for example was the question of whether or not Hispanics had registered after Proposition 187.

1724 Comparison between 1992–94 and 2012–13. Cf. Barreto 2013.

1725 Damore, Pantoja 2013, p. 4.

1726 Quoted in: Sherman 2013: “California Republicans turn to immigration to fight extinction.” *Politico*, August 19.



nationwide increase of 9.7 percent,<sup>1727</sup> allowing the state to add four electoral votes to its total tally, bringing it to 38.<sup>1728</sup> These trends will in all likelihood continue with one projection model estimating an additional gain of seven seats over the next thirty years.<sup>1729</sup> What could very well provide the Republican Party in the state with some sleepless nights is the simple fact that Hispanics accounted for most of that growth. While the non-Hispanic white population in the Lone Star state did expand by 4.2 percent during the 00s – therefore far outpacing that demographic segment’s nationwide growth of 1.2 percent<sup>1730</sup> – it paled in comparison to the changes that occurred in the Hispanic community. The Hispanic population in the state grew by 41.8 percent during the same period, actually slightly below the national average in Hispanic growth of 43.0 percent but still enough to account for 65 percent of Texas’ population rise over the decade,<sup>1731</sup> in the process driving the non-Hispanic white share of the population down from 52.4 percent in 2000<sup>1732</sup> to 44.0 percent by 2013.<sup>1733</sup> Among the state’s population below the age of 18, those trends were even more pronounced. Between 2000 and 2010, Hispanics were responsible for 95 percent of the population growth of Texas’ population in that age bracket, allowing the community to overtake non-Hispanic whites as the largest ethnicity among Texans below 18.<sup>1734</sup> While non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics respectively made up 42.6 and 40.5 percent of the state’s under-18 population in 2000, those shares had decreased to 33.8 and increased to 48.3 percent ten years later.<sup>1735</sup> As a matter of fact by 2010 Hispanics outnumbered non-Hispanic whites in every five-year age bracket between the ages of 0 and (including) 30–34.<sup>1736</sup> As illustrated by figure II.4.4.b, by the time the next U.S. census is conducted in 2020, demographic forecasts expect Hispanics to narrowly outnumber their non-Hispanic white counterparts. Population trends after that call for Hispanics to be on the cusp of

1727 Cf. Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert 2011, p. 6.

1728 This meant the state now has the second highest number of electoral votes in the nation, only trailing California. During the 1990s it still trailed New York by a single electoral vote. By the 2010s it had nine votes more than the Empire State.

1729 In other words, projections made for the 2040 reapportionment of seats. Cf. Trende 2013d.

1730 Cf. Humes, Jones, Ramirez 2011, p. 18.

1731 Cf. Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, Albert 2011, p. 6. Texas’ Hispanic population grew by 2.79 million between 2000 and 2010 while the overall population expanded by 4.29 million. Only in California did the Hispanic population increase by more in terms of absolute numbers (although it rose by “just” 27.8 percent in the Golden State).

1732 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2014a: *Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000. Texas*.

1733 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2014b (*Texas*).

1734 Cf. Office of the State Demographer (Texas) 2012: *Update on Texas Demographic Characteristics and Trends*, January 26, p. 17.

1735 Cf. *ibid.*

1736 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 18.

becoming an outright majority a decade later and outnumber non-Hispanic whites by a margin of over 1.6-to-1 by 2040.<sup>1737</sup>

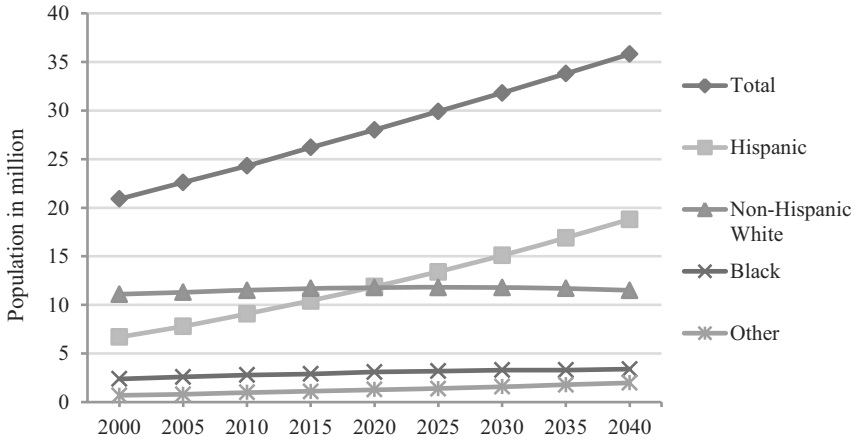


Figure II.4.4.b: Population trends in Texas, 2000–2040.<sup>1738</sup>

Does this mean Texas will be up for grabs anytime soon? Democrats have most certainly turned their attention towards the Lone Star state recently, recognizing the potential it carries as the possible jewel in the crown of states whose partisan allegiances have shifted due to demographic changes.<sup>1739</sup> Ted Cruz himself noted that if Texas ever did join the blue camp, “no Republican will ever again win the White House.”<sup>1740</sup> At the state level, Republicans recognize the potential that is in place for an eventual Democratic takeover in the state capital as well. Steve Munisteri, chairman of the Texas GOP between 2010 and ’15, acknowledges that “[y]ou cannot have a situation with the Hispanic community that we’ve had for forty years with the African-American community, where it’s a bloc of votes that you almost write off,” adding the dire warning that “[b]y 2040, you’d have to get over a hundred per cent of the Anglo vote,”<sup>1741</sup> in order for the GOP to remain in power in Texas. Along with the community’s increase in size, Hispanic voting habits in the Lone Star state most certainly justify warnings like Munisteri’s.

1737 Cf. Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts 2007: *Texas Population Growth, 1980 to 2040*. Data from Texas State Data Center.

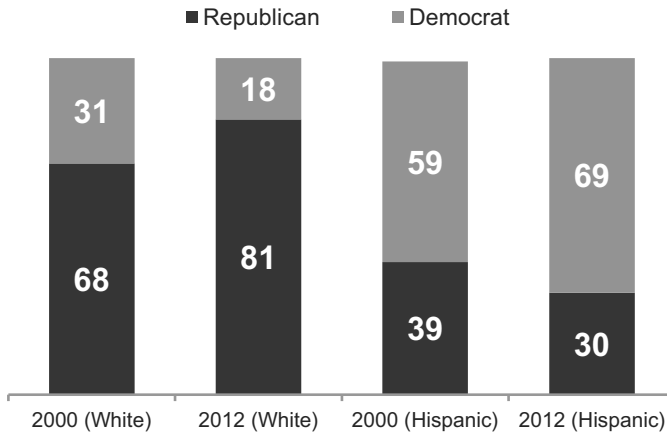
1738 Cf. *ibid.*

1739 For different analyses of how the Democratic Party wishes to take advantage of these underlying trends in Texas, cf. Izadi 2013: “How Democrats Are Aiming to Make Texas a Swing State.” *National Journal*, September 8, Lizza 2012: “The Party Next Time.” *The New Yorker*, November 19 or Burns 2013a: “Democrats launch plan to turn Texas blue.” *Politico*, January 24.

1740 Quoted in: *The Economist* 2013b: *Demography is not destiny*. April 13.

1741 Quoted in: Lizza 2012.

Looking at the data of counties that are largely Hispanic (80 percent or more, see figure II.4.4.c) in Texas indicates a significant shift into the Democratic camp in recent years, increasing the community's already strong Democratic lean. At the same time though, this development has effectively been offset by non-Hispanic white Texans emulating the trends we have seen across the rest of the South by becoming more deeply entrenched within the Republican camp.



**Figure II.4.4.c:** Popular vote (in percent) in Texan counties with a population 80 percent non-Hispanic white or more (N=42) / 80 percent Hispanic/Latino or more (N=16) (according to the 2010 U.S. census) in the 2000 and 2012 presidential elections.<sup>1742</sup>

Despite the distinct lack of enthusiasm Mitt Romney's campaign elicited in the South in particular and the fact that one of their fellow Texans had been on the ballot in 2000, Romney was able to increase the Republican share of the vote in the largely non-Hispanic white Texan counties from 67.7 percent in 2000 to 80.8 percent twelve years later. On the other side of the partisan and ethnic divide a different story transpired. While Al Gore won Texan counties that have a population of 80 percent or more Hispanic by 19.6 percentage points, Barack Obama managed to virtually double this margin to 38.6 points. The fact that despite an increase of 25.8 percent in the number of votes cast in these Hispanic counties, Mitt Romney actually received close to 5,800 fewer votes in them in 2012 than George W. Bush had done a dozen years earlier<sup>1743</sup> serves to illustrate Romney's poor performance among Hispanics and the general problem Republicans are facing within this community even further.

1742 Own calculations based on Index Mundi 2010e: *Texas White, not Hispanic Population Percentage by County* and Index Mundi 2010d: *Texas Hispanic or Latino Origin Population Percentage by County*, and election results provided by Leip 2014.

1743 Bush won 156,091 votes in the sixteen Hispanic counties in question while Romney only won 150,310 votes.

As we saw in chapter II.1.3, despite these trends Texas' Republican lean between 2000 and 2012 remained relatively unchanged, decreasing from 21.8 points to the right of the nation in 2000 to 19.6 in 2012 – with the latter number actually representing a slight increase from the 2008 lean of 19.0 points. If the Democrats wish to do better in the Lone Star state, they will have to combine the “natural” elements of Hispanic population growth with a better turnout and registration machine. Up until now the achievements in the state on that front have been rather mixed, perhaps partially attributable to the fact that Democratic Hispanics are discouraged from turning out due to the fact that Texas continues to remain largely uncompetitive across virtually all government levels. Current data most certainly do illustrate the uphill battle Democratic activists have on their hands. While 82 percent of white and 77 percent of African-American adults in the state reported to being registered to vote in 2013 that share stood at just 43 percent among Hispanics (compared to a registration rate of 50 percent among non-Texan Hispanics).<sup>1744</sup> The sluggish turnout rate has therefore allowed white Texas Republicans to provide a sufficient counterweight, keeping the state reliably red. According to calculations by political scientist Mark Jones of Rice University in Houston, John McCain's margin of victory in the state would for example have been halved from twelve to six percentage points if Texas Hispanics had turned out in a manner comparable to their compatriots in California in 2008.<sup>1745</sup> The comparison between 2000 and 2012 depicted in figure II.4.4.c should not cause a great amount of euphoria among Democrats either. As already pointed out, the number of voters in the largely Hispanic counties rose by 25.8 percent between 2000 and 2012 – an increase that stood just slightly above the statewide growth in voters of 24.8 percent (meaning these Hispanic counties accounted for 6.25 percent of Texas' total vote in 2012, compared to 6.20 percent twelve years earlier). All in all a relatively disappointing result though considering the overall growth in Hispanics and the lackluster enthusiasm Mitt Romney generally elicited among the evangelical white Southern electorate.

Unless the dynamic of Republicans hemorrhaging votes in the Hispanic community is changed, Texas could nonetheless become a battleground state in the near to mid-term future as its demographic composition changes even further. Opinion is divided on how quickly the Lone Star state can become purple thanks to a variety of factors that make election forecasts a somewhat inexact science. An analysis by the Houston Chronicle arrived at 2024 as the date of Texan Democrats reaching parity with their Republican counterparts if cur-

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1744 Cf. Dugan 2014: “Texan Hispanics Tilt Democratic, but State Likely to Stay Red.” *Gallup*, February 7.

1745 Cf. Romano 2013: “Can Mayor Julian Castro Turn Texas Blue?” *Newsweek*, April 17.

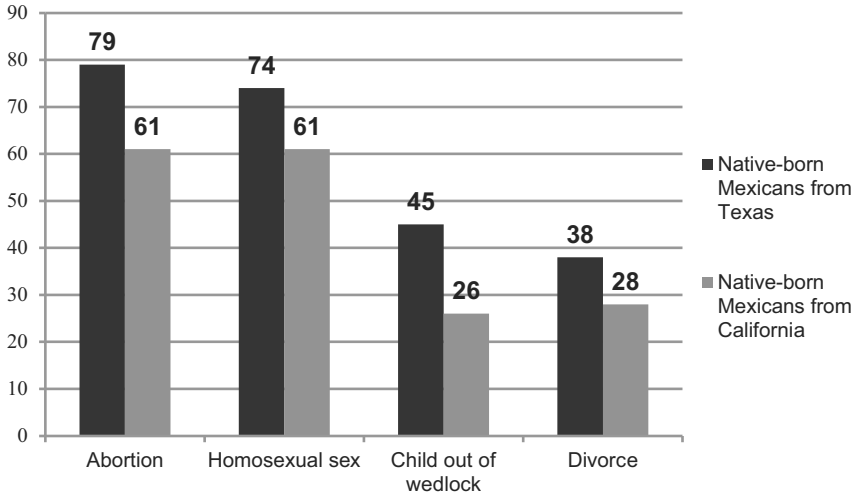
rent population and turnout trends continue. Their forecasts based on these trends show the Democrats narrowing the 15.8-point lead Mitt Romney obtained in 2012 by around five and a half points with every subsequent election if the different ethnic groups hold onto their electoral preferences. If on the other hand Republicans can emulate President Bush's performance among Hispanics and get to the all-important 40 percent mark, the date of parity would be pushed back to 2036.<sup>1746</sup> One of the key factors in the battle for Texas (and the question if the GOP can get within the 40 percent range) will be the question to what extend Texan Hispanics follow the partisan moves of their national kin. On a variety of key socio-cultural issues for example, native-born Mexicans from Texas have been shown to be notably more conservative than their compatriots from California (see figure II.4.4.d). While almost half of all Hispanics with Mexican ancestry from Texas considered having a child born out of wedlock to be unacceptable in a 2002 study, just a quarter of Mexican-Americans from California felt the same way. On abortion a similarly wide gap of 18 points was in place as well. Interestingly enough when *foreign-born* Mexicans in both states were presented with the same set of questions, the differences in opinion turned out to be statistically insignificant.<sup>1747</sup> What we see here then may very well be part of a *neighborhood effect*, a phenomenon that describes how members of a community can be influenced and shaped by the (ideological) environment they have been in for a substantial period of time.<sup>1748</sup> Hispanics who were raised or came of age in one of the most devoutly conservative states of the nation will therefore be to the right of their brethren whose opinions have been shaped by an environment that could hardly be more liberal, in this case the state of California. Any potential shift to the center and away from the Democratic Party among Hispanics at the national level could therefore be replicated in a more pronounced manner among Texan Hispanics whose bonds with the liberal political establishment appear somewhat weaker, strengthening the Republican hand in the state.

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1746 Cf. Dunham 2012: "Exclusive analysis: If trends hold, Texas will be a toss-up state by 2024." *Houston Chronicle*, November 12.

1747 On abortion and gay sex, the gap between both foreign-born Mexicans from Texas and California stood at six and zero percentage points respectively for example (percent responding "unacceptable"). Cf. Pew Hispanic Center, Kaiser Family Foundation 2002, p. 51.

1748 Cf. Fisher 2014, p. 167.



**Figure II.4.4.d:** Differing attitudes between native-born Mexicans from Texas and California on salient socio-cultural issues. Percent who say each is generally “unacceptable.”<sup>1749</sup>

Other polls also indicate that Hispanics from the Lone Star state have a tendency to lean to the right of Hispanics in the rest of the nation. In 2013, the Democratic Party enjoyed a 30-point lead in partisan identification among non-Texan Hispanics; among Texan Hispanics though this gap stood at just 19 points. This group of Lone Star Hispanics has also bucked the wider national partisan shifts. While Republican identification/lean among non-Texan Hispanics decreased from 22 to 21 percent between 2008 and 2013 it actually rose by four points among Texan Hispanics, going from 23 to 27 percent during the same period.<sup>1750</sup> Unsurprisingly then, the Republican Party has actually been able to do relatively well among the state’s Hispanic electorate. Internal Republican polls for example showed President Bush winning a majority of Hispanic voters in a number of areas in the state during his 2004 re-election bid, a claim that has been disputed by some within the Hispanic community though.<sup>1751</sup> On his part, former Texas governor Rick Perry won 39 percent of Hispanic voters during his 2010 re-election while the state party increased its number of Hispanic elected officials from 58 to 78 in the 2012 elections.<sup>1752</sup> For the time being then, Texas may very

1749 Cf. Pew Hispanic Center, Kaiser Family Foundation 2002, p. 51.

1750 Cf. Dugan 2014.

1751 Nina Perales, attorney at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), contends this claim was part of “Bush’s campaign spin” though. Cf. Bickerstaff 2007: *Lines in the Sand: Congressional Redistricting in Texas and the Downfall of Tom DeLay*, p. 34 for claim that Bush won a majority and p. 413 for counterpoint by Perales.

1752 Cf. Conroy 2013: “Can Democrats Mess With Texas in 2016?” *RealClearPolitics*, February 22.

well be out of reach for the Democratic Party due to a number of factors such as an increasingly Republican white electorate (as indicated by Mitt Romney's strong showing in 2012) and a Hispanic community that is to the right of its national compatriots. As we have seen in this chapter though, other former Republican strongholds have indeed become far more competitive as the local electorate has – among other trends favoring the Democratic Party – become increasingly Hispanic. Due to the conquest of states such as Colorado, Nevada, and Virginia at the presidential level, Democrats are thus able to craft a path to the White House that can do without the Lone Star state for the foreseeable future.

### II.4.5 Today's young voters – Dark blue but fading?

The moves and shifts within the Republican Party over the last half a century have rendered it in the position of having become a bastion of older white voters whose views on a variety of issues – ranging from economics to socio-cultural matters as well – are often at odds with today's younger electorate; an unsurprising generational fault line which is usually substantially wider today than in previous decades. In 2012 for example, 60 percent of the nation's 18 to 29 year olds cast their ballots for President Obama, a remarkable increase compared to a mere dozen years earlier when just 48 percent of young adults voted for Al Gore.<sup>1753</sup> This increased liberal lean of young voters is not just an artifact of the fact that today's youngest generation also is the most multiethnic one. While young whites were indeed substantially less likely to support the president in 2012 than their generational minority counterparts were, they still constituted by far the most Democratic white age cohort.<sup>1754</sup> As will be made abundantly clear over the following pages, the views that many older whites subscribe to – the brand of populist anti-government stance that has been a staple of modern Southern politics since at least the days of George Wallace and now forms such an integral part of the GOP's contemporary ideological foundations – fail to appeal to many young adults, particularly minority ones. This is an age cohort

1753 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014c: *Millennials in Adulthood*, March 7, p. 12.

1754 Mitt Romney won 18–29-year-old whites by seven points. At the same time, he won 30–44-year-old whites by 21, 45–64-year-old whites by 23, and whites 65 or older by 22 points. Cf. Resurgent Republic 2012a: *2012: The Year Changing Demographics Caught Up With Republicans*. November 10. Some recent data does indicate though that younger whites have soured on President Obama as well. Presidential approval ratings from Gallup show that while whites aged 18 to 29 were eleven percentage points more likely to approve of President Obama in 2009 than whites aged 65 and older were (58 to 47 percent), this gap had narrowed to just three points by 2014 (34 to 31 percent). Cf. Newport 2014b: "Obama Loses Support Among White Millennials." *Gallup*, December 8.

that has come of age in an environment in which the free market failed to avert – and some would argue caused – the worst recession since the 1930s with the government having to intervene in order to prevent the “Great Recession” from turning into another “Great Depression.” Growing up in such economically troubling and uncertain times with the specter of youth unemployment and underemployment persistently hanging over today’s young adults has made them more open to the concept of an activist government that provides a degree of support to those in need. On the socio-cultural front, Southern Evangelism also fails to offer an appealing choice for young Americans who are much more at ease with homosexuals and – at least in this issue area – oppose an activist government that seeks to legislate morality.

The current generation we will be focusing on (and most recent one to be granted a specific name) is generally known as the “Millennials,” a cohort group that usually includes everyone born after 1980<sup>1755</sup> but is not infrequently used as a simple moniker for 18 to 29 year olds. This generational group is by rather significant margins the most liberal one in the nation. In 2014, 31 percent of Millennials described themselves as “liberal” compared to shares of 24 percent among members of Generation X, 21 percent among Baby Boomers, and 18 percent among the Silent Generation.<sup>1756</sup> A substantial share of those young adults are sometimes willing to take their (economic) liberalism to the next level, as indicated by the group’s openness towards “socialism” – a perhaps somewhat surprising trait considering the historically negative connotations this term elicits in the United States. A 2011 Pew survey found that when asked to rate the terms *socialism* and *capitalism* positively and negatively, 49 percent of young adults aged 18 to 29 rated socialism positively while just 46 percent had the same sort of attitude towards capitalism, in other words a pro-socialism gap of three percentage points. Older cohort groups on the other hand displayed a completely different attitude. Among 30 to 49 year olds the gap in positive ratings stood at 16 points in favor of capitalism, with even stronger pro-capitalist sentiments among 50 to 64 (28-point gap) and 65+ year olds (39-point gap).<sup>1757</sup>

Such an affinity for a left leaning political course of action also becomes apparent when younger voters are asked about the extent to which the government should intervene in the economy. A September 2013 survey by the Pew Research Center (see figure II.4.5.a) showed that when asked if they preferred a

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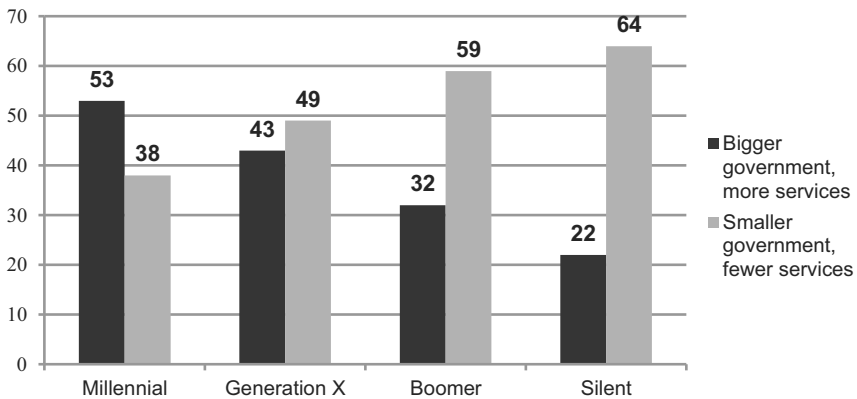
1755 For an overview of the generations cf. Pew Research Center 2014c, p. 9. The most commonly used generations are as such: Silent (born between 1928 and 1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) and of course the Millennials.

1756 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22.

1757 Cf. Pew Research Center 2011b: *Little Change in Public's Response to 'Capitalism,' 'Socialism,'* December 28, p. 3.



bigger government with more services or a smaller one with fewer services, 53 percent of Millennials opted for the bigger option, a ten-point gap between it and the next generational group (Generation Xers) in terms of support for an activist government. Even within the youngest adult generation we see a strong division on the topic along racial lines, although just as is the case when it comes to electoral preferences, young whites are to the left of their elders. While non-Hispanic white Millennials were indeed more likely to support a bigger government than older whites, a majority of these white young adults nonetheless preferred a smaller government by a margin of 52 to 39 percent. Among all non-white Millennials on the other hand, the lead in support for a bigger government versus a smaller one stood at a remarkable 50 percentage points (71 to 21 percent).<sup>1758</sup>



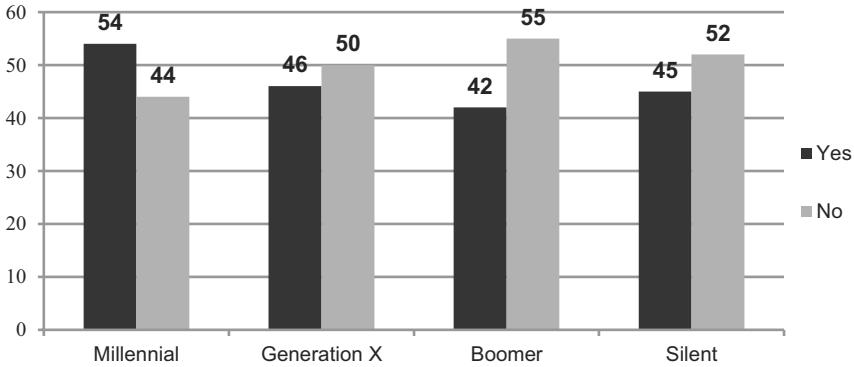
**Figure II.4.5.a:** *Would you rather have a bigger government and more services or a smaller government and fewer services? Support for either option in percent, remaining shares answered “depends” or “don’t know.”*<sup>1759</sup>

On the matter of health care, we see a similar generational as well as racial/ethnic fault line. Majorities of all generations did disapprove of the Affordable Care Act in a Pew survey from December of 2013, with the disapproval rating ranging from 54 to 55 percent in every single generational bracket.<sup>1760</sup> This was not due to a general opposition to government funded and provided health care shared by these different cohort groups though. Today’s young adults are far more likely to argue that it is the government’s job to ensure that health care coverage is provided for all citizens, as illustrated by figure II.4.5.b.

1758 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014c, p. 38. White Generation X members opted for the smaller government choice by a margin of 67 to 27 percent while the breakdown among white Baby Boomers stood at 70 to 23 percent.

1759 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 35.

1760 Cf. *ibid.*



**Figure II.4.5.b:** *Is it the government's responsibility to provide health insurance for all? Response in percent.*<sup>1761</sup>

The conclusion we can arrive at then is that the dissatisfaction with Obamacare found among Millennials does not provide Republicans with a possible opening, particularly as long as the South remains the driving ideological force within the party.<sup>1762</sup> If anything it appears that the youngest cohort group would prefer a health care law that is even more progressive than the Affordable Care Act. As is the case on the question of government services, the issue of health care also divides the generations along their racial and ethnic lines. While 68 percent of non-white Millennials believe it is the government's task to ensure all citizens are provided with health care coverage (with 30 percent disagreeing), a majority (54 percent to be precise) of their non-Hispanic white millennial brethren believes the opposite. These white Millennials were once again to the left of their older white generational predecessors but less so than on the matter of big versus small government.<sup>1763</sup> That the future of the small government GOP appears to be bleak among the non-white elements of society is also made evident by other numbers. Data from the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) for example serves to highlight the rift that can be found between the growing segment of minority voters and the Republican Party along with its core of white Evangelicals even among young Americans where one might perhaps expect a certain generational overlap in terms of ideology. The PRRI's survey showed that 69 percent of college-age Millennials (18 to 24 year olds) felt the government ought to do more to reduce the gap between the poor and the rich. Among both African Americans

1761 Cf. *ibid.*

1762 As already shown earlier, Southern Republicans were the most vehemently opposed group (out of 125 subgroups) when asked about the Affordable Care Act. Cf. *The Morning Consult* 2013b.

1763 Cf. *Pew Research Center* 2014c, p. 38. 60 percent of white Generation Xers and 62 percent of white Baby Boomers felt the government should not provide health insurance for all.

and Hispanics that share actually rose to 79 percent. Republican and white evangelical college-age Millennials were unsurprisingly far less likely to argue for an activist government though as only 51 and 53 percent of the two respective groups supported steps to combat inequality.<sup>1764</sup>

Quite important in the quest to answer what future electoral majorities will look like is the question what sort of impact an *age effect* may or may not have on Millennials. As will be illustrated in closer detail in chapter II.4.8 on the “graying of America,” there is some evidence to support the popularly held view that as people age they also adopt a more conservative stance on a variety of issues – albeit those shifts tend to be rather limited. The problem the Republican Party is faced with though is the simple fact that today’s youngest voters are more liberal than older cohort groups were at similar points of their lives. While 55 percent of Generation X members for example felt in 1994 (when they were at around the same age as today’s Millennials) that the government was wasteful and inefficient, just 42 percent of Millennials have expressed the same dim view.<sup>1765</sup> These trends are widely replicated in other surveys with Millennials virtually always expressing far bigger trust in (federal) political institutions than older generations do today or did when they themselves were at a younger age<sup>1766</sup> – in the process these young adults are holding views that are alien both to the white South and the Christian Right. What this discrepancy ultimately demonstrates is that even if Millennials follow a trajectory similar to that of previous generations and move towards the ideological right as they age and become more affluent (and thus presumably wish to give less money to the government) we will still be left with an electorate that is overall more liberal as the older and substantially more conservative generations depart it. Sociological analysis moreover also provides little hope for those who believe that Millennials might through some unforeseen event overtake their elders on the right eventually. Just as is the case with today’s largely Democratic young adults, previous generations have also been a product of their time – that is to say that their political and partisan preferences were shaped in quite a distinctive manner by the political environment they found themselves in as they came of age (referred to as the *impressionable-years hypothesis*). And as the voting record of previous generations illustrates, these preferences tend to stay with cohort groups unless major political upheaval generates a substantial realignment in the political realm – an

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1764 Cf. Jones, Cox, and Banchoff 2012, pp. 20–21.

1765 Cf. Pew Research Center 2010b: *Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change*, February 24, p. 72.

1766 For a general overview of Millennial views vis-à-vis other generations on a variety of topics see for example Levine, Flanagan, Gallay 2008: “The Millennial Pendulum: A New Generation of Voters and the Prospects for a Political Realignment.” *New America Foundation*, February.

example of which would of course be the Democratic shift on civil rights and its repercussions on Southern politics and partisan majorities which even caused older white Democratic Southerners to significantly alter their partisan allegiances over time.<sup>1767</sup> Contrary to the commonly held belief and assumption that most adults significantly move to the right over time – perfectly summed up in a quote often misattributed to Winston Churchill that those who are not liberals at 25 have no heart and those who fail to be conservative at age 35 have no brain – basic ideological beliefs have been proven to be quite rigid.<sup>1768</sup> Americans who came of age during the unsuccessful Democratic presidency of Jimmy Carter and the subsequent rather successful time Ronald Reagan spent in office have for example been shown to be persistently more Republican than the general electorate while this trend has been reversed over the past two decades as President Clinton presided over a period of immense economic growth and deficit reduction while George W. Bush left the White House with one of the lowest approval ratings ever recorded, a track record that has created younger cohort groups that have been more Democratic than the overall electorate.<sup>1769</sup> The uncertain economic environment many of today's young adults have found themselves in in recent years may very well have added to the Democratic advantage *and* prove to have a durable effect. As Paola Giuliano and Antonio Spilimbergo show in their work on the effect poor economic cycles have on ideological preferences, people who experience a recession in their younger years are more likely to support redistributive programs and left leaning parties while also expressing doubts about the possibility of working their way up through sheer effort.<sup>1770</sup> These experiences tend to have a lasting impact with their effects on partisan preferences not wearing off substantially with time. According to the authors' analysis (primarily based on General Social Surveys [GSS] dating back to the 1970s) the effect of individuals living through a recession in their younger "impressionable" years "could explain up to 10–15 % of the probability of voting for a Democratic president in some US regions."<sup>1771</sup> Of

1767 Cf. Osborne, Sears, and Valentino 2011: "The End of the Solidly Democratic South: The Impressionable-Years Hypothesis." *Political Psychology* 32(1), pp. 81–108.

1768 Data from Gallup for example shows a remarkable degree of continuity in the ideological self-placement of different generations. In 1994, net conservatism (that is to say the percentage identifying as conservative minus the percentage identifying as liberal) among Baby Boomers stood at 19 points. Twenty years later this figure came in at 23 points. Similar trends could be seen among other generational cohorts as well. Cf. Jones 2015a: "U.S. Baby Boomers More Likely to Identify as Conservative." *Gallup*, January 29.

1769 For data on this cf. Pew Research Center 2011a: *The Generation Gap and the 2012 Election*, November 3, p. 16 as well as Motel 2013: "JFK torchbearers now vote more Republican." *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, November 21.

1770 Cf. Giuliano, Spilimbergo 2012: *Growing Up in a Recession*. September.

1771 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

course some of these trends may very well be negated if the government is perceived as ineffective in its fight against unemployment with some recent indicators pointing towards weakened Democratic partisanship among the youngest voters as we will see later on in this chapter. Americans who came of age during the Roosevelt presidency of the 1930s and 40s (the so called *Greatest Generation*) may after all not just have consistently voted more Democratic than the average voter due to experiencing economic upheaval and hardships in their younger years but also because FDR proved to be a remarkable leader both at home and abroad whose remedies helped bring an end to the Great Depression.

### Millennial liberalism on social issues

Unsurprisingly, the strong social conservatism present in today's Republican Party also puts them at a disadvantage with younger voters. Millennials are by far the most ardent supporters of gay marriage, as 70 percent of them supported marriage equality in 2013, creating a considerable gap between them and other cohort groups where support was 20 to 40 points lower.<sup>1772</sup> Other surveys also attest to the exceptionalism of young Americans vis-à-vis their elders on gay rights. Asked if the phrase "supporter of gay rights" fitted them on a scale of one (totally wrong) to ten (perfect description), 51 percent of Millennials rated the description between eight and ten, a high level of agreement that was substantially lower among Generation Xers (37 percent), Baby Boomers (33 percent), and members of the Silent Generation (32 percent).<sup>1773</sup> What this last dataset with its statistically insignificant differences in opinion between the older generations demonstrates is that when it comes to homosexuality and sexual equality, Millennials most certainly do stand out quite significantly. Instead of seeing a natural progression towards more tolerance we see a leap in acceptance among the youngest Americans which puts the *evangelized* GOP in a particularly precarious position, seeing as the matter of gay rights is "a gateway [for many younger voters] into whether the Party is a place they want to be,"<sup>1774</sup> a conclusion that the party itself arrived at in its 2013 report on the party's shortcomings; a report that also called on Republicans "to make sure young people do not see the Party as totally intolerant of alternative points of view."<sup>1775</sup>

On top of their own tolerance towards same-sex marriage, today's young

1772 Support for same-sex marriage stood at 49 percent among members of Generation X, 38 percent among Baby Boomers and 31 percent of Silent Generation members. Cf. Pew Research Center 2013e, p. 1.

1773 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014c, p. 46.

1774 Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, McCall 2013, p. 8.

1775 Ibid.

adults are also far less accepting of anti-gay sentiments within society and show little understanding for religious concerns pertaining to the subject. Take the question of whether a business providing wedding services should be allowed to refuse to cater to a gay wedding on the grounds of religious reasons (see table II.4.5.a). While only around a third of 18 to 29 year olds argued in favor of providing businesses with the freedom to refuse services, 71 percent of white evangelical Protestants unsurprisingly preferred this option. What this differing attitude also illustrates is the twofold divide between young Americans and the GOP's core constituency of white Evangelicals pertaining to gay rights *and* the question of personal freedom from government interference. Just as is the case on economic matters, young adults see the government as a force for good in the struggle for sexual equality. Moreover, these Millennials believe that collective rights supersede individual ones.

**Table II.4.5.a:** *If a business provides wedding services, such as catering or flowers, should it be allowed to refuse those services to same-sex couples for religious reasons, or required to provide those services as it would to all other customers? Remaining shares “don’t know,” answers in percent.*<sup>1776</sup>

	Allowed to refuse	Required to provide
<b>Total</b>	47	49
<b>Age 18–29</b>	35	62
<b>30–49</b>	46	50
<b>50–64</b>	48	48
<b>65+</b>	60	36
<b>White ev. Protestants</b>	71	25
<b>Unaffiliated</b>	36	61

On the other particularly salient issue of abortion we can also see a strong fault line between the young and the GOP's core, represented once again by white evangelical Protestants. There appears to be little reason to believe that this gap will narrow in future years. As was illustrated in chapter II.2.2, if anything white Evangelicals have in recent decades increased their opposition to abortion with the community's younger cohort groups often more opposed to reproductive rights than their elders. Looking at U.S. society in general, we see the opposite trend of young adults having a more pro-choice position, albeit by relatively narrow margins. Presented with the question if the *Roe v. Wade* ruling should be overturned, 63 percent of Americans argued that the Supreme Court's 1973 decision should remain in place. 18 to 29 year olds showed some of the highest levels of support for the ruling with 68 percent backing the verdict. White

<sup>1776</sup> Cf. Pew Research Center 2014f: *Public Sees Religion's Influence Waning*, September 22, p. 33.

evangelical Protestants on the other hand were the only major demographic in which a majority felt the decision should no longer stand as 54 percent supported overturning *Roe v. Wade* while 42 percent gave their tacit approval to the ruling.<sup>1777</sup> Direct support for the practice of abortion is marginally lower but shows the same kind of pattern. Overall, 58 percent of 18 to 29 year olds called for abortion to be legal in all or most cases in a 2014 survey – roughly in line with the national average of 55 percent. Only 30 percent of white evangelical Protestants on the other hand took a pro-choice position in the same survey as two-thirds instead called for abortion to be illegal in most or all cases.<sup>1778</sup>

The general socio-cultural views of Millennials do not come as much of a surprise if we take into account that religion, as we will see in a more extensive manner in the next chapter, plays a far smaller role in the day to day lives of today's younger voters than it does for older generations. This gap pertaining to the centrality of religion is of course particularly pronounced when younger generations are being compared to white evangelical Protestants. For many of today's young adults, politics and religion should simply be separated along clearly delineated lines. While 50 percent of white evangelical Protestants for example expressed the belief that a political leader ought to rely on his or her religious beliefs when making policy decisions, close to two thirds (65 percent) of 18 to 39 year olds objected to this approach as just 30 percent shared the position adopted by a majority of white evangelical Protestants.<sup>1779</sup> Attempting to incorporate many of these younger socially liberal and tolerant voters into a party that has by and large adopted the views of the Christian Right on these matters will remain one of the key challenges today's and tomorrow's Republicans are faced with.

### Hope springs eternal

Of course the one thing Republicans can to a certain extent take comfort in is the simple fact that a new batch of first time voters heads to the polls every four years, providing the party with a new opportunity to improve its standing among the young. Republicans can point to the fact that past successful Republican (and less than successful Democratic) presidencies created generations of young adults who saw their home within the GOP tent. Ahead of the 1988 presidential election for example, E.J. Dionne, Jr. still made the case that “[i]t is

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1777 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013c, p. 3.

1778 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014f, p. 37.

1779 Cf. Washington Post 2012: *March 2012 Monthly*. Q: *Do you think a political leader should or should not rely on his or her religious beliefs in making policy decisions?* April 26.

said that the future belongs to the young, which gives the Republican Party a lot to look forward to,<sup>1780</sup> a verdict that appears almost surreal in today's partisan environment. Things have changed remarkably over the last quarter of a century but Dionne's comment does highlight the fact that partisan affiliation among the young invariably sways over time, always influenced by the environment they find themselves in. Today's younger voters lean to the left both on social and economic matters but a number of indicators are emerging on the polling horizon that some of the youngest adults who have come of age during the Obama presidency may be beginning to embrace a more centrist and less liberal ideology, particularly on questions related to the economy. "There is a libertarian streak that is apparent among these left-of-center young people,"<sup>1781</sup> claims Andrew Kohut, founding director of the Pew Research Center. For Kohut the reasons for this can be found in the fact that "[t]hey came of age in an anti-government era when government doesn't work."<sup>1782</sup>

The momentous impact the political environment of the day has on the political views of people who came of age is illustrated in figure II.4.5.c. Millennials who came of age during the second, rather disastrous, term of George W. Bush's presidency are far more liberal and Democratic than those who entered the electorate during President Obama's average – some would say disappointing – first term in office. According to a range of features and policy preferences indicated in the figure, the youngest group of Millennials is actually the least liberal cohort group out of the four batches of Millennials who entered adulthood during the last four presidential terms. Millennials who came of age during George W. Bush's second term are for example eleven percentage points more likely than those who entered adulthood during President Obama's first four years in office to identify with or lean towards the Democratic Party and support the general notion that the government ought to provide universal health care.

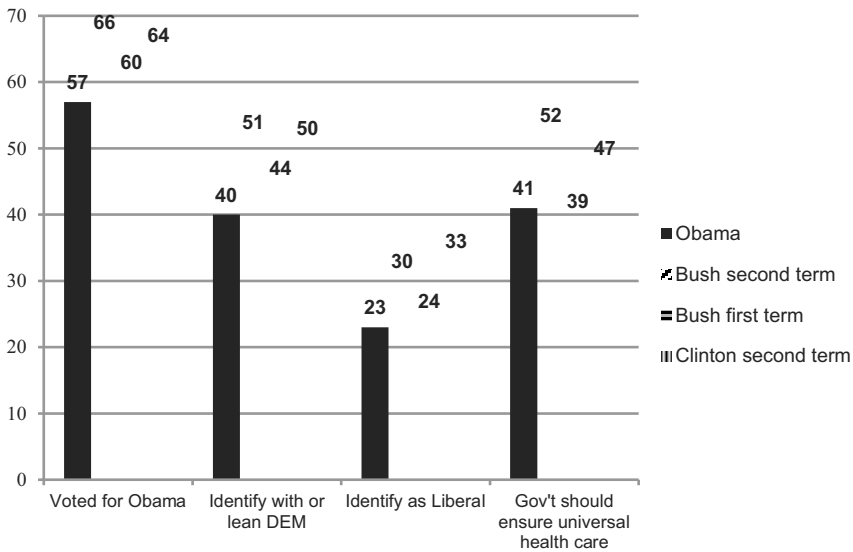
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1780 Dionne, Jr. 1988: "Political Memo; G.O.P. Makes Reagan Lure Of Young a Long-Term Asset." *New York Times*, October 31.

1781 Quoted in: Edsall 2014: "The Coming Democratic Schism." *New York Times*, July 15.

1782 Quoted in: *Ibid.*





**Figure II.4.5.c:** Political attitudes of Millennials sorted by who was president when they came of age politically (in percent).<sup>1783</sup>

Other data points in a similar direction, indicating that some of the youngest members of today's electorate may have lost their trust in the government and its ability to positively influence people's lives while the youngest cohort group that entered adulthood during the Obama presidency in all likelihood never possessed the same level of trust to begin with – developments that can in part perhaps be traced back to the rather sluggish economic recovery, the persistent legislative fighting in Congress as well as the fairly dismal rollout of the Affordable Care Act in the fall of 2013. A 2014 survey found that 66 percent of 18 to 29 year olds agreed with the proposition that “when something is run by the government, it is usually inefficient and wasteful,” up from 42 percent in a similar survey conducted five years earlier.<sup>1784</sup> This shift is also reflected in attitudes towards the political class, with the one politician many Millennials had rested their hopes upon, President Obama, not escaping their wrath either. Only 39 percent of 18 to 29 year olds said in a survey conducted by Harvard's Institute of Politics in the spring of 2013 that they trusted the president to do the right

1783 Source: YouGov polls conducted between January and November 2012. Cf. Sides 2014: “Democrats have a young people problem, too.” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, March 10.

1784 The respective millennial shares that disagreed with the proposition were 32 percent in 2014 and a majority of 54 percent in 2009. Cf. Reason-Rupe 2014: *Millennials: The politically unclaimed generation – The Reason-Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Survey*, July 10, p. 44.

thing either all or most of the time, down from 44 percent in February of 2010. Trust in Congress as well as the federal government to do the right thing “all of the” or “most of the time” had also decreased by seven points during the same period. This drop was not due to a general increase in distrust towards all levels of government though as both local and state governments for example fared better and saw their trust go up by one and two percentage points respectively over the three-year period.<sup>1785</sup>

Despite some losses, the 2012 election once again saw young adults overwhelmingly support the president as well as Democratic candidates in other elections. While President Obama in general most certainly did quite well among 18 to 29 year olds, exit polling data suggests that the youngest voters who entered the electorate during President Obama’s first term were far more likely to vote Republican than their older millennial counterparts.<sup>1786</sup> This shift in attitude is also reflected when the partisan preferences of high school students are compared to those attending college, as seen in table II.4.5.b. While college students preferred President Obama over Governor Romney by a margin of over 30 points, the margin was far narrower among high school students (aged 13 to 17) where the president’s lead shrank to just 9.7 points.

**Table II.4.5.b:** *Partisan preferences of college and high school students, 2012 presidential election (in percent).*<sup>1787</sup>

	Obama	Romney	Other	Would not vote
<b>College</b>	54.3	23.7	8.3	13.2
<i>Swing states*</i>	58.5	23.4	6.2	10.5
<b>High School</b>	45.3	35.6	6.4	12.2
<i>Swing states</i>	43.9	36.9	4.7	14.2

\* *Swing states are: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin.*

In the nine swing states the survey looked at, the president’s lead among high school students was even smaller, coming in at just seven points. Even within the

1785 Cf. Institute of Politics, Harvard University 2013a: *Survey of Young Americans’ Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service: 23rd Edition*, April 30, p. 15.

1786 John Sides comes up with numbers that indicate Mitt Romney won 57 percent of 18, 59 percent of 19, and 54 percent of 20 year olds. While not having had a detailed look at these numbers myself I highly doubt that Mitt Romney won any age bracket of the electorate below the age of 30 by close to 20 points. Furthermore, Sides also mentions that President Obama won 75 percent of 21 year olds. Such a tremendous gap from one year to the next appears rather implausible, meaning that these numbers are in all likelihood owed to sample sizes that are simply too small to infer any meaningful interpretation of electoral preferences. For the data cf. Sides 2014.

1787 Poll conducted by American University and GfK Custom Research LLC. Cf. Durando 2012: “Poll: College, High School Students Favor Obama.” *American University*, November 1.

bracket of young adults we see some strong differences in opinion as well, particularly when it comes to the president and the sense of dissatisfaction younger voters possess pertaining to his job record. Data from November of 2013 showed that while only 40 percent of older Millennials (25 to 29 year olds) would vote to recall President Obama this share rose to 52 percent among younger Millennials aged between 18 and 24 years.<sup>1788</sup> The Democratic lead in partisan identification was also notably lower among 18 to 24 year olds where the gap between Democrats and Republicans stood at a mere six points (with the Democrats leading by 31 to 25 percent) while coming in at 16 points among the older millennial group (where we saw a Democratic lead of 38 to 22 percent).<sup>1789</sup> Moreover, Millennials are far less likely to identify with either party than their elders, with the share of Millennials describing themselves as Independents rising from 38 percent in 2004 to 50 percent by 2014 – when the share of Independents among the other generational cohorts stood between 32 and 39 percent.<sup>1790</sup> One should not forget though that this trend has coincided with strong increases in nominal disaffiliation from both parties among all segments of society. Does this mean younger voters are loosening their ties to the Democratic Party and about to jump ship? Not necessarily. Increases in voters preferring the “Independent” label have to be approached with a degree of caution since this fondness for the *partisan* center does not necessarily mean these voters also inhabit the *ideological* middle ground.<sup>1791</sup> Extensive work on the topic by Yanna Krupnikov and Samara Klar has indicated that the increasing share of Independents in the American electorate appears to be driven to a significant extent because the label has become increasingly “socially desirable”<sup>1792</sup> in a political environment in which partisan warfare and never-ending bickering are ubiquitous. If those nominal Independents are asked about specific policy matters though they still tend to support consistently Democratic or Republican

1788 Cf. Institute of Politics, Harvard University 2013b: *Survey of Young Americans’ Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service: 24th Edition*, December 4, p. 7.

1789 Cf. Della Volpe 2013: “IOP Releases New Fall Poll, 5 Key Findings And Trends in Millennial Viewpoints.” *Harvard University Institute of Politics*, December 4.

1790 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014c, p. 18.

1791 We should not forget here that some of the new recruits in the general *Independent* camp may simply be disillusioned partisans who believe their own parties are not partisan enough. As we already discussed earlier on, Tea Party supporters for example regularly express the belief that their Republican representatives have compromised *too much* despite the fact that the general public believes the exact opposite to be the case. Instead of keeping the Republican label, these conservative voters may prefer to emphasize their political independence when asked by pollsters. On the other side one can come across leftist liberals who feel the Democratic Party has also compromised too much on central tenets such as universal health care.

1792 Krupnikov, Klar 2014: “Why people call themselves ‘independent’ even when they aren’t.” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, January 10.

partisan positions on a variety of issues.<sup>1793</sup> Findings like these should not come as much of a surprise in a day and age in which the parties are ideologically sorted, forcing even truly centrist Independents into a position in which switching their partisan allegiance every election cycle is increasingly difficult as the choices between the two parties are rather clear cut each and every time one heads to the polling station. One may very well prefer the Independent *partisan* label due to the drubbing the public image of both parties has taken but actually finding an *ideological* center ground has become virtually impossible as both parties have become respective bastions of conservatism and liberalism, with few if any remaining politicians combining the two strains to provide a viable alternative. For voters that are independent in name only, such as a number of Tea Partiers, the choice is rather straightforward to begin with. A nominally independent conservative will inevitably choose the Republican position while a fellow Independent who subscribes to a liberal outlook will naturally find their views most accurately represented by the Democratic Party. The liberal views and values of Millennials across the economic and social spectrums as evidenced in this chapter should thus negate any potential hope today's deeply conservative Republican Party may draw from increases in the number of millennial Independents. Additionally, there are few signs of Millennials replicating their slight shift away from Democratic affiliation by also moving to the ideological middle. Millennials were the only generational group in a 2014 Pew survey to answer by a plurality that their political views had become more liberal over the course of their lives (by a margin of 48 to 42 percent, with the latter share arguing their positions had become more conservative). On social views the contrast with previous generations is even starker, as 57 percent of Millennials answered their views in this issue area had become more liberal, compared to a share of 42 percent among all respondents.<sup>1794</sup> Even if a taste for conservatism does increase as Millennials move into their 30s and 40s, Republicans will have a difficult time compensating for the liberal head start this generation has, particularly if the GOP fails at de-emphasizing its social and religious conservative credentials.

## Conclusion

Today's young adults are decidedly more liberal and, as we will see in the next chapter, less religious than their elders were at similar stages in their lives. The fact that the Republican Party on the other hand is more conservative and religious than at arguably any point of its history reveals the dilemma it finds

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1793 Cf. *ibid.*

1794 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014c, p. 23.

itself in.<sup>1795</sup> Whether future economic changes will cause a profound alteration of millennial political attitudes will of course remain to be seen. As the earlier mentioned work of Giuliano and Spilimbergo nonetheless demonstrates, the ideological and partisan attitudes adopted during young adulthood can have a substantial effect on later positions as well. Economic hardships and unemployment experienced at the onset of a person's life in the workforce tend to moreover have a ripple or "scarring" effect that can prevail throughout one's lifetime, leading to comparatively lower wages and an increased likelihood of joblessness even at later stages of a job career<sup>1796</sup> which may further weaken Republican chances of winning over this cohort group. Additionally, the impressionable-years hypothesis and data on the persistent partisan lean of different generations appear to indicate that partisan preferences often stay with one for the duration of one's life relatively independent of economic factors. As shown in this chapter, some recent data has nonetheless indicated a growing distrust in virtually all governmental institutions among Millennials,<sup>1797</sup> buttressing the earlier mentioned claim by Andrew Kohut that having grown up in an era of dysfunctional government has left its mark on America's young adults. Yet this does not necessarily mean these voters will abandon the party that shares their values on a wide range of issues and join the anti-statist ranks of the Tea Party, the very organization that carries a significant blame for the political gridlock the United States has become infamous for in recent years. It could however have a noticeable effect on the political activism of this cohort and their turnout, heightening the advantage Republicans have enjoyed in recent midterm elections, an electoral environment in which younger voters traditionally have a far worse record than their elder counterparts when it comes to turning up at the polls.<sup>1798</sup> A certain degree of disillusionment most certainly appears to have grabbed a foothold among young Americans. While 31 percent of Americans aged 18 to 29 said they would definitely be voting ahead of the 2010 midterms that share had dropped to a mere 23 percent ahead of the 2014 congressional

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1795 Fact of the matter is that the most recent Republican House and Senate conferences' DW-Nominate mean scores have also been their most conservative ones. For specific data cf. Poole 2015b.

1796 For more on the repercussions of youth unemployment cf. for example Schwerdtfeger 2013: "Assessing the long term cost of youth unemployment." *TD Economics Special Report*, January 29, or Mroz, Savage 2006: "The Long-Term Effects of Youth Unemployment." *The Journal of Human Resources* 41(2), pp. 259–293. The latter do note a "catch-up response" regarding wages with unemployment nonetheless exerting a negative impact on earnings for close to a decade.

1797 Cf. Institute of Politics, Harvard University 2014: *Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service: 25th Edition*, April 29, pp. 17–18.

1798 See chapter II.4.8, *The graying of America*.

contests.<sup>1799</sup> Trends like these could make a Democratic takeover of the House in future years a daunting challenge.

Fact of the matter remains that the white Southern penchant for “small government” when it comes to welfare spending seen to be beneficial to minorities in particular and the region’s religious and social conservatism that has pervaded every fiber of the Republican Party put the GOP at odds with a significant majority of today’s younger voters. Compared to the gap between the Republican Party and minorities, this rift is also particularly evident on social issues where Republican policies and views on homosexuality have substantially hurt the party’s appeal among young adults. How to move forward then? At least some of the younger Republicans have recognized the trouble the party is in among Millennials. A report drawn up by the College Republican National Committee released in June of 2013 pointed out that if the party does wish to make inroads among young adults, it will require “significant work to repair the damage done to the Republican brand among this age group over the last decade.”<sup>1800</sup> These young Republicans themselves acknowledge that the GOP’s focus on small government and its general emphasis on businesses have given many young voters the impression that they will only be able to reap the benefits of Republican policies once they have reached a certain economic standing – before reaching that plateau they are left to fend for themselves though.<sup>1801</sup> In the words of the report, “[w]e’ve become the party that will pat you on your back when you make it, but won’t offer a hand to help you get there.”<sup>1802</sup> A different solution to the Republican demise among young adults could perhaps have been offered by a (self-described) libertarian candidate like Senator Rand Paul whose 2016 campaign failed to ever gain any traction. Of course his staunch libertarian position on economic matters offers only a limited appeal to a significant segment of Millennials (although some disillusionment regarding the role of government in the economic sphere appears to be spreading as mentioned earlier) but a more reasonable approach on social and foreign policy issues based on libertarian values can get members of the millennial generation excited.<sup>1803</sup> Case

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1799 Cf. Institute of Politics, Harvard University 2014, p. 7.

1800 College Republican National Committee 2013: *Grand Old Party for A Brand New Generation*, p. 4.

1801 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 84–85.

1802 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

1803 The momentous weight social liberalism carries among younger voters is also reflected in the findings of the Reason-Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Survey. According to their data, 62 percent of 18 to 29 year olds are social liberals while just 49 percent have the same degree of liberalism on economic issues (cf. Reason-Rupe 2014, p. 25). The key then for any Republican candidate wishing to win over young voters will be to strike the right balance between exploiting their nascent economic libertarianism while – more importantly – showing and emphasizing to Millennials that one does not subscribe to the hidebound

in point his father Ron Paul. In the first two primaries of the 2012 season, Paul won a plurality of voters aged 18 to 29 in both Iowa and New Hampshire, gaining 48 and 46 percent of their vote respectively.<sup>1804</sup> Moreover, his son Rand has recognized that if the Republican Party wants to be able to once again fashion broad nationwide majorities on a consistent basis, it will have to “become a new GOP, a new Republican Party. And it has to be a transformation, not a little tweaking at the edges.”<sup>1805</sup> As already noted earlier, some within the GOP have come to recognize that “for many younger voters, these [social] issues are a gateway into whether the Party is a place they want to be.”<sup>1806</sup> A candidate like Paul who de-emphasizes the party’s religiously based aversion to gay marriage and abortion could at least begin to alter the Republican brand image among young adults. This is of course easier said than done – as the Kentucky senator can attest to – in a party that is more *evangelized* than ever thanks to past decisions that were made to facilitate the conversion of the South.

This book of course is a testament to the shifting sands of partisan affiliations. Can Republicans take heart from their conquest of the South and hope that similar gains can in time be made among younger voters? The simple answer is “no” if one analyzes more closely how the momentous changes in the former Confederacy came about. After all, when it comes to the realignment of the South one has to remember that in ideological terms the South, broadly speaking, did not realign at all. White Southerners were racial and social conservatives in the 1950s and 60s and they remain the most conservative group on both issue areas to this day. Instead the party system around them realigned. The party of *Radical Reconstruction* had all of a sudden become the party espousing the very same racially resentful rhetoric and values that had always been a staple of Southern politics. The lesson to be drawn from this and the chapter we have just discussed is that the basic ideological preferences of adults tend to not change substantially over time. Today’s younger voters may alter and adjust their priorities as they settle down but ultimately the Republican Party can only replicate its Southern success if it follows a strategy similar to its Southern one of adjusting its own policies to fit the mold of the electorate it is seeking to win over. A difficult task thanks to the overwhelming success the *Southern Strategy* has proven to be.

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social values of the religious right. The survey also has data to back up the assertion that a more socially progressive yet fiscally conservative candidate could do quite well among younger voters. 53 percent of 18 to 29 year olds said they would vote for a candidate like Hillary Clinton in 2016 (the highest share of any candidate mentioned) – the same share said they would also vote for a hypothetical socially liberal and fiscally conservative candidate (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 28–29).

1804 Cf. CNN 2012c and CNN 2012d: *New Hampshire Exit/Entrance Polls*, January 10.

1805 Quoted in: J. Miller 2014: “Rand Paul: Without change, GOP will ‘not win again in my lifetime.’” *CBS News*, February 14.

1806 Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, McCall 2013, p. 8.

## II.4.6 The secularization of America

As we have seen time and again throughout this book, one of the defining traits of the American South is its religiosity which has found its way into every area of the Republican Party as it has increasingly relied on the region and its white Evangelicals for votes. On top of that, we have also observed that on an issue like abortion, younger white evangelical cohorts are actually more conservative than their elders implying that religious beliefs have not decreased their relevance in the decision making process of this particular demographic group.<sup>1807</sup> Such trends among Evangelicals and the distinctive degree of religiosity found south of the Mason-Dixon Line most certainly serve to buttress the argument that the South continues to be an exceptional region particularly in light of the wider changes in religiosity that are occurring across the country. Plainly speaking, America is becoming less religious as younger generations are increasingly turning away from organized religion while some slight but relatively minor changes on religiosity have also been detected among older cohort groups in recent years. Shifts in attitude towards religion and the decreasing importance placed on faith when arriving at one's own policy preferences obviously do not bode well for a party with a deeply religious ideological foundation.

This group of religiously unaffiliated adults, also colloquially referred to as the “nones,” is comprised of people who do have a certain level of faith but do not possess an affiliation with any particular organized religion as well as self-described atheists and agnostics.<sup>1808</sup> As a group these adults are significantly less religious than religiously affiliated Americans on a variety of topics, such as church attendance or the general importance religion plays in their daily lives.<sup>1809</sup> The General Social Survey (GSS) which has been tracking religious preferences in the United States since 1972 illustrates the demise of religiosity and organized religion in the country quite well. While a mere seven percent of all Americans answered “no religion” to the question of their religious preference in 1975 that share had increased quite modestly to eight percent 15 years later. Rather remarkable changes have occurred over the past two decades though. By 2012, 20 percent of respondents were religiously unaffiliated,<sup>1810</sup> a share that had risen even further to almost 23 percent by 2014.<sup>1811</sup> This shift has been particularly pronounced among young adults who constitute the driving force behind the

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1807 Cf. Hoffmann, Mills Johnson 2005, pp. 177–178.

1808 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012g: “Nones” on the Rise, October 9, p. 9.

1809 Cf. *ibid.*

1810 Cf. Hout, Fischer, and Chaves 2013: “More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Key Finding from the 2012 General Social Survey” *University of California, Berkeley: Institute for the Study of Societal Issues*, March 7, pp. 1–2. Cf. also Pew Research Center 2012g, p. 9.

1811 Cf. Pew Research Center 2015b: *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, May 12, p. 3.



move away from religious affiliation. According to the 2012 GSS, a plurality (30.9 percent) of 18 to 30 year olds identified with no religion at all.<sup>1812</sup> More recent data from the summer of 2014 compiled by the Pew Research Center indicates that this trend shows no signs of abating – if anything the opposite is true. In 2014, 34 percent of older Millennials (aged 25 to 33) were religiously unaffiliated. Seven years earlier, 25 percent of the same cohort group (then aged 18 to 26) professed to have no religious affiliation. Among younger Millennials (aged between 18 and 24) this share even stood at 36 percent in 2014.<sup>1813</sup>

Such a non-religious outlook in life is not an artifact of the cohort group's younger age. When compared to previous generations at similar points in their lives, we see that today's young adults are significantly less likely to be religious. Between 1990 and 2012 having no religious preference for example increased by 22 points among 18 to 24 year olds according to the GSS, rising from 9.7 to 32.0 percent.<sup>1814</sup> With data broken down into specific generations, we see a similar picture: While 26 percent of Millennials were religiously unaffiliated in the late 2000s, just 20 percent of Generation X members and 13 percent of Baby Boomers were part of this more secular demographic segment when they were the same age as today's Millennials.<sup>1815</sup> Worrying for the party of *religious conservatism* is the distinct and, in light of the previous data, unsurprising lack of this ideology among Millennials. Just 17 percent of Millennials (in this case 18 to 33 year olds) were classified as religious conservatives by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI)<sup>1816</sup> compared to a national average of 28 percent while almost half of these young adults (45 percent to be precise) were considered to be “non-religious” (22 percent) or “religious progressives” (23 percent) compared to a national average of 34 percent among those two least religious groups.<sup>1817</sup>

It appears that for quite a few Millennials, the ageing process has also coincided with the realization that they simply do not wish to continue being a member of a particular religious denomination. A different survey from the PRRI which asked “college-age” Millennials (18 to 24 year olds) about their religious traits during childhood and early adulthood revealed that the unaffiliated share among these respondents had risen from eleven percent in their childhood years to 25 percent by the time they had reached adulthood.<sup>1818</sup> Such

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1812 Cf. Bowers 2013: “More Republican demographic death spiral: ‘No religion’ a plurality among Americans 18–30.” *Daily Kos*, June 28.

1813 Cf. Pew Research Center 2015b, p. 69.

1814 Cf. Hout, Fischer, and Chaves 2013, pp. 3 and 11.

1815 Cf. Pew Research Center 2010b, p. 85.

1816 This was done by combining a number of different scales regarding the theological, economic, and social orientations of different demographic groups.

1817 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera, Dionne, Jr., Galston 2013b, pp. 32–34.

1818 Cf. Jones, Cox, Banchoff 2012, p. 7.

increases in secular sentiment are not just limited to those young adults that have always had weaker ties to the church, in other words Millennials that could be considered Christian in name only. Instead what we are seeing is a broad and pervasive decoupling from religion found even among formerly religious young adults. According to a recent study by the Barna Group for example, 43 percent of Christian Millennials “who used to identify themselves closely with faith and the church” had ceased attending church regularly between their teen and early adult years.<sup>1819</sup> Delving into the myriad of reasons behind this secularization would go well beyond the scope of this book. One central influence though driving disaffiliation appears to be the position towards homosexual individuals taken by various denominations, unsurprising in light of the previous data pertaining to Millennials and gay rights. More so than older cohort groups who have left their respective churches, Millennials cite the negative position of their (former) religious home as a key reason in their decision to discard their affiliation.<sup>1820</sup> Other scholars have also suggested that some Americans, particularly the youngest generation, may have moved away from organized religion precisely because of its politicization over the past few decades as the ties between prominent religious leaders and the Republican Party have become ever closer.<sup>1821</sup> In this case, religious non-affiliation constitutes a political statement among moderate or liberal Americans that one does not wish to be identified with any particular organized religious community because of their not infrequent association with conservative politics.<sup>1822</sup> Regardless of whether one subscribes to the belief that religious views shape political positions and partisan affiliations or that the causal arrow points in the other direction, it goes without saying that the party which represents many of the – in the eyes of quite a few Millennials in particular and some older Americans as well – hidebound religious positions and actively incorporates them into its policy proposals will continue to have a hard time making inroads into this distinctly secular electorate.

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1819 Cf. The Barna Group 2013a: *Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials*.

1820 Cf. Jones, Cox, Navarro-Rivera 2014, p. 20. Almost a third of Millennials responded that the negative teaching of their respective churches on homosexuality was a “somewhat important” or “very important” reason for their departure. Just 19 percent of Baby Boomers and 17 percent of the Silent Generation answered that homosexuality played a central role in their disaffiliation process.

1821 David E. Campbell and Robert D. Putnam conclude that “[t]o [young adults], ‘religion’ means ‘Republican,’ ‘intolerant,’ and ‘homophobic.’ Since those traits do not represent their views, they do not see themselves – or wish to be seen by their peers – as religious.” Campbell, Putnam 2012: “God and Caesar in America: Why Mixing Religion and Politics Is Bad for Both.” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April.

1822 Cf. Hout, Fischer 2001: “Explaining the Rise of Americans With No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations.” *GSS Social Change Report No. 46*, November, pp. 18–20.

Hopeful signs for the GOP on the other hand are few and far in between. Could Millennials simply become more religious as they age? As Paul Taylor of the Pew Research Center points out, some sociologists like Robert Wuthnow of Princeton University argue that religious non-affiliation and decreases in church attendance may also be artifacts of the fact that for many of today's young adults, traditional coming of age processes – such as settling down, marrying, and subsequently starting a family – have been pushed back by a number of years.<sup>1823</sup> The reasoning is that they once they undergo these processes, their religiosity may quite possibly perk up because church membership is a part “of these traditional or conventional roles.”<sup>1824</sup> Compared to their generational predecessors at similar points in their lives for example, Millennials are indeed far less likely to be married. While 48 percent of Baby Boomers and 36 percent of Generation Xers were married at age 18 to 32 that share stands at just 26 percent among Millennials.<sup>1825</sup> Data also does indicate that among those under the age of 30 today who have gotten married, religious affiliation levels are higher than among the unmarried.<sup>1826</sup> Republicans should not count on Millennials joining churches left and right once they do decide to tie the knot though, after all the correlation between marriage and religious affiliation does not necessarily imply that the former leads to increases in the latter; as a matter of fact the causal arrow is highly likely to point in the other direction with today's religiously affiliated young adults simply placing more stock in the institution of marriage than their less religious millennial counterparts do. As Taylor also mentions, the majority of data on religious affiliation suggests that affiliation (or for that matter non-affiliation) rates in general do not shift substantially as people get older.<sup>1827</sup> As was already pointed out, 13 percent of Baby Boomers were religiously unaffiliated when they were in their late teens and early twenties during

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1823 Cf. Taylor 2014, p. 130.

1824 Wuthnow 2007: *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*, p. 54. As Wuthnow states, changing approaches to marriage “are likely to have a significant impact on religious participation” (p. 54). Marriage in itself represents “a significant form of settling down” – with “religious participation” another key ingredient of “conformity to mainstream social values” (ibid.). Moreover, using data from a Detroit sample of white mothers and children surveyed between 1962 and 1985, Arland Thornton, William G. Axinn, and Daniel H. Hill also found evidence that “marriage increases the religious involvement of young people.” In other words, the causal arrow can point both ways: Strong religious beliefs undoubtedly increase the likelihood of marriage rather than living in co-habitation while marriage itself can also lead to higher levels of religious participation. Thornton, Axinn and Hill 1992: “Reciprocal Effects of Religiosity, Cohabitation, and Marriage.” *American Journal of Sociology* 98(3), pp. 628–651, here p. 643.

1825 Cf. Pew Research Center 2014c, p. 5.

1826 Cf. Taylor 2014, p. 130.

1827 Cf. ibid., pp. 130–131.

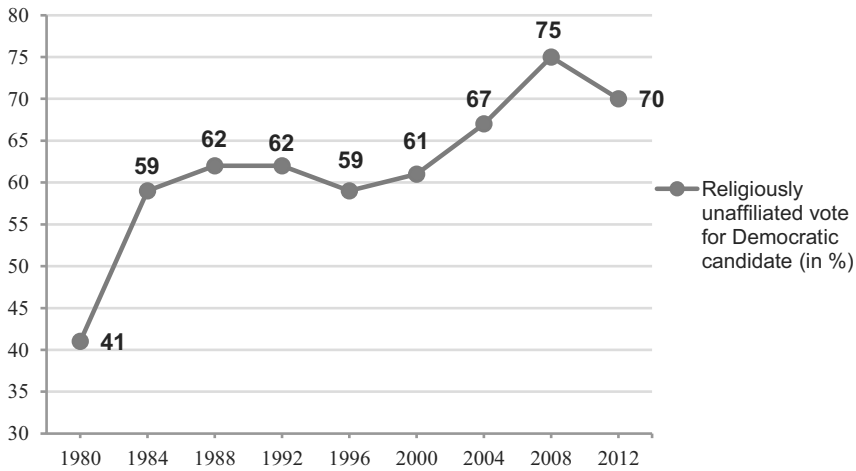
the late 1970s; 30 years later that share still stood at 13 percent with virtually no changes occurring among other generational groups either.<sup>1828</sup> Of course these older cohort groups did indeed also get married at an earlier point in their lives, leaving room for the possibility that early marriage also led to the higher rates of religious affiliation that could be noted among these older generations – a change that could still occur among the as yet unmarried Millennials. The distinct lack of movement towards more religiosity with higher age nonetheless indicates that Republicans should not count on a great religious awakening transpiring among Millennials any time soon.

The specific data on how these “nones” act at the ballot box certainly provides Republicans with some uncomfortable reading as well. Religiously unaffiliated partisan preferences are almost as clear cut as those found among the people standing at the opposite end of the religiosity scale. Along with African Americans, these religiously unaffiliated voters are some of the most Democratic ones in the land, casting 70 percent of their vote for Barack Obama in 2012.<sup>1829</sup> It is most certainly interesting to note how the strong shift of the unaffiliated vote into the Democratic camp in recent years has coincided with the complete *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the GOP across all political levels, demonstrating how the swelling of the Republican Party’s ranks with religious conservatives appears to have deterred secular voters from backing the party’s presidential candidates (see figure II.4.6.a). Support for Democratic presidential candidates hovered at around 60 percent between 1984 and 2000 with statistically insignificant changes occurring during this period. In the three most recent presidential elections though, Democrats respectively won 67, 75, and 70 percent of the religiously unaffiliated vote (a trend undoubtedly also driven though by the aforementioned lack of religious affiliation among younger voters and their Democratic leaning).

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1828 Cf. Pew Research Center 2010a: *Religion Among the Millennials*, February 17, p. 1.

1829 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012i.



**Figure II.4.6.a:** Democratic share of the religiously unaffiliated vote in presidential elections, 1980 through 2012, in percent.<sup>1830</sup>

Once again we ought to turn our attention to Virginia and its gubernatorial contests since they perfectly serve to exemplify the corner the Republican Party has gotten itself into with its strategy of focusing on white evangelical voters in an environment that is increasingly secularized. In the 2013 gubernatorial election in the *Old Dominion*, 27 percent of all voters were white evangelical or born-again Christians, a demographic the Republican candidate Ken Cuccinelli won by 66 percentage points (81 to 15 percent), losing the remaining 73 percent of the electorate by a margin of 30 points (31 to 61 percent).<sup>1831</sup> Four years earlier, the share of white evangelical voters had still stood at 34 percent, a demographic Republican candidate Bob McDonnell also won by 66 points (83 to 17 percent) while losing the remaining 66 percent of the electorate by only eleven points (44 to 55 percent).<sup>1832</sup> The difference between a comfortable victory in 2009 (Bob McDonnell beat his Democrat opponent Creigh Deeds by over 17 points) and a narrow defeat four years later could thus be found in the decreasing share of the white evangelical electorate and Cuccinelli's far poorer performance outside of his core constituency of white evangelical Protestants.

These trends are also reflected in the composition of both parties. While “nones” made up just eight percent of all Republican identifiers in 2012 their

1830 For data 1980 through 2000 cf. Navarro-Rivera 2012: “The Evolution of the Religiously Unaffiliated Vote, 1980–2008.” *Public Religion Research Institute*, October 26. For data 2004 through 2012 cf. Pew Research Center 2012i.

1831 Cf. CNN 2013b, p. 3.

1832 Cf. CNN 2009: *2009 Exit Polls: Virginia Governor*, November 3, p. 3.

share stood at 20 percent among Democrats<sup>1833</sup> with the divide also replicated in the 2012 presidential election when the religiously unaffiliated constituted 21 percent of President Obama's electorate but just seven percent of Governor Romney's.<sup>1834</sup> This shift is not without its pitfalls for the Democratic Party either though. As veteran scholar of the interplay of religion and politics John C. Green notes, the unaffiliated vote could "in the future [...] be as important to the Democrats as the traditionally religious are to the Republican Party," meaning that "we are likely to see even sharper divisions between the political parties and sharper divisions within [the parties]."<sup>1835</sup> Considering that there are still fairly religious elements left within the Democratic coalition of voters – African-American Protestants as well as both Hispanic Catholics and Protestants most notably – religiously unaffiliated voters and activists could, as Green eludes to, play a role similar to that of their devout counterparts on the right and make the party a less attractive option for those who still consider religion to be an integral part of their own identity and worldview. Whether such trends actually come to fruition and serve to fracture the vast Democratic coalition will be one of the more interesting political developments in the coming years.

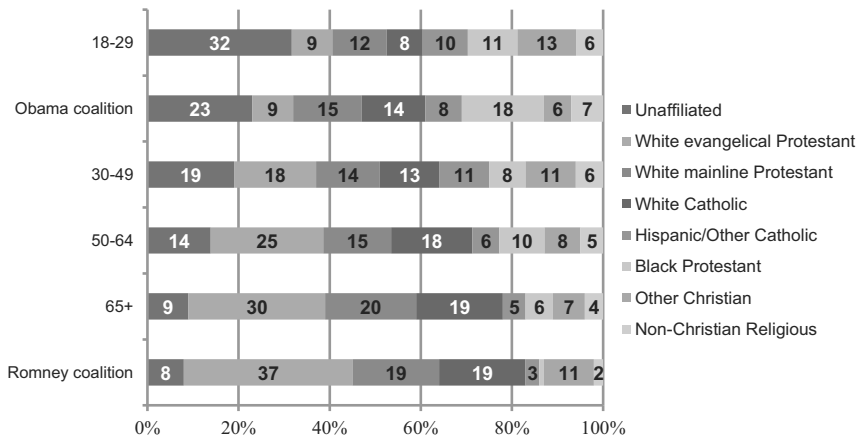
Still, one cannot get around the hard facts that Obama's 2012 electoral coalition, as shown in figure II.4.6.b, managed to reflect the secularizing trends of the nation in a substantially better manner than Governor Romney's religious alliance which on its part appeared to almost be a carbon copy of the demographic composition found among Americans aged 65 and older. America's youngest generation is not just the country's most ethnically diverse but also – as seen over the previous pages – its most secular one with scant evidence of the trend away from religious affiliation reversing in the near future. These young adults are keen to keep religion – which they often perceive to be intolerant towards some of the more marginalized groups in society – out of politics while showing little acceptance and understanding for policies that appear to be based on biblical verses. If the Republican Party remains the party of religious conservatism and white evangelical Protestants while continuing to blur the lines between politics and religion though, there is little reason to believe that significant shares of the religiously unaffiliated will ever consider it as a potential political home.

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1833 Cf. Pew Research Center 2012f, p. 11. The religiously unaffiliated made up 18 percent of the entire sample in this dataset.

1834 Cf. Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, and den Dulk 2014, p. 94.

1835 Quoted in: Winston 2012: "Losing our religion: One in five Americans are now 'nones.'" *Religion News Service*, October 9.



**Figure II.4.6.b:** Composition of different age brackets and the Obama/Romney electoral alliances of the 2012 presidential election by religious affiliation (in percent).<sup>1836</sup>

## II.4.7 Additional changes in the electorate – The shrinking Republican base

The changes we have already discussed appear to broadly favor the Democrats in future elections with some trends offering at least a modicum of hope for the GOP in the longer term future. These are far from the only transformations taking place within America's electorate though. Some of the shifts addressed over the following pages are connected to what we have already talked about: decreasing rates of marriage and its links to increases in religious non-affiliation are one such example. Others are part of a broader trend that has led to a decline of the blue collar electorate while more people than ever are attending and finishing college. Worryingly for Republicans, many of those trends even within what constitutes the party's contemporary electoral backbone – i. e. the white electorate – appear to be favoring their Democratic counterparts as well, factors which may very well place a cap on potential future GOP gains among white voters. Democratic pollster Stanley B. Greenberg concludes, with undoubtedly a sense of satisfaction, that “[e]very structural change you are talking about is moving in the direction of whites improving their votes for Democrats.”<sup>1837</sup>

1836 Source: Public Religion Research Institute: *The 2012 American Values Survey* (October), in: Public Religion Research Institute 2012: *The End of a White Christian Strategy*, November 12.

1837 Quoted in: Brownstein 2013.

## Changes in the white electorate

If whites have lost their role as the kingmakers of American politics over the last thirty odd years, the changes have been particularly pronounced among the white working class, defined by Ruy Teixeira as whites without a four-year college degree. This is a group that is more at home within the Republican Party than their counterparts with a college education, seeing as the former have been found to be more socially conservative while also being more open to certain parts of the GOP's populist anti-government message because of their tendency to blame the government for the economic problems they are facing.<sup>1838</sup> This definition is by no means without its detractors, as some prefer to instead use income, a combination of the two factors, or occupational groups instead.<sup>1839</sup> At least when the primary dividing line is a college education though, figures indicate that this batch of voters has moved quite strongly into the Republican camp over the last few decades. While 55 percent of whites without a college degree voted for Democratic presidential candidates in 1960 and '64 that share dropped to a mere 35 percent in 1968 and '72.<sup>1840</sup> In 2000, Al Gore lost this segment of the electorate by 17 points while four years later John Kerry fared even worse, losing the white working class by 23 points.<sup>1841</sup> President Obama's 36 percent share among these voters in 2012 represented another land mark with his showing constituting the worst Democratic performance among blue collar whites since Walter Mondale's 1984 defeat.<sup>1842</sup> Incidentally, the last time a Democratic presidential candidate also won less than 40 percent of the general white vote in a two-man presidential race was 1984 as well when Walter Mondale won 34 percent of whites compared to Barack Obama's 39 percent.<sup>1843</sup>

How was Barack Obama then able to win the presidency despite historically poor showings among the white working class? One central explanation is that the demise of the white *working class* has been even more remarkable than the general demise of the white vote. In 1988, white working class voters still constituted 54 percent of the general electorate. Around a quarter of a century later (2012) their share had dropped by 18 points to just 36 percent meaning that whites without a college degree now made up just half of all white voters, down

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1838 Cf. Teixeira 2010, p. 12.

1839 Cf. H. Farrell 2008: "Where's the American Working Class?" *The Monkey Cage*, December 5.

1840 Cf. Teixeira and Abramowitz 2008: "The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of a Mass Upper Middle Class." *Brookings Working Paper*, April, pp. 9–10.

1841 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 11.

1842 Cf. Brownstein 2012b.

1843 Exit poll data. Cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.



from 64 percent 24 years earlier.<sup>1844</sup> During the same period the share of whites *with* a college degree within the overall electorate rose from 31 to 36 percent,<sup>1845</sup> quite a significant feat considering the overall decreasing share of the white electorate during the same period (which contracted from 85 to 72 percent of all voters). While whites with a college education are by no means staunchly Democratic voters, their partisan inclinations are to the left of those whites who do not possess a college degree. In 2012, President Obama managed to win 42 percent of the vote among college-educated whites compared to just 36 percent among working class whites.<sup>1846</sup> It is worth remembering though that while this intra-white trend appears to at least help cushion some of the Democratic losses among white voters, a closer look reveals the general impact of this development to be largely negligible. Had the 2012 white electorate looked like the one in place in 1988 in terms of its college/non-college breakdown (in other words a 64 to 36 percent split in favor of working class whites instead of the even 50–50 split), President Obama would have won 38 percent of the white vote (using the 2012 margins found among both groups) instead of the 39 percent he actually received. Had the roles been reversed, i. e. if college-educated whites had constituted 64 percent of the white electorate, the president's share of the white vote would have come in at 40 percent.<sup>1847</sup> Of course in an election with razor-thin margins like the one seen in 2000, these shifts may nonetheless prove to be vital.

Even more important – given the fact that the electoral college and not the popular vote determines who gets to live at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue – are the changes that have occurred in a variety of battleground states. As we already addressed earlier, states such as Florida, Nevada, or Colorado have seen significant increases in the share of the electorate Hispanics make up. These shifts are complemented more worryingly for the Republicans by decreases in the white electorate that are primarily or sometimes solely found among the white working class. Take the key battleground state of Florida. Between 1988 and 2008, the share of white working class voters in the state's electorate decreased by 17 percentage points. This is not just due to the fact that an increasing share of the electorate is now comprised of minorities – whose share rose by twelve points during the same period – but also thanks to college-educated whites which made up four percentage points more of the Sunshine State's electorate in 2008 than they had done 20 years earlier.<sup>1848</sup> A similar development can be spotted in Nevada. Here the white working class's share dropped by 24 points

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1844 Cf. Teixeira 2013b: "Will The Future Of White Voters Be Republican? Don't Be Too Sure." *ThinkProgress*, August 9.

1845 Cf. *ibid.*

1846 Cf. Brownstein 2013.

1847 Own calculations.

1848 Cf. Teixeira 2010, p. 13.

over 20 years with both minorities (up by 19 points) *and* college-educated whites (up by four points) increasing their electoral muscle.<sup>1849</sup> Trends like these that have altered the electoral scales along with the president's strong performance among minorities, young adults, and just enough college-educated whites played a key role in helping him carry Virginia and the aforementioned eternal swing state of Florida, places where President Obama faced a particularly strong degree of rejection by the white working class.<sup>1850</sup>

### A nation of singles

Similar to many other nations across the world, marriage rates have decreased substantially in the United States over the past few decades, a development that can to some extent be traced back to the trends already discussed (such as the secularization of the nation) but whose specific data nonetheless reveals some interesting demographic shifts that do not bode particularly well for the Republican Party. In 2011, just 20 percent of all adults in the U.S. aged between 18 and 29 were married compared to 59 percent in 1960.<sup>1851</sup> These underlying trends are also reflected on election day. While only 24 percent of all voters who took part in the 1972 presidential election were unmarried that share had ballooned to 39 percent by 2012.<sup>1852</sup> This is not just due to increases in the minority electorate who are more likely than their non-Hispanic white counterparts to be unmarried. Between 1984 and 2012 white singles increased their share within the white electorate from 30 to 35 percent, another troubling sign for the GOP as every Democratic candidate has fared better among white singles than among married whites in presidential elections since 1980.<sup>1853</sup> Changes in marital relations and the voting habits of both groups certainly provide for interesting reading because the partisan rift between the married and unmarried is notably larger than the often cited gender gap. A comparison between the 2004 and 2012 presidential elections paints a vivid picture of some of the changes the electorate has undergone over the course of less than a decade and how these shifts have tilted the playing field in favor of the Democrats. Compared to George W. Bush's performance among married voters, Mitt Romney did reasonably well with the Massachusetts governor's margin of victory within this demographic group only

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1849 Cf. *ibid.*

1850 Cf. Brownstein 2012b.

1851 Cf. Cohn, Passel, Wang, and Livingston 2011: "Barely Half of U.S. Adults Are Married – A Record Low." *Pew Research Center*, December 14, p. 2.

1852 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2013d: *Facts for Features: Unmarried and Single Americans Week Sept. 15–21, 2013*. July 30.

1853 Cf. Brownstein 2013.

a point below that of President Bush, coming in at 14 instead of 15 points. Where we can detect a substantial alteration of voting habits is among the unmarried part of the electorate though, among whom President Obama managed to better John Kerry's 18-point victory by expanding it to a 27-point gap.<sup>1854</sup> Between 2004 and 2012, the married/unmarried breakdown of the electorate also narrowed from 63 %–37 % to 60 %–40 %.<sup>1855</sup>

The rising tide of *singledom* and the challenges this poses for the GOP are particularly pronounced when we turn our attention to female voters. Over a mere ten year period (from 2000 to 2010) the number of unmarried women in the United States increased by roughly 18.6 percent – rising from 44.8 million to over 53 million – while the number of married women only grew by seven percent during the same timeframe.<sup>1856</sup> The former group was carried by President Obama by an impressive 36 points while he lost the latter by seven points to Governor Romney.<sup>1857</sup> The 2013 Virginia gubernatorial contest that we have now assessed in closer detail on a number of occasions demonstrates the complete and utter Republican failure among unmarried women in an even more vivid manner. While Ken Cuccinelli won married women by a margin of 51 to 42 percent over his Democratic opponent Terry McAuliffe, he lost unmarried women by a stunning 42 points (25 %–67 %).<sup>1858</sup> What are the reasons behind these patterns and how do they fit into the context of this book? Unmarried women tend to possess a number of traits that make them more likely to vote in a liberal manner. Compared to their married counterparts they are less affluent for example. The vehement (Southern) anti-statism and religious conservatism espoused by the GOP does not exactly make the party a more appealing choice for many of these unmarried women either. Their possible background as single mothers and the general circumstances that they find themselves in often create an environment in which an activist government is perceived as anything but the demonized institution that Republicans make it out to be while quite a few of these women also abhor the idea of men like Ken Cuccinelli making decisions for them on matters like contraception.<sup>1859</sup> That President Bush could do a better job of connecting with unmarried voters can primarily be traced back to his brand of conservatism. Even though the 43<sup>rd</sup> President could undoubtedly also be regarded as a strong proponent of strengthening the role of religion in everyday

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1854 For 2004 data cf. CNN 2004b: *National Presidential Exit Poll*, November 2. For 2012 data cf. CNN 2012l.

1855 Cf. *ibid.*

1856 Cf. The Voter Participation Center and Lake Research Partners 2012: *The Power of Unmarried Women*, p. 6.

1857 Cf. CNN 2012l.

1858 Cf. CNN 2013b, p. 5.

1859 Cf. The Economist 2013f: *The Marriage Gap*. December 14.

life, he nonetheless also ran as a compassionate conservative who acknowledged that the government had a role to play in the everyday lives of Americans, particularly when it came to lending a helping hand to those who needed support the most (single mothers relying on food stamps to feed themselves and their children spring to mind).<sup>1860</sup> The subsequent emergence and prominence of the Tea Party and the policies it stands for – such as the complete abolishment of nutritional assistance for the poor and abhorring virtually all other government welfare programs – appear to have had a devastating effect on Republican popularity among the unmarried though. Moreover, as the GOP has become increasingly *evangelized* it has also increasingly portrayed marriage as a panacea for all of society's ills – from poverty<sup>1861</sup> to violence<sup>1862</sup> – in the process often, even if not necessarily always overtly, demonizing those who do not fit their traditionalist mold. It does not appear unlikely then that the constant lionization of the institution of marriage by the GOP alienates many single voters, as they are made to feel rather unwelcome within the Republican tent.

One of the key questions that remains to be answered in the coming years and decades is if marriage is merely being delayed due to the economic hardships

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1860 An example of his compassionate conservatism can be found in George W. Bush's 2001 inaugural address: "America at its best is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our Nation's promise. And whatever our views of its cause, we can agree that children at risk are not at fault. [...] Where there is suffering, there is duty. Americans in need are not strangers; they are citizens – not problems but priorities. And all of us are diminished when any are hopeless. Government has great responsibilities for public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools." Bush 2001: "Inaugural Address." January 20. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*.

1861 Presenting his proposals in January of 2014 to combat poverty and reform the American welfare state, Marco Rubio referred to marriage as the "greatest tool to lift children and families from poverty" because it supposedly decreased the risk of childhood poverty by 82 percent, a rather dubious claim due to the fallacious correlation between marriage and poverty. For quote see Rubio 2014: *Rubio Delivers Address on 50th Anniversary of the "War on Poverty."* January 8.

1862 Asked about his views towards an assault weapons ban during the second presidential debate in 2012, Mitt Romney evaded the question and gave an answer that has become the standard Republican response to almost any cultural issue – the centrality of growing up in a two parent household, preferably a married one: "Yeah, I'm not in favor of new pieces of legislation on – on guns and taking guns away or making certain guns illegal. We, of course, don't want to have automatic weapons, and that's already illegal in this country to have automatic weapons. [...] What I believe is we have [...] to change the culture of violence we have. [...] But let me mention another thing. And that is parents. We need moms and dads, helping to raise kids. Wherever possible the – the benefit of having two parents in the home, and that's not always possible. A lot of great single moms, single dads. But gosh to tell our kids that before they have babies, they ought to think about getting married to someone, that's a great idea. Because if there's a two parent family, the prospect of living in poverty goes down dramatically." For transcript see Aravosis 2012: "Full transcript of second Obama/Romney debate." *Americablog*, October 17.

Millennials in particular are facing today or if lower rates of marriage among today's younger segments of society will persist even as they age and establish a financial foundation along with a degree of economic security that should enable them to finally take the plunge. While young adults are indeed more likely than their elders to consider marriage to be an obsolete institution (44 percent among Millennials compared to 39 percent among all Americans) a significant majority of them (70 percent) nonetheless intends to tie the knot eventually.<sup>1863</sup> Future developments will most certainly provide scholars and analysts with a variety of interesting data on the potential impact of marriage on shifting partisan preferences. One forecast can nonetheless be made with a relatively strong degree of certainty: Even though we have seen in this chapter that marriage and Republican affiliation are linked to each other, the institution will by itself not turn currently unmarried Millennials into Reaganites, as evidenced by the ideological preferences of this segment of the population illustrated in chapter II.4.5. Additionally, the anti-statist and traditionalist core of the GOP will also continue to represent a barrier between Republicans and significant parts of the single electorate, particularly when it comes to its female members.

## II.4.8 The graying of America

Up until now virtually all of the demographic factors we have assessed provide Republicans with a rather bleak future to look forward to. One development in particular though should raise the spirits of conservatives at least in the short to mid-term. As is the case in most of the rest of the developed world, America's population is becoming older and doing so rather quickly. Over the past forty odd years, the country's median age has risen from 28.1 years in 1970 to 32.9 in 1990 and 37.2 by 2010.<sup>1864</sup> This trend will continue in future years as well. According to projections made by the U.S. Census Bureau, the population aged 65 or older is set to increase from 43.1 million in 2012 to 92.0 million in 2060<sup>1865</sup> with their share of the nation's population increasing from 13.0 percent in 2010<sup>1866</sup> to 21.9 percent by 2060.<sup>1867</sup> Of course tomorrow's older voters are the young Democrats of today, meaning that Republicans cannot simply count on an

1863 Cf. Taylor 2014, p. 108.

1864 Cf. Skelley 2014: "Putting Their Eggs in the Wrong Midterm Basket." *Sabato's Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, March 27.

1865 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2012d.

1866 Cf. Howden, Meyer 2011: "Age and Sex Composition: 2010–2010 Census Briefs." *United States Census Bureau*, May, p. 2.

1867 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2012b: *Table 2. Projections of the Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for the United States: 2015 to 2060 (NP2012-T2)*.

ageing population providing them with future electoral victories, particularly if one takes into consideration that while just 22 percent of today's seniors are minorities that share will stand at 45 percent in 2060.<sup>1868</sup> Moreover, as was already discussed earlier on, the "impressionable years hypothesis" and a multitude of data suggest that cohort groups often exhibit remarkable stability concerning their ideological and partisan leans. There is nonetheless some evidence to suggest that an "age effect", in other words a move to the ideological right as one ages, does exist which may counteract some of the other demographic trends that appear to favor Democratic candidates and policies. Levine, Flanagan, and Gallay 2008 for example do note that both Generation Xers and Baby Boomers became more conservative at similar rates in their thirties and forties<sup>1869</sup> while political analyst Sean Trende rightfully points out that those members of the electorate who were the biggest supporters of staunch liberal George McGovern in his 1972 presidential bid (then 18 to 24 year olds – the only age group carried by the South Dakota senator) are now some of the most reliably Republican voters (see table II.4.8.a).<sup>1870</sup> Ideological self-placement mirrors the "age effect" we can see in voting preferences. A poll conducted by Time magazine in 1986 for example showed that 64 percent of polled Baby Boomers felt they had become more conservative since the 1960s. While 31 percent said they had identified as liberals in the 1960s and '70s that share had dropped to 21 percent by 1986; the share of conservatives on the other hand had risen from 28 to 41 percent.<sup>1871</sup> A variety of ANES surveys also indicate changing political beliefs as voters age. In 1972, 51 percent of eligible voters in the early baby boomer cohort (defined as having been born between 1943 and '58) identified as Democrats while a mere 29 percent considered themselves Republican. By 2008 though, the shares within this particular cohort group had changed to 45 and 48 percent respectively as Republican identifiers were now outnumbering their Democratic counterparts.<sup>1872</sup> Some of these trends may very well have accelerated in recent years as the nation's political and racial polarization have come to the fore. Data from Gallup for example indicates that the largely white segment of senior citizens has moved significantly into the Re-

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1868 Cf. Teixeira, Frey, Griffin 2015: "States of Change: The Demographic Evolution of the American Electorate, 1974–2060." *Center for American Progress, American Enterprise Institute, Brookings Institution*, February, p. 13.

1869 Cf. Levine, Flanagan, Gallay 2008, pp. 6–7.

1870 Cf. Trende 2013c: "Demographics and the GOP, Part IV." *RealClearPolitics*, July 2. Trende mentions that McGovern won this group by two percentage points, quite a feat considering his overall loss by 23 points. If we expand the group to all those below the age of thirty, Nixon won by four points (still making this group 19 points more Democratic than the electorate at-large). Cf. Gallup 2012: *Election Polls – Presidential Vote by Groups*.

1871 Cf. K. Bowman, Rugg 2011: "As the boomers turn." *Los Angeles Times*, September 12.

1872 Cf. *ibid*.

publican camp over the past few years. In 2007, Democrats enjoyed an advantage in partisan affiliation of eleven points among Americans aged 65 and older. Three years later, this had been reversed to a Republican advantage of six points, a shift well above that of Americans below the age of 65.<sup>1873</sup>

Presidential election results (see table II.4.8.a) over the past few decades also reveal remarkable changes in the partisan lean of voters aged 45 and older, age brackets where the Democratic advantage among non-whites does little to help them compensate for the rightward shift of non-Hispanic whites due to the fact that these age groups are the least ethnically diverse in the nation. To a certain extent these changes are of course also attributable to staunchly Democratic older voters – who came of age during the Great Depression – passing away and the move of voters who came of age during the dismal Carter and successful Reagan presidencies moving into older age brackets. As the data in the previous paragraphs illustrates though, a rightward shift among older (disproportionately white) Americans does appear to be transpiring. Regardless of the specific factors behind the results, senior citizens in particular appear to be a group of voters whose support Republicans can count on – an important factor to remember as we discuss turnout of different age groups later on in this chapter. As table II.4.8.a demonstrates, in both 2008 and 2012 Americans aged 65 and older had a Republican lean of over 15 percentage points compared to the electorate at-large, a remarkable difference from 2000 for example when voters 60 and older still supported Al Gore by a wider margin than the entire electorate did and a far cry from the almost seven-point Democratic lean seen within this group in 1988.

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1873 Among Americans below the age of 65, the same Democratic advantage of eleven points was slashed by nine points over the three-year period. Of course there are certain inherent limitations when using age (e.g. all senior citizens) rather than cohort groups (e.g. Baby Boomers) to gauge changes in partisan preferences. Nonetheless this shift appears to go beyond older – more Democratic leaning – seniors dying and being replaced by more Republican younger seniors. The increasing racial polarization seen throughout the electorate and between both parties unsurprisingly appears to have had a particularly profound effect on the partisan preferences of the whitest age group of all. Cf. Jones 2014b: “U.S. Seniors Have Realigned With the Republican Party.” *Gallup*, March 26.

**Table II.4.8.a:** *Voters aged 45 and older, their share of the electorate, how they voted, and their partisan lean.*<sup>1874</sup>

Year	Share of voters aged 45 and older within general electorate	How they voted (GOP vote first)	National popular vote	GOP lean (positive figure indicates more Republican than general electorate)
2012	54 %	45–64 year olds: 51–47, 65+ year olds: 56–44	51.0–47.2 (Dem +3.8)	45–64: +7.8, 65+: +15.8
2008	53 %	45–64 year olds: 49–50, 65+ year olds: 53–45	52.9–45.6 (Dem +7.3)	45–64: +6.3, 65+: +15.3
2004	54 %	45–59 year olds: 51–48, 60+ year olds: 54–46	50.7–48.3 (GOP +2.4)	45–59: +0.6, 60+: +5.6
2000	50 %	45–59 year olds: 49–48, 60+ year olds: 47–51	48.4–47.9 (Dem +0.5)	45–59: +1.5, 60+: -3.5
1996	50 %	45–59 year olds: 41–48, 60+ year olds: 44–48	49.2–40.7 (Dem +8.5)	45–59: +1.5, 60+: +4.5
1992	40 %	45–59 year olds: 40–41, 60+ year olds: 38–50	43–37.5 (Dem +5.5)	45–59: +4.5, 60+: -6.5
1988	44 %	45–59 year olds: 57–42, 60+ year olds: 50–49	53.4–45.7 (GOP + 7.7)	45–59: +7.3, 60+: -6.7

While voters aged 45 and older constituted 44 percent of the entire electorate in 1988 that share reached 54 percent in the most recent presidential election. Looking at the partisan preferences of these age brackets, we see that between 1988 and 2000, voters 60 and older were to the left of the general electorate on three out of four occasions (1988, 1992, and 2000). In the three subsequent elections though, they were one of the most reliably Republican demographics in the entire country with the Republican lean among seniors coming in at over 15

1874 For data from 1988 through 2004 cf. New York Times 2008a: *Election Results 2008 – Exit Polls*, November 5. For 2008 and 2012 data cf. Roper Center Public Opinion Archives 2014.



percentage points in both 2008 and 2012. Mitt Romney actually managed to become the first Republican to cross the 60 percent mark among *white* seniors since Ronald Reagan did so in 1984,<sup>1875</sup> winning whites 65 and older by a margin of 61 to 39 percent.<sup>1876</sup> A similar picture can also be seen in congressional elections. As recently as 2000, support for Democratic candidates among voters 65 years and older was higher than among young adults between the ages of 18 and 29. That year the two-party share of the House vote for Democratic candidates stood at 52 percent among seniors and 51 percent among young adults. By 2012 though, only 44 percent of senior citizens backed Democratic candidates while 60 percent of 18 to 29 year olds cast their vote for a Democrat.<sup>1877</sup>

### Turnout and the disproportionate impact of older voters

As political analyst David Wasserman has noted, President Obama's electorate coalition "is more highly dependent on young and non-white voters than any presidential coalition before it."<sup>1878</sup> One central drawback of such a coalition is the fact that younger voters traditionally have a far weaker track record when it comes to turning out on election day, particularly when a big name at the top of the ticket is missing – in other words off-year elections or the midterms. Comparing the 1972 and 2008 electorates demonstrates how both societal ageing and differences in turnout can skew the electorate in a more favorable Republican direction. In 1972, adults aged 18 to 24 represented 18.3 percent of the *citizen voting age population* (CVAP) while making up just 14.3 percent of that year's electorate thanks to the less than stellar turnout record of younger voters, amounting to a voter per CVAP ratio of 0.78 in the process. 36 years later that ratio had dropped even further to 0.76 as the share of 18 to 24 year olds among all voters had moreover decreased by five points to 9.3 percent in 2008.<sup>1879</sup> A different trend can be seen in the older age brackets where the voter to CVAP ratio of Americans aged 61 to 75 increased from 1.08 in 1972 to 1.13 in 2008 while rising among voters between the ages of 76 to 84 from 0.91 to 1.11, indicating that these demographic groups were heavily overrepresented among citizens who actually turned out to vote on election day. Combined with the general aging of American society this ultimately meant that while both of these older groups comprised

1875 Cf. Brownstein 2013.

1876 Cf. Resurgent Republic 2012a.

1877 Cf. Wasserman 2013b: "The GOP's Built-In Midterm Turnout Advantage." *The Cook Political Report*, May 31.

1878 Ibid.

1879 Cf. Leighley, Nagler 2014: *Who Votes Now?: Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States*, p. 36.

20.2 percent of the voting population in 1972, their share had increased to 24.3 percent by 2008.<sup>1880</sup> Table II.4.8.b also highlights that turnout rates found among the older segments of the electorate in presidential elections are substantially higher than the ones found among the younger members of society which has nonetheless more often than not failed to provide Republican candidates with sufficient support to win the popular vote in recent years. While the turnout rate among seniors has hovered around 70 percent over the past quarter of a century, it reached a peak of 44.3 percent among 18 to 24 year olds in 2008 before once again dropping below the 40 percent mark four years later.

**Table II.4.8.b:** *Reported voting rates (in percent) in presidential election years by selected characteristics, 1988 to 2012.*<sup>1881</sup>

	2012	2008	2004	2000	1996	1992	1988
18–24	38.0	44.3	41.9	32.3	32.4	42.8	36.2
25–44	49.5	51.9	52.2	49.8	49.2	58.3	54.0
45–64	63.4	65.0	66.6	64.1	64.4	70.0	67.9
65+	69.7	68.1	68.9	67.6	67.0	70.1	68.8

This trend is replicated in an even more pronounced fashion in congressional midterm elections (see table II.4.8.c). Compared to the presidential election two years earlier, the turnout rate in the 2010 congressional election among the youngest voters (18 to 24 year olds) decreased by a staggering 56 percent, dropping from 44.3 to 19.6 percent. Among voters aged 65 and older though, it merely shrunk by 14 percent, declining from 68.1 to 58.9 percent.

**Table II.4.8.c:** *Reported voting rates (in percent) in congressional election years by selected characteristics, 1986 to 2010.*<sup>1882</sup>

	2010	2006	2002	1998	1994	1990	1986
18–24	19.6	19.9	17.2	16.7	20.1	20.4	21.9
25–44	32.2	34.4	34.1	34.8	39.4	40.7	41.4
45–64	51.1	54.3	53.1	53.6	56.7	55.8	58.7
65+	58.9	60.5	61.0	59.5	61.3	60.3	60.9

What this obviously means is that older voters have a disproportionately big impact on midterm elections in particular. All in all, exit poll data shows that

1880 Cf. *ibid.*

1881 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2013b: *Historical Time Series Tables: Table A-9. Reported Voting Rates in Presidential Election Years, by Selected Characteristics: November 1964 to 2012.* May 8.

1882 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2013a: *Historical Time Series Tables: Table A-7. Reported Voting Rates in Congressional Election Years, by Selected Characteristics: November 1966 to 2010.* May 8.

while 18 to 29 year olds on average constituted 21.4 percent of the electorate in the presidential elections between 1972 and 2008, they made up just 14.2 percent of congressional midterm electorates between 1974 and 2010. Voters aged 60 and older on the other hand respectively made up 21.1 and 27.3 percent.<sup>1883</sup> Expanding the younger age bracket a bit to include voters aged up to 44 and only including participation in House elections, David Wasserman's calculations shown in table II.4.8.d reveal that since 1994, the share of the electorate under the age of 45 has dropped by an average of 9.6 percentage points in congressional midterm elections compared to the House elections in presidential election years preceding them.

Table II.4.8.d: *Share of U.S. House Vote of Voters 18–44*.<sup>1884</sup>

Election Cycle (Presidential Election/Midterms)	Share of U.S. House Vote in Presidential Election Years	Share of U.S. House Vote in Midterms
1992/1994	56 %	45 %
1996/1998	50 %	42 %
2000/2002	49 %	39 %
2004/2006	45 %	37 %
2008/2010	47 %	36 %

### Overreliance on older voters and their values

While high turnout rates among older voters can provide Republican candidates with a path to victory in congressional contests, such a strategy of focusing on older, largely white, voters to win elections also has its fair share of pitfalls. Data from the 2012 Republican presidential primaries first of all does demonstrate quite vividly that the party's base is sorely lacking young input. After the "Super Tuesday" primaries of March 6, exit polls revealed that voters aged 50 or older had made up a majority of GOP primary voters in every Republican state for which exit polls had been conducted (14 in total).<sup>1885</sup> During the presidential election four years earlier, voters aged 50 and above comprised more than half of the electorate in only one of those 14 states though (Virginia). While voters aged 50+ cast 43 and 44 percent of all presidential ballots in 2008 and 2012 respectively, they made up 70 percent or more of the Republican 2012 primary

1883 Cf. Skelley 2014: "Putting Their Eggs in the Wrong Midterm Basket." *Sabato's Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, March 27.

1884 Data assembled by: Wasserman 2013b.

1885 Cf. Brownstein 2012a: "The Bucket List: Why Older Whites Are Dominating the GOP Primaries." *National Journal*, March 7.

electorate after Super Tuesday in the states of Florida (71 %) and Nevada (70 %), while making up at least 60 percent in Georgia (64 %), Massachusetts (64 %), Vermont (63 %), Oklahoma (62 %), Tennessee (62 %), South Carolina (61 %), Iowa (60 %), Michigan (60 %), and Virginia (60 %).<sup>1886</sup> As we already saw in the chapters on the Tea Party, the somewhat atypical views of the primary crowd can have a devastating impact on the electability of candidates particularly when we see such a notable rift between the constitution of the general and primary electorates, forcing candidates to support positions that may go over well in February and March but cause an uproar in October and November. Fact of the matter is that the opinions and preferences of the GOP's old white base are increasingly out of touch with the positions adopted by growing segments of the electorate. Take the issue of same-sex marriage for example. While data from the Pew Research Center showed an increase in support for gay marriage of four and five percentage points respectively among members of Generation X and Millennials between 2011 and 2013 (rising to 52 and 66 percent respectively) it rose by just a point among Baby Boomers (going from 40 to 41 points). Unsurprisingly, members of the "Silent" Generation (born between 1928 and 45) were the least supportive, with 35 percent favoring allowing gay couples to marry.<sup>1887</sup> On an integral issue like immigration, older voters are also distinctly to the right of the general population. Another Pew survey dating from 2013 showed that 49 percent of all 65+ year olds as well as 46 percent of 50 to 64 year olds considered immigrants to be a burden on society because "they take jobs, housing, and health care;" just 41 percent of the general population and 33 percent of 18 to 29 year olds felt that way.<sup>1888</sup> Striking an immigration reform deal that is widely considered to be a prerequisite for and first step towards future Republican inroads into the Hispanic electorate is thus hardly a popular endeavor among the older voters that often form an integral part of today's GOP base.

Another challenge presented by the increasing clout of older voters within the Republican Party is their apparent aversion to compromise and disdain for the political class. Heading into the 2010 congressional midterms, 45 and 41 percent of Republicans and Republican leaning independents aged 65 or older and between the ages of 50 to 64 respectively argued that a candidate's willingness to compromise with people they disagreed with made voting for such a candidate less likely (see table II.4.8.e). Younger and middle aged Americans were far more willing to approve of such candidates though.

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1886 Cf. *ibid.*

1887 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013h: *Changing Attitudes on Gay Marriage, slide 2*, June.

1888 Cf. Pew Research Center 2013f, p. 5.

**Table II.4.8.e:** *Effect on vote if candidate will compromise with people they disagree with (in percent, Republican brackets include Republican leaning independents; remaining shares “no difference” or “don’t know”):*<sup>1889</sup>

	Total	All 18–29	All 30–49	GOP 50–64	GOP 65+
<b>More likely to vote</b>	42	52	47	37	18
<b>Less likely to vote</b>	22	13	19	41	45

These older Republicans were also far less likely to support an incumbent, with 52 percent among 65+ year old and 49 percent among 50 to 64-year-old Republicans responding that a candidate’s incumbency decreased the likelihood that they were going to cast their ballot for such a candidate. Among the entire sample this view was expressed by just 27 percent. Political novices were therefore also far more popular among the older sections of the GOP electorate: 43 percent of Republicans and Republican leaners aged 65 and above as well as 34 percent of those aged between 50 and 64 said that a candidate’s background that revealed no previous political office made it more likely they were going to vote for that person, a position shared by just 24 percent of all voters.<sup>1890</sup> What we see among today’s Republican seniors then is an attitude quite reminiscent of the uncompromising populist positions espoused by the Tea Party as well as the late George Wallace. These senior citizens epitomize the contemporary angry white Republican voter who despises Washington, D.C. and prefers candidates that are not tainted by previously held political offices.

## Conclusion

Different aspects of the Republican Party’s *Southernization* can most certainly entail electoral windfalls for the Republican Party as the nation ages. The racial polarization of the American electorate that has emerged in recent years as the GOP and its officeholders have become distinctly Southern may very well drive the disproportionately white segment of voters aged 50 and older even further into the hands of the Republican Party. Being the party older whites and the defenders of more traditional social values moreover allows Republicans to do exceptionally well in certain electoral environments – such as the midterms – where key pillars of the Democratic base are often taking part in a far less enthusiastic manner. Today and in the immediate future, the graying of the nation presents Republicans with a viable path towards electoral success, allowing them to control at least one of the levers of political power in the nation’s

<sup>1889</sup> Cf. Pew Research Center 2010c: *Seniors are Strongest Advocates for Change in 2010*, June 3.

<sup>1890</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

capital (the House), while the mid to long term future looks bleaker even as the nation ages. To be sure, some of today's liberal young voters will adjust their political positions as their personal backgrounds change – keeping in mind that these young adults will replace more conservative cohort groups, this will still move the country to the left though. As was illustrated in previous chapters, today's young adults are far more liberal than their older counterparts were at similar stages of their lives so even a similar move to the right will not fully compensate for the liberal “head start” this generation has had compared to their elders. If racial polarization also shows no signs of abating, the GOP's current advantage will eventually turn into a serious disadvantage. As we saw in this chapter, white seniors have overwhelmingly moved to the right while their non-white counterparts nonetheless remain one of the most steadfast Democratic cohort groups. Unless Republicans can tone down some of their racially resentful rhetoric that is so appealing to today's conservative base, future senior citizens will in all likelihood be a group that can no longer be counted on to vote Republican by simple virtue of the fact that they will be far more non-white than today's seniors. One should also not forget the elephant in the room: Any electoral formula for success that is largely dependent on today's older voters will inevitably run into problems as these people, to use a euphemism, leave the electorate. Moreover, despite a huge Republican lean among voters aged 45 and older in the two most recent presidential elections (see table II.4.8.a), Republican candidates were defeated quite handedly both times around demonstrating that such a strategy has severe limitations in at least the arguably most important election of all.

## II.4.9 General conclusion regarding demographic trends

The Republican Party is at a crossroads. Within the halls of Congress and across the nation, members of the party are discussing how to best adapt to a changing nation. Focus on the white vote and hope that the increasing clout of minority voters in the electoral and political realms will lead to a backlash that widens Republican margins among the white electorate in a sufficient manner to regain the presidency or embrace immigration reform in an attempt to win over Hispanics are the two most prominent options usually debated.<sup>1891</sup> The problem is

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1891 One of the most vocal proponents for an electoral strategy that continues to primarily focus on white voters is the conservative political analyst Sean Trende. He for example made the case after the 2012 presidential election that Romney's defeat could in large part be traced back not to a poor performance among non-whites but a supposedly dismal turnout among less affluent whites. While Trende argues that the GOP does have to indeed fare better among Hispanics in future elections, he believes that at least in the short term a

that either path has a number of substantial drawbacks. Option number one depends on Republican candidates replicating winning margins among white voters that not even Ronald Reagan achieved.<sup>1892</sup> Focusing on the white vote will also yield diminishing returns with each successive election. Option two is far from a guaranteed vote winner as well. As the preceding chapters have shown, Hispanics not only vote Democratic but more importantly possess strong liberal ideological positions. Current discussions surrounding another comprehensive immigration reform attempt frequently portray it as a litmus test for Hispanics to see if the GOP has actually changed its attitude towards them, an approach that tends to overstate its importance in shaping Hispanic partisan allegiances.<sup>1893</sup> This particular issue area does however perfectly highlight the conundrum Republicans are facing today. A more lenient position on immigration can send a signal to Hispanic voters that the party has become more willing to embrace policies close to the heart of the Latino community. The overall liberal lean of Hispanics nonetheless makes this a precarious position to take. Supporting immigration reform that provides illegal Hispanic immigrants with a pathway to citizenship could primarily serve to swell the ranks of Democratic voters. The eventual impact of a substantial immigration reform bill is up for debate, depending of course on how many illegals would decide to apply for citizenship, turn out to vote, and last but not least their partisan preferences. The consensus appears to be that Democrats would profit albeit by relatively negligible margins even if the party continues to replicate its recent success among minority voters. Calculations drawn up by Carson Bruno of Stanford University's Hoover Institution pertaining to the most recent presidential election that include a naturalized share of those illegals who would have been granted a pathway to citizenship according to the Senate's 2013 immigration reform bill

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continued if not increased appeal towards whites can deliver the keys to the White House to a Republican candidate. Cf. Trende 2013a: "The Case of the Missing White Voters, Revisited." *RealClearPolitics*, June 21. For a counterargument cf. Abramowitz, Teixeira 2013.

- 1892 Trende's calculations for a closer 2012 election for example depended on the "missing white voters" breaking in favor of Mitt Romney by a 70 to 30 margin. Cf. Trende 2013a. Ultimately, a Republican candidate will have to win upwards of 60 if not even 65 percent of white voters in future elections if minorities stick to their own partisan preferences. In 1980, Reagan won around 61 percent of the two-party white vote.
- 1893 Issues like education, employment, the economy, and health care consistently play a far more important role in the minds of Hispanic voters than immigration does. Cf. Krogstad 2014a: "Top issue for Hispanics? Hint: It's not immigration." *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, June 2. Cf. also Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Krogstad 2014: "Latino Support for Democrats Falls, but Democratic Advantage Remains." *Pew Research Center*, October 29, p. 29. In 2014, 92 percent of Hispanic respondents to Pew's "National Survey of Latinos" answered that education was "extremely" or "very important" to them personally. Jobs and the economy along with health care came in at 91 and 86 percent respectively. Immigration had a similar importance among 73 percent of those surveyed.

illustrate this. Assuming that 60 percent of today's undocumented immigrants applied for citizenship (which would be roughly in line with the naturalization rates of past undocumented migrants), that they would be ten percentage points more likely to take part in the election than their ethnic brethren who have possessed their American passports for a longer period of time, and that they perfectly replicated the partisan tendencies of their respective ethnic communities would have widened the gap between President Obama and Mitt Romney by around 1.1 points in 2012 without delivering any additional states to the Democratic column.<sup>1894</sup> Regardless of the in this instance rather unimpressive numbers, we do nonetheless see that the primary beneficiary of a more Hispanic American electorate would be the Democratic Party. Current Republican strongholds would also see a vastly changed electorate. In places like Texas, Arizona, and Georgia the undocumented immigrant population in 2010 for example exceeded Mitt Romney's 2012 winning margin in each state.<sup>1895</sup> And as we saw in chapter II.4.4, ethnic changes in a number of states from Florida, to Virginia, California, and the Mountain West have provided Democratic candidates with a far more favorable environment that allows them to lose the white vote by historic margins while still holding onto these states. Demographer William H. Frey of the Brookings Institution on his part arrives at the conclusion that if new Hispanic voters continue to hold onto their current partisan preferences, "Democrats will be looking at a landslide going into 2028."<sup>1896</sup>

Where is the upside for Republicans then? For starters, recent electoral outcomes have shown that the party's large winning margins among whites put them in a competitive position. As earlier indicated, winning just 40 percent of the Hispanic electorate is more than enough in such a setting to win an outright majority in presidential contests. Moreover, "[m]inority political diversification, coupled with persistent white preference for the GOP, could spell a long and lonely exile from power for Democrats,"<sup>1897</sup> is the grim verdict Shaun Bowler and Gary Segura arrive at for the Democratic Party should it lose its stranglehold on the non-white electorate. Even minute shifts in Hispanic voting preferences can yield substantial swings in the Republican direction, as demonstrated by an

1894 North Carolina would have been a virtual tie in this new electoral environment though. All in all, under this scenario President Obama would have gained 2.4 million votes nationally compared to Romney's increase of 821,000 votes. Cf. Bruno 2013: "The Electoral Consequences of Granting Citizenship to Undocumented Immigrants." *Stanford University - Hoover Institution*, May 23, p. 9.

1895 Cf. Schultheis 2013: "Immigration reform could be bonanza for Democrats." *Politico*, April 22.

1896 Quoted in: Associated Press 2013: *White apathy, energized black voters doomed GOP's Romney in 2012 as black turnout hit highs*. April 28.

1897 Bowler, Segura 2012: *The Future Is Ours: Minority Politics, Political Behavior, and the Multiracial Era of American Politics*, p. 259.



analysis of the 2012 congressional election by Alex Engler of Georgetown University. Assessing the twenty congressional districts from 2012 that are the most vulnerable to shifts in Hispanic support, Engler found that a ten percentage point shift in support among Hispanics towards the Democratic Party would yield just one a single additional seat for the party. A shift of the same magnitude in the Republican direction on the other hand would turn twelve Democratic congressional seats red.<sup>1898</sup> There is a downside to this calculation though that Engler and other analysts or commentators who make the case for increased Hispanic outreach frequently fail to take into account. Any moderation by the party on integral issue like immigration will in all likelihood alienate certain parts of the Republican base, meaning that improvements among Hispanic voters would have to be more substantial to compensate for this. Both the strong activism and vehement opposition to immigration based on socio-cultural reasons by a group such as the Tea Party also ensure that Republican candidates will think twice before embracing immigration-related policies that are popular among Hispanics. Some changes in the Republican approach to the Hispanic community will inevitably have to be made though. As chapter II.4.3 illustrated, there are elements within this group that could be more open to voting Republican. Targeted appeals and an increased outreach to these constituencies – such as small business owners or the burgeoning community of Hispanic Protestants – appear to the best course of action in order to improve the party’s chances of reaching that vital 40 percent mark without simultaneously enraging the base.

There are of course other factors that could also aid the GOP in future years. As we have seen, an increased exposure to the United States and its culture does correlate with a rise in support for conservative economic policies as well as increased identification as “American” rather than Hispanic. Cultural ties and identification are moreover always in flux. As successive generations of Hispanics grow up in the United States, as they intermarry, become more affluent and less Catholic they should become an easier target demographic for the Republican Party. In 2010 for example, 15 percent of all new marriages in the United States were between partners of a different ethnic background; among Hispanics, 26 percent tied the knot with a partner from a different ethnic community, with new Hispanic intermarriages overwhelmingly being established with non-Hispanic whites.<sup>1899</sup> Their children may often bear a Hispanic

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1898 Engler’s calculations are based on a Hispanic turnout of 42 percent. Cf. Engler 2013: “Analysis: The Dismal Politics of Immigration Reform in the House of Representatives.” *Georgetown Public Policy Review*, February 12.

1899 81 percent of Hispanic newlyweds who intermarried did so with a non-Hispanic white spouse. Cf. Passel, Wang, and Taylor 2010: “Marrying Out: One-in-Seven New U.S. Mar-

name but ultimately consider themselves white. These developments mean that the lines between what passes for “white” today and the Hispanic community are becoming increasingly blurred, a trend that will undoubtedly also affect Hispanic identity in coming generations. Journalist Jamelle Bouie even goes as far as to claim that if white Hispanics follow the pattern of previous Caucasian groups that were often subject to discrimination at the hands of other whites – such as the once staunchly Democratic groups of Italian, Irish, or Slavic-Americans which Nixon quite successfully targeted in the 1960s and 70s – “the future won’t be majority-minority; it will be a white majority, where Spanish last names are common.”<sup>1900</sup> The data supports this assertion. As was illustrated in chapter II.4.1, if the *non-Hispanic* moniker is dropped from the subgroup of whites in the U.S. and we instead look at the entire white population without making any ethnic distinctions, the share of whites in the U.S. population will decrease by a relatively minor nine points between today and 2060, still standing at around 70 percent by the middle of this century.<sup>1901</sup> Ian Haney López argues in a similar manner that the expansion of the white community to include Hispanics could have far reaching consequences for both how the Hispanic community perceives itself and the general racial and ethnic constitution of the United States. He concludes that just as different southern or non-Anglo European ethnic groups – such as the Italians, French, Slavs, or Germans whom Benjamin Franklin as earlier mentioned deemed to be of a “swarthy Complexion”<sup>1902</sup> – eventually became part of the hitherto Anglo-Saxon white fold, Hispanics could undergo a similar transformation. One central reason for this potential alteration in the eyes of Haney-López can be found in the fact that in American society the ethno-racial divide continues to be primarily found in the latter racial sphere between whites and non-whites – with the former still providing a higher societal status than the latter.<sup>1903</sup> It is not too far a stretch to argue then that if Republicans continue to present themselves as the party of the white electorate and if the racial polarization of politics does not subside in the wake of President Obama’s exit from office, Hispanic voting behavior may very well be altered if they eventually see themselves first and foremost as white as well.

Another trend that could have some influence on how future majorities are

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riages Is Interracial or Interethnic.” *Pew Research Center*, June 4, revised June 15, pp. 14–15.

1900 Bouie 2014: “Demography Is Not Destiny.” *Democracy* 31, pp. 77–81, here p. 80.

1901 See figure II.4.1, *Changing demographic composition of the United States: Percentage of total population by selected ethnic groups, actual and projected*.

1902 Quoted in: *The Economist* 2013a.

1903 Cf. Haney López 2014, pp. 216–218. Moreover, as we saw in chapter II.4.1 there has been a recent trend within the Hispanic community of identifying as white, as the share of Hispanics declaring themselves to be “white alone” in the U.S. Census rose from 48 to 52 percent between 2000 and 2010.

fashioned is the simple fact that Hispanic population increases have over the last decade primarily come from Hispanic births in the U.S. rather than increased Hispanic immigration, a reversal of trends seen during the 1980s and 1990s when immigrants accounted for a majority of the Hispanic growth in America.<sup>1904</sup> This has had an impact on the basic composition of the country's Hispanic population. While 59.9 percent of all Hispanics in the United States in 2000 were *native-born* that share had increased to 64.5 percent a dozen years later.<sup>1905</sup> According to 2014 estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau, native-born Hispanics will constitute 72.6 percent of the nation's Hispanic community by 2060.<sup>1906</sup> The repercussions of this trend are not necessarily clear. Data from the Pew Research Center has revealed native-born Hispanics to be more likely to consider themselves liberals and less likely to hold a conservative affiliation than their foreign-born counterparts.<sup>1907</sup> Yet, as we have also seen there is some evidence of Hispanics being influenced by the environment they grow up in with second and third or higher generation Hispanics (i. e. *native-born* ones) far more likely than their (foreign born) elders to support the basic American economic tenets of "small government." It most certainly warrants remembering though that even among these more integrated groups an activist government is the preferred option by a significant margin.

Ultimately then, it appears that at least in the short term in particular Republicans have a substantial uphill battle on their hands (a conclusion reached long before Donald Trump secured the party's presidential nomination), especially given the basic differences in opinion on economic issues between themselves and the Hispanic community that appear to be driven primarily by the GOP's *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* – diverging views that cannot be glossed over by incrementally moving to the center on immigration alone and a gap that may widen even further if the aforementioned dual intra-Republican developments continue. Hispanics are staunch liberals when it comes to the question of what role the government has to play in the economic sphere, a stance that places them at odds with white Southern conservatives and, more importantly in the context of this book, by extension with the GOP as well due to the increasing weight carried by Southern conservatism within the Republican Party. Hispanics do not see poverty as an individual failing that can only be rectified by the poor themselves but as an area in which the government can and should actively intervene to ameliorate the suffering of those who are not capable of making ends meet. On the social issues that are often cited as the one

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1904 Cf. Krogstad, Lopez 2014: "Hispanic Nativity Shift." *Pew Research Center*, April 29, p. 4.

1905 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 3.

1906 Cf. United States Census Bureau 2014c: *Table 13. Projections of the Population by Nativity, Hispanic Origin, and Race for the United States: 2015 to 2060 (NP2014-T13)*. December.

1907 Cf. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez, Velasco 2012, p. 30.

issue area in which Republicans should be able to win over Hispanics, the Latino community may be closer to the GOP's core constituency of white Evangelicals but they put far less stock in these matters than the religious right does. As long as the Republican Party's ideological foundations continue to be found in the South, the party will therefore find it rather difficult to make significant and broad inroads into the Hispanic community, particularly among present generations of Hispanics.

A similar story has unfolded when we look at younger voters, to a certain extent because today's young adults are the most ethnically diverse members of the voting age population. Even among white Millennials though, liberal values find a greater acceptance than they do within older Caucasian cohort groups. Taken in their entirety, Millennials are socially and economically liberal who do not see the federal government with the same sort of distrust that has been a staple of the ideological underpinnings of the white South. The evangelical opposition to gay rights and abortion that has in recent years become a litmus test for national Republican politicians is alien to this generation of Americans as well – further evidence of how the *Evangelicalization* of the GOP has hurt its prospects among young adults. Despite some recent evidence that President Obama's time in office has caused a shift to the center among those who entered the electorate during his presidency, truly substantial changes in partisan preferences among Millennials and subsequent generations will only occur if the GOP sheds parts of its *southernized* ideology in favor of a more libertarian position on social issues while at least tacitly acknowledging that the government can have a role to play in alleviating poverty. In light of the party's track record in recent years and the increasing stature of the evangelical South both at the Republican mass and the elite level, the prospects for such a change appear rather dim.



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## II.5 Conclusion: Has the nation been lost by winning the South?

Through the skillful usage of race and religion and the unique role both played and continue to play in the South, Republicans have managed to gain a stranglehold on a region of the country that had been an electoral wasteland for it and its candidates for close to a century. As the South has become Republican, the Republican Party has also become the representative of Southern values with everything they entail. The *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* of the Republican Party has ultimately been a double edged sword for it. On the one hand, the party's recent dominance in congressional elections and its era of success at the presidential level between the late 1960s and 2004 was, according to Kenneth Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, "made possible largely by a movement toward the GOP by southern evangelical Protestants and, to a lesser extent, Roman Catholics."<sup>1908</sup> The South has provided the party with a new base from which it has become rather easy to control the House as it has to win only around 40 percent of all non-Southern seats if the former Confederacy remains as solidly in the Republican camp as it is right now – and there are few indicators that white Southerners can be enticed into joining the Democratic Party in an era of increasing polarization and partisan sorting. In elections that see a higher level of participation by the electorate of the future – minorities and young voters – the story is a different one though. Success in the South has come at the expense of losing voters across the country that do not share the conservative anti-statist outlook of the white South. Nonetheless, even in these instances the South can prove to be a crucial component of a majority, as illustrated by George W. Bush's presidential victories that were obtained despite only winning around a third of all non-Southern electoral votes.

In order to gauge to what extent the *southernized* Republican Party can win future elections and leave a lasting mark on American politics, a number of different factors have to be considered, namely the role of race in future political discourse, the state of the Democratic Party, Republican strength at the state

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1908 Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011, p. 101.

level, and – last but definitely not least – the ability of today’s GOP to adapt to a changing electoral environment.

### Race and future majorities

The Obama presidency has brought race back into a sharp focus, perhaps unsurprisingly as the racial resentment found among Republican voters has risen to such a remarkable extent in recent decades that has led some scholars to describe the GOP as a party “dripping with racial resentment.”<sup>1909</sup> Racial and ethnic polarization along partisan and ideological lines therefore appears to be here to stay, as demonstrated in the demographics chapter earlier on which showcased the differing preferences of Hispanics and the Republican Party. A variety of scholarly studies have also showcased the extent to which race played a role in both the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. Calculations by John Sides and Lynn Vavreck showed that moving voters’ racial attitudes to a neutral position (in this case the midpoint of the racial resentment scale) would have resulted in a four point increase in President Obama’s 2012 popular vote share.<sup>1910</sup> A similar story transpired in the 2008 election as B. Keith Payne and his colleagues arrived at the conclusion that “racial prejudice may have played a significant role” in that year’s presidential contest.<sup>1911</sup> As mentioned earlier, David Sears and Michael Tesler’s analysis of the same election also revealed

1909 Data from the 1986 ANES showed that only nine percent of Republicans were part of the two most racially resentful categories. By 2016 this share had risen to around 38 percent. For data and quote cf. Hetherington, Engelhardt 2016.

1910 Sides, Vavreck 2013: *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*, p. 208. This finding is buttressed by other authors as well. An analysis by Josh Pasek, Jon A. Krosnick, and Trevor Tompson ahead of the election showed that neutralizing both anti-black and pro-black attitudes would have led to a projected increase of President Obama’s vote share of two percentage points while Governor Romney’s was set to drop by three percentage points. Cf. Pasek, Krosnick, and Tompson 2012: *The Impact of Anti-Black Racism on Approval of Barack Obama’s Job Performance and on Voting in the 2012 Presidential Election*, October, p. 3.

1911 Payne, Krosnick, Pasek, Lelkes, Akhtar, and Tompson 2010: “Implicit and explicit prejudice in the 2008 American presidential election.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46, pp. 367–374, here p. 372. Higher explicit prejudice (such as the position for example that African Americans are lazy) among respondents made them more likely to vote for Senator McCain and less likely to vote for Barack Obama while higher implicit prejudice (while simultaneously controlling for explicit prejudice) meant respondents were less likely to vote for Obama but not more likely to vote for McCain, instead either staying home or voting for a third party candidate (p. 373). On top of that implicit prejudice (referring to associations with a group that come to mind unconsciously without the respondent consciously recognizing them as prejudice, p. 367) was also shown to contribute to higher levels of explicit prejudice among respondents which – as already mentioned – led to a higher likelihood of voting for John McCain (p. 370).

racial resentment to have had an independent impact on vote choice – a change from previous all-white contests that would also not have been present in a hypothetical contest between Hillary Clinton and John McCain.<sup>1912</sup> Donald Kinder and Allison Dale-Riddle even reach the verdict that if the general fundamentals and issues surrounding the 2008 election – taking place in the midst of a massive economic downturn while the Republican inhabitant of the White House had to contend with historic disapproval ratings – had not been as favorable as they were for the Democrats, Barack Obama might not have won at all.<sup>1913</sup> In a similar vein, Payne et al. conclude that Barack Obama “was not elected because of an absence of prejudice, but despite its continuing presence”<sup>1914</sup> in 2008.

The data does appear to indicate then that for the time being, racial preferences can help Republicans remain more competitive even in high-turnout elections although future elections between white presidential candidates may very well once again allow for fewer opportunities to exploit such animosities. As previous chapters have illustrated, Republican downsides to the racialization of politics and influx of racially conservative Southerners into the ranks of the GOP of course exist as well though. There can be little doubt that the abandonment of the Republican Party by African Americans is directly linked to the *South-ernization* of the GOP and strategic moves by the party that set the foundations for the establishment of a Republican base south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Republican results among the African-American community illustrate the extent to which Goldwater’s *duck hunting* strategy in particular cast the die for contemporary racial polarization. In 1960, Richard Nixon was still able to obtain 32 percent of the African-American vote while four years earlier Dwight D. Eisenhower had managed to get 39 percent of all black voters on his side.<sup>1915</sup> After the 1964 about-face on race and the decision to go for broke in the South, African Americans deserted the party of Lincoln in droves though with Goldwater himself receiving a mere 6 percent of the black vote in 1964.<sup>1916</sup> Since then, no Democrat has won less than 82 percent of the African American vote.<sup>1917</sup>

This sharp reversal of Republican fortunes among the black community comes as no surprise considering that framing race in the manner of George Wallace appears to have permeated every fiber of the Republican body, a finding

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1912 Cf. Tesler, Sears 2010, pp. 59–61.

1913 Cf. Kinder, Dale-Riddle 2012, pp. 116–117.

1914 Payne et al. 2010, p. 373.

1915 Officially defined as “non-white.” Cf. Gallup 2012.

1916 Cf. *ibid.*

1917 Cf. New York Times 2008b: *Election Results 2008 – National Exit Polls Table*, November 5, for data from 1972 through 2008. According to Gallup, Hubert Humphrey won 85 percent of the “non-white” vote in 1968. Cf. Gallup 2012.



illustrated particularly well by comments of one of the GOP's more prominent faces in Congress. In April of 2013, Kentucky Senator Rand Paul faced an audience at the largely black Howard University to talk about the GOP's past positions on civil rights. Having himself been criticized for his controversial views pertaining to the 1964 civil rights act,<sup>1918</sup> the senator from the Bluegrass State has nonetheless also gained some commendations from across the political aisle for his distinctly *non*-Wallaceist approach to crime, symbolized by Paul's recognition and frequently repeated comments that America's justice system appears to unfairly punish African Americans and other non-white minorities.<sup>1919</sup> Moreover, Senator Paul has been one of the few Republican figures to openly acknowledge that the party's complete disregard for the minority vote could prove to have devastating consequences.<sup>1920</sup> Yet even he fell into the trap of portraying African Americans as a community dependent on and asking for government help when attempting to explain his own positions and those of his party to an audience of almost exclusively black college students. Wondering how the party of Lincoln and the slave emancipation could have lost 95 percent of the black vote, Paul arrived at the following conclusion:

*“African Americans languished below white Americans in every measure of economic success and the Depression was especially harsh for those at the lowest rung of poverty. The Democrats promised equalizing outcomes through unlimited federal assistance while Republicans offered something that seemed less tangible – the promise of equalizing opportunity through free markets.”*<sup>1921</sup>

Present in those comments is the traditional Republican accusation that minorities can be won over by showering them with – in the words of Senator Paul – “unlimited federal assistance.” Republicans on the other hand offered a quintessentially American approach of providing equal opportunities through the free market. The senator's statement appeared innocent enough and he un-

1918 Choosing an approach not dissimilar to that of Barry Goldwater's criticism of the civil rights act in 1964, Paul said that while he “abhor[red] racism” he nonetheless “believe[d] in private ownership” which was curtailed by certain components of the landmark legislation. Quoted in: Kessler 2013: “Rand Paul's rewriting of his own remarks on the Civil Rights Act.” *Washington Post*, April 11.

1919 “Rand Paul is courting black voters unabashedly,” is how the *Washington Times*'s Ralph Z. Hallow summed up Senator Paul's approach towards the African-American community that was crafted in the wake of the Republican Party's 2012 presidential defeat. Hallow 2014: “Rand Paul's pursuit of black voters splits GOP.” *Washington Times*, August 19.

1920 “We evolve, or we become extinct. If we can't figure out how to grow and appeal to those other groups [Hispanic, younger, and female voters], we'll become extinct. We already are essentially extinct on the West Coast and in New England.” Senator Paul quoted in: Alberta, O'Sullivan 2013: “A 12-Step Program for the Republican Party.” *National Journal*, January 24.

1921 Quoted in: *Wall Street Journal* 2013: *Rand Paul Delivers Speech at Howard University*. April 10.

doubtedly did not intend to prime racial resentment, considering the audience he was addressing. The fact that even in such an environment though prejudicial views about African Americans not being in tune with American values are unwittingly employed illustrates the extent to which the GOP's half a century long *Southern Strategy* and its basic components have left a lasting mark on the party.

What then does the continued centrality of race in both U.S. society and the GOP mean for the future prospects of the Republican Party? A fair degree hinges on the role President Obama has played in the increased racialization of politics and what the end of his time in office means for the survival chances of this contemporary feature of American politics. President Obama's exit from the political stage may very well provide more moderate Republicans with a degree of hope. Christopher Parker makes the case that while the Tea Party movement will not enter a "hibernation" once the target of their most vehement and visceral anger is no longer in office, its "intensity will almost certainly diminish."<sup>1922</sup> Supporters of the movement may thus very well lose some of their desire to take part in campaigns and other components of the political and electoral process, thereby creating a political environment that while being far from moderate can at least make it somewhat easier for establishment candidates to gain traction and support. As the previously mentioned work of Andrew B. Hall has demonstrated, a closely contested primary in which a more moderate Republican candidate eventually prevails over their fringe opponent can have a remarkable positive impact on Republican hopes come Election Day.<sup>1923</sup> While the Tea Party spirit is deeply embedded in today's Republican Party due to the changes it has undergone as illustrated in this work, Hall's analysis shows that a dispirited and disengaged Tea Party activist network would nonetheless have repercussions for the electoral future and fortunes of the Republican Party; it goes without saying that the same can be asserted regarding the party's possible ideological course correction. The 2016 Republican presidential race most certainly appears to at least partially disprove the assertion of moderate candidates finding themselves in a more favorable environment – yet it warrants pointing out that this is but one of many Republican nomination contests, held in what can only be described as a rather exceptional setting. One cannot help but wonder whether a candidate espousing Donald Trump's values without his status as a notorious celebrity would have disappeared into electoral oblivion thanks to a dearth of media attention. Gauging the impact the end of Obama's presidency will have on the GOP's base will become easier in future election cycles as the memory of his time in office will fade.

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1922 C. Parker 2014, p. 25.

1923 Cf. A. Hall 2013.

Moreover, the case can be made that the replacement of President Obama by a white office holder could once again also lead to a general deracialization of American politics, even if the new president is a member of the Democratic Party as well. Such a deracialization could also lead to a “de-galvanization” of the racially conservative Tea Party, a development that might make it easier for Republicans to strike a more bipartisan chord. At the same time though this may also create a more favorable environment for the Democrats as racial animus loses some of its prominence as a predictor for partisan preferences. In such a deracialized environment winning upwards of 60 percent of the white vote – increasingly a prerequisite for a successful Republican presidential campaign – would be quite a challenge. The centrality of President Obama in bringing race to the fore has been elucidated in a variety of scholarly analyses. Work by Michael Tesler for example demonstrated that a recently established relationship between *old-fashioned racism* (such as views on interracial dating) and white partisanship that had been virtually non-existent from American politics for decades was mediated by evaluations of President Obama<sup>1924</sup> while an issue like health care reform also became racially charged during his presidency,<sup>1925</sup> leading the author to conclude that we are indeed living in a “hyperracialized era.”<sup>1926</sup> Jonathan Knuckey on his part showed that the increased role of racial resentment as a predictor of white partisanship in the 2008 presidential election was directly tied to President Obama rather than a general perception of the Democratic Party as the champion of minorities.<sup>1927</sup> Removing President Obama from the equation could therefore mitigate racial polarization as well.<sup>1928</sup> It is nonetheless highly doubtful that it will bring many racially resentful whites back into the Democratic fold as the reasons behind their GOP allegiance are plentiful. Nevertheless, the results of recent presidential elections have shown that even negligible losses among white voters present Republican candidates with an almost insurmountable challenge as they seek to take back the White House.

Assuming that a deracialization does not materialize, what would this then mean for the party of whites? Throughout this book the point has been made that Southern racial conservatism has done substantial – and perhaps irrepar-

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1924 Cf. Tesler 2013.

1925 Cf. Tesler 2012a.

1926 Quoted in: Chait 2014: “The Color of His Presidency.” *New York*, April 6.

1927 Cf. Knuckey 2011, pp. 575–576.

1928 A poll conducted by the Washington Post and ABC News in January of 2015 showed Hillary Clinton trailing Republican candidates among white voters by between three and seven points. While those margins can be rather different on Election Day of course, the Republican strategy of driving up the margins among whites ultimately entails far more pitfalls when the Democratic candidate is not black. For poll cf. Gearan, Craighill 2015: “Hillary Clinton has double-digit leads over potential GOP presidential rivals, poll shows.” *Washington Post*, January 22.

able – damage to the GOP’s standing among minorities. What if, at least in the short term, this damage can be counterbalanced by the shifting partisan preferences of a white electorate that increasingly sees politics in racialized terms, particularly as the specter of a majority-minority nation looms ever larger? Maureen Craig and Jennifer Richeson for example reach the conclusion that “the increasing diversity of the nation may engender a widening partisan divide.”<sup>1929</sup> Their analysis of a number of studies pertaining to white responses to demographic changes demonstrated that making America’s shift towards becoming a majority-minority nation salient to white Americans had the effect of making this group more likely to express support for conservative policies both related and non-related to race while also causing a partisan move in a Republican direction among some.<sup>1930</sup> Other studies have also replicated results which indicate that white exposure to immigrants or even just the Spanish language can trigger the white backlash or racial/group threat phenomenon that played (and to some extent still plays) such a central role in determining white Southern political preferences, a priming which then for example impacts attitudes towards immigration.<sup>1931</sup> Increased hostility and polarization between the different ethnic groups of the United States may therefore mean that – according to Larry Bartels – “[t]he changing American polity may come to look more like Texas than like the multicultural Democratic stronghold of California,”<sup>1932</sup> with Texas a prime example of a state that has undergone momentous ethnic changes away from whites yet remained, if not become even more, staunchly Republican.<sup>1933</sup> The racially coded rhetoric of Wallace, Goldwater, Nixon, and Reagan – which continues to be employed wittingly or unwittingly in a fair number of Republican campaigns – along with attempts to stoke (non-Hispanic) white

1929 Craig, Richeson 2014: “On the Precipice of a ‘Majority-Minority’ America: Perceived Status Threat From the Racial Demographic Shift Affects White Americans’ Political Ideology.” *Psychological Science* (published online April 3, 2014), pp. 1–9, here p. 1.

1930 Cf. *ibid.*

1931 Benjamin Newman, Todd Hartman, and Charles Taber’s analysis shows that “contact with immigrants who speak little to no English, as well as incidental exposure to the Spanish language, heighten feelings of cultural threat, which increases anti-immigrant sentiment and policy preferences.” Cf. Newman, Haber, Taber 2012: “Foreign Language Exposure, Cultural Threat, and Opposition to Immigration.” *Political Psychology* 33(5), pp. 635–657, here p. 635. In a similar manner an experiment conducted by Ryan Enos also demonstrated that exposure to Spanish-speaking people (in this case only two) in a homogenous Anglo-American community primed a more exclusionary response towards immigrants among non-Hispanic whites, albeit the effect does appear to wear off eventually. Cf. Enos 2013. *The Causal Effect of Prolonged Intergroup Contact on Exclusionary Attitudes: A Test Using Public Transportation in Homogenous Communities.*

1932 Bartels 2014: “Can the Republican Party thrive on white identity?” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, April 16.

1933 Something achieved by the move to the right of non-Hispanic whites, as illustrated in figure II.4.4.c.

fears of their impending minority status may very well then still bring enough whites to the ballot box to keep the GOP competitive in presidential elections for the foreseeable future while the party has an almost solid lock on the U.S. House thanks to the realignment fed and nurtured by such rhetoric.

In addition, Republican states have seen their weight within Congress (and therefore also the Electoral College) increase substantially in recent years. Just over the past two decades alone (due to the reapportionment of U.S. House seats based on the 2000 and 2010 U.S. censuses), states that voted Republican five or more times in the past six presidential elections (1992 through 2012) gained twelve seats in the House while Democratic leaning states (voted for a Democrat five or six times) lost fourteen seats during the same period.<sup>1934</sup> In a close election this could prove to be the difference: Had John Kerry won Ohio in 2004, he would have become president. Had Barack Obama won all of John Kerry's states along with Ohio in 2012, the President would have been six electoral votes short of the 270 mark. Of course it warrants mentioning that a substantial share of the population growth of red states is due to an influx of voters that appear to be prime targets for the Democratic Party, namely "young professionals" and minorities.<sup>1935</sup> One can contend though that the introduction of such liberal-leaning Democratic voters (especially non-white ones) into a staunchly Republican environment will cause a further move to the right by some of the "indigenous" voters, akin to the white backlash seen in most African-American regions of the South. In such a scenario Republican prospects of continuing to carry red states that have seen substantial population growth in recent years do not look all that bleak, at least in the short to mid-term future.

The long term outlook looks far less favorable though. Surviving in a hyper-racialized era is possible if (disaffected) whites still make up three quarters of the electorate. As the country changes those winning margins among whites have to be increased to levels not even reached by popular presidents such as Ronald Reagan. Any strategy that asks Republican candidates to outdo even the most popular political figures each election cycle is hardly a sure recipe for success. What is more, a brown instead of a black Democratic Party may not elicit the same kind of racially resentful reaction that African Americans tend to

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1934 Own calculations. If we look beyond the deep red and blue states, the data looks similar. States that voted Republican four or more times over the six presidential elections between 1992 and 2012 gained ten seats while their Democratic counterparts lost fifteen seats. The two states that split their presidential vote evenly – Colorado and Florida – gained a combined five seats.

1935 Cf. MacManus 2012, p. 66. As was also shown earlier on in this book (see table II.4.4.b: *Increase in Hispanic population shares [in percent], 1990–2010/2013*), a number of Southern states have seen significant growth in their Hispanic populations. For more on the expansion of the Hispanic community beyond its traditional homes cf. Frey 2015, pp. 65–85.

prime, increasing the difficulty in running up white margins. When it comes to the classic way of gauging racial resentment among whites by asking questions that go to the core of whether certain groups are regarded as adhering to the traditional American (white) protestant work ethic, Hispanics tend to do far better than their African American counterparts. Data from the 2008 ANES pre-election study assembled by Shaun Bowler and Gary Segura in which non-Hispanic whites were asked if certain other ethnicities were as industrious as themselves showed that almost 50 percent of whites felt African Americans were *less hardworking* while a mere nine percent considered them to be *more hardworking* than whites. A much more benign attitude was extended towards Hispanics though: 30.3 percent of non-Hispanic white respondents felt Hispanics were actually *more hardworking* while only 27.2 percent considered them to be *less hardworking*.<sup>1936</sup>

#### Broadness of the Democratic coalition as its Achilles' heel

While the focus throughout this book has been on the Republican Party, changes within its Democratic counterpart will obviously also have an impact on the future Republican potential for electoral success. Demographic trends may indeed favor the Democratic Party but winning presidential elections on the back of an alliance of voters with vastly differing economic concerns, different races and ethnicities, and groups with significantly varying degrees of religiosity can come with a price as well. As writer H.L. Mencken already observed around a century ago, the Democratic Party was – and some might argue still is – comprised of “gangs of natural enemies in a precarious state of symbiosis.”<sup>1937</sup> At the onset of the twenty-first century, the Democratic Party now is “the Austro-Hungarian empire of presidential majorities: a sprawling, ramshackle and heterogeneous arrangement, one major crisis away from dissolution.”<sup>1938</sup> Brown University’s Wendy Schiller therefore believes that ultimately the “forces that could make the Democrats a permanent majority at the national level could also start cannibalizing the Democratic Party.”<sup>1939</sup>

One such cannibalizing force could potentially be religion. Religiously unaffiliated voters have become a central pillar of the Democratic Party, accounting for almost a quarter of President Obama’s coalition in 2012, up from the 12

1936 Cf. Bowler, Segura 2012, p. 273.

1937 Quoted in: Micklethwait, Wooldridge 2004, p. 251.

1938 Douthat 2014: “There Is No Alternative.” *New York Times*, June 7.

1939 Quoted in: Brennan 2013: “In Rhode Island, A Battle for the Democratic Party’s Future.” *National Journal*, April 15.

percent of Al Gore's electorate they constituted a dozen years earlier.<sup>1940</sup> Particularly when it comes to social issues such as gay marriage and abortion, a substantial rift is in place between these less religious voters and African American Protestants whose opposition to gay marriage is not infrequently only surpassed by their white evangelical counterparts.<sup>1941</sup> As the Democratic Party becomes even more ideologically cohesive, it may also face some of the same problems the ideologically purified GOP has had to contend with in recent years, namely the establishment of a genuine (leftist) populist activist movement that seeks to keep moderate candidates and incumbents on a tight liberal leash.<sup>1942</sup> Of course the conservative share among Republicans (70 percent in 2013) is still far larger than the liberal one (43 percent) among Democrats but the latter has risen by an astonishing 14 percentage points over the course of 13 years (between 2000 and 2013).<sup>1943</sup> Will left-wing groups also primary Democrats in future electoral cycles for straying from the liberal flock? For the time being at least, Democrat moderates appear to be relatively safe. After all, while the party's electorate may have moved to the left, the DW-Nominate scores in Congress illustrate that non-Southern Democrats have largely retained their ideological placement of 40 years ago meaning that there is not the kind of race to the fringes within the congressional caucus that is found on the other side of the partisan aisle.<sup>1944</sup> The pressure on Democratic legislators to abide by liberal orthodoxy is therefore somewhat limited as the party has retained a culture of moderation that is sorely lacking within the GOP. The 2016 presidential primary season may nonetheless already have provided an interesting look into the future of Democratic campaigns. The left-leaning *New Republic* for example made the case in late 2013 that Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren – who has become a favorite of the party's left wing since her election to the Senate in 2012 – could have proven to be a formidable foe for former Secretary Clinton if Democratic voters had realized that the party's "soul lies with Elizabeth Warren [instead]."<sup>1945</sup> While Warren failed throw her hat into the ring, Senator Bernie Sanders' popularity did point to

1940 Cf. Navarro-Rivera 2012.

1941 While support for gay marriage for example increased among white mainline Protestants and white Catholics by nine and five points respectively between 2008/09 and 2010, it increased by a mere single point among Black Protestants with their level of opposition (62 %) only topped by white Evangelicals (74 %). Cf. Pew Research Center 2010d: *Gay Marriage Gains More Acceptance*, October 6.

1942 Cf. Scher 2014: "Can the Left Launch Its Own Tea Party?" *Politico Magazine*, December 8, and Milbank 2014: "Purity politics, Democrat-style." *Washington Post*, November 17.

1943 Cf. Jones 2014a: "Liberal Self-Identification Edges Up to New High in 2013." *Gallup*, January 10.

1944 For DW-Nominate data cf. Poole 2014a.

1945 Scheiber 2013: "Hillary's Nightmare? A Democratic Party That Realizes Its Soul Lies With Elizabeth Warren." *The New Republic*, November 10.

a desire among significant parts of the Democratic base for a genuinely leftist-liberal candidate, indicating that a self-professed “democratic socialist” could lay claim to the party’s soul. Despite the at least initial civility of the Democratic contest compared to what occurred on the other side of the partisan aisle, an eventual row between Senator Sanders and Secretary Clinton about the progressive credentials of the latter nonetheless broke out in the midst of the 2016 primary season, reminiscent of the infighting within the GOP about the adherence of its politicians to conservative orthodoxy.<sup>1946</sup> And as the primary season dragged on into late spring, the tone on the Democratic side grew increasingly acrimonious as well. If conclusions from liberal circles pertaining to the 2014 midterms moreover also gain traction – namely that candidates in key battleground states lost precisely because they were *not liberal enough* and thus failed to sufficiently galvanize their increasingly left-leaning base<sup>1947</sup> – Democratic electoral strategies may eventually begin to resemble those of their Republican counterparts.

Ultimately, it appears though that one crucial detail directly related to the Republican *Southernization* may help the Democratic Party: Polarization. The ideological sorting of the American party system precipitated by the Southern realignment has left a gulf between both parties that few if any groups are able to cross today. African-American Protestants who have their doubts about the progressive social liberalism espoused by today’s religiously unaffiliated Millennials on matters like abortion or gay marriage may internally frown about the course their party has taken on these issues but not too many of them will jump ship and join a party with a core constituency of racially conservative white Southerners.<sup>1948</sup> The same holds true for virtually all other constituent parts of the Democratic alliance who share a broad overlap in opinion on a variety of social and economic issues. A negative impact may be seen though when it comes to getting out the vote, as illustrated by the dismal performances of Democrats in recent (low turnout) midterm elections. A party that has to elicit enthusiasm from a vast array of different groups may wind up failing to sufficiently galvanize any. The Republican Party with its relatively homogeneous base does not appear to face such problems.

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1946 Cf. O’Sullivan 2016: “Clinton, Sanders fight over claims to progressive credentials.” *Boston Globe*, February 3.

1947 See the views expressed by Green, Taylor 2014: “Route to power for Democrats: Big ideas.” *The Hill*, November 6.

1948 Moreover, a variety of data illustrates that even conservative or more affluent African Americans reject the Republican Party, in no small part due to the developments that have been laid out in this book. For African Americans then, “partisanship remains rooted in group identity rather than ideology.” Abramowitz 2010, p. 75. For data on Democratic identification among African Americans cf. *ibid.*, p. 74.



Republican strength at the congressional level and outside the nation's capital

The vast majority of this book has been dedicated to the federal political realm and the future chances of a *southernized* GOP in obtaining majorities both at the congressional and presidential levels. In order to truly gauge the state contemporary Republicanism finds itself in, one needs to also look beyond the nation's capital. Far from being a party consigned to the ash heap of history, Republican state parties have enjoyed remarkable success in recent years. The level of strength is illustrated in a vivid manner if the electoral votes of the states largely run by Republicans are added up. In the summer of 2013, Republicans controlled all levers of political power at the state level – meaning the governorship as well as both state legislative chambers – in 23 states that totaled 262 electoral votes, compared to just 160 electoral votes in the camp of unified Democratic control. Combining the electoral votes of states under total GOP control with the ones from states in which Republicans controlled two-thirds of the state political bodies (29 states in total fell into this category) meant the total amount of electoral votes rose to 305.<sup>1949</sup> Of course this sort of support can, as Republicans have had to find out the hard way in recent years, not be translated into actual electoral votes.<sup>1950</sup> After all, the electorate in high(er) turnout presidential elections looks vastly different from the ones that take part in local contests. The strength at the state level nonetheless allows the GOP to frequently draw districts in a more advantageous manner while providing the party with a deep bench of politicians with legislative or executive experience. More importantly perhaps, it also gives Republicans the tools with which to defend and protect conservative policies and values against liberal legislation coming out of the nation's capital, illustrated by the continuing battle over President Obama's hallmark piece of legislation, the Affordable Care Act.

While the GOP failed to achieve its intended goal of scuttling the ACA at the national level, its state branches have been far more successful in limiting the expansion of a publicly funded healthcare system. 27 states – in 23 of which the GOP was able to govern without any Democratic input while in another two Republicans controlled two of the three state governmental branches in 2013 – refused to set up their own health care marketplaces and exchanges (which were intended to be Americans' primary places for obtaining new healthcare plans),

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1949 Data as of August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Cf. Berman 2013. Note: This includes Nebraska which officially has a non-partisan legislature. The state's governor is a member of the GOP though while all five of its members in the U.S. House and Senate are Republicans. In other words, it makes sense to include this state in the Republican camp.

1950 Five states in which the GOP controlled all three state political bodies in 2013 for example cast their vote for President Obama in 2012 (Florida, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin).

forcing local citizens to use the federal site which ran into serious problems in late 2013.<sup>1951</sup> A significant pillar of Obamacare – the expansion of Medicaid eligibility – was also placed in the hands of the states by the Supreme Court, providing state governments with the opportunity to opt out of it.<sup>1952</sup> By the end of October 2013, 25 by and large Republican dominated states<sup>1953</sup> had either decided to not participate or were leaning towards not participating in the federal expansion of Medicaid with some contemplating the introduction of their own alternative models.<sup>1954</sup> This Republican reluctance is in place despite the fact that the federal government carried all additional costs for the newly eligible for the first three years (2014 through 2016) and will still pay for 90 percent of those expenses in 2020 and beyond.<sup>1955</sup> As of September 2013, 17 Republican states had also taken steps to restrict so called “navigators” (guides trained to explain the details of the ACA to consumers and help them sign up) from working in their states. This was done by for example requiring potential “navigators” to pass a state exam and a criminal background check (as was the case in Indiana) or preventing them from working on the premises of local health

1951 Virginia had a split state senate in which the then Republican governor cast the tie-breaking vote. Nebraska has a Republican governor but an officially non-partisan unicameral state legislature (in which one can expect Republican sentiment to prevail though). If these two states are included, the total adds up to 23. Data as of May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Cf. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2013: *State Decisions For Creating Health Insurance Marketplaces*. Data on governing majorities based on: Berman 2013.

1952 Cf. Roades 2012: “Initial reactions to the Supreme Court ruling – What decision means for providers.” *The Advisory Board Company*, June 28.

1953 Out of those 25 states, 19 to 21 were states with complete Republican control of state governments and another two with two-thirds control. The 21 state total includes Virginia and Nebraska.

1954 Data from October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013 obtained by: Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services 2013: *State Medicaid and CHIP Income Eligibility Standards Effective January 1, 2014*, p1. Only six (Florida, Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin) of those 25 states can be considered as more bipartisan states by virtue of their electoral record in presidential elections. At the local level though, these states tend to be dominated by (or at least give some control to) the GOP, with a particularly strong Tea Party influence in places like Maine (where Tea Party governor Paul LePage vetoed a bill that expanded the state’s Medicaid program) and New Hampshire. Florida, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin for example had both Republican governors and complete GOP control of the state legislature (Virginia had a split state senate with the tie-breaking vote cast by its Republican governor) when these issues were discussed throughout 2013.

1955 In 2017, ’18, and ’19, the federal government will pay for 95, 94, and 93 percent of additional costs. Cf. Angeles 2012: “How Health Reform’s Medicaid Expansion Will Impact State Budgets.” *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, July 25, p. 4. According to a 2014 analysis by the New York Times’ *Upshot*, this decision has left more than three million Americans – who would have been covered by a nationwide expansion of Medicaid – uninsured. Cf. Quealy, Sanger-Katz 2014: “Who Would Have Health Insurance if Medicaid Expansion Weren’t Optional.” *The Upshot / New York Times*, November 3.

offices (an additional hurdle in place in Florida).<sup>1956</sup> The Republican controlled South Carolina state house even went as far as to pass a bill that criminalized the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in May of 2013 and rendered the health care reform law to be “null and void” due to its supposed unconstitutionality.<sup>1957</sup>

Another factor not to be underestimated is the fact that success for the Democrats at the presidential level could very well come at the expense of seats in both the U.S. Senate and House. Data leading up to and including the 2012 elections assembled by the University of Virginia’s Center for Politics showed that the twelve post-World War II presidents have lost an average of 30 U.S. House seats, six U.S. Senators, eight governors, control of six state legislatures, and roughly 360 state legislative seats during their time in office, leading the authors behind the research to reach the conclusion that success in presidential contests “often invites later failure.”<sup>1958</sup> In other words, if the Democratic Party exploits the advantage it possesses at the presidential level in future years, the Republican Party undoubtedly appears poised to remain in control of at least one of the two houses of Congress. Moreover, continued failure in presidential elections may also have the effect of increasing the chances of moderate candidates to make it through the primaries. As Martin Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller show in “The Party Decides,” the more time a party spends outside the White House, the more likely it is to nominate a more moderate candidate.<sup>1959</sup> Despite the fact that the GOP had spent two terms out of office by

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1956 Cf. Galewitz 2013: “Obamacare ‘navigators’ run into GOP opposition.” *USA Today*, September 22.

1957 Cf. Chasmar 2013: “South Carolina House passes bill making ‘Obamacare’ implementation a crime.” *Washington Times*, May 2.

1958 Sabato, Kondik, Skelley 2013: “The Presidency’s Political Price.” *Sabato’s Crystal Ball, University of Virginia Center for Politics*, August 1. Losses are often particularly pronounced in congressional midterm elections which traditionally see a lower turnout than their presidential counterparts – providing the GOP with a more favorable electoral environment of older and less diverse voters (see chapter II.4.8 for reported voting rates in congressional and presidential election years in particular). Brian Knight also provides a general overview of the reasons behind the traditionally dismal showings of presidential parties in congressional midterm elections in a 2014 paper. The primary reason, according to Knight, can be attributed to a “presidential penalty” that the commander-in-chief’s party has to contend with. More specifically this means that voters use congressional midterm elections to voice their disapproval of the president’s performance in office while also possessing a reluctance to provide a single party with unified control of both the executive and legislative branches. Of course such a phenomenon of “governing” parties faring poorly in contests in-between general elections can be seen across the democratic world. Cf. Knight 2014: “An Econometric Evaluation of Competing Explanations for The Midterm Gap.” *NBER Working Paper No. 20311*.

1959 Cf. Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller 2008: *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*, pp. 91–92.

2016, the party's top two presidential candidates could hardly have been described as moderate. This is not the place to decipher the 2016 presidential race but its outcome on the Republican side highlights the extent to which the GOP has become the party of the South as nativist rhetoric, anti-elitism directed at Washington, D.C., and a dose of religious zealotry (on the Cruz side) served both Trump and his primary challenger quite well. 2020 and beyond will show whether the Republican Party has reached a tipping point that has made it nearly impossible for so called "establishment" Republicans to push through their preferred choice. Regardless of the eventual outcome of the 2016 presidential race, one thing appears quite certain though: The *Southernization* of the GOP with all its repercussions has made ideological purity (notwithstanding Trump's success despite his past liberal preferences) a central theme of Republican presidential contest, making it far harder for Republican moderates (actual or perceived) in the field to eventually come out on top without sustaining severe damage to their credibility and reputation in the process.<sup>1960</sup>

Conclusions based on past trends like the one Cohen and his colleagues arrive at therefore need to be put in a contemporary political context. A fair degree of the data assessed by them and others stems from an era in which the parties were not as ideologically cohesive and the still existent more moderate factions, emboldened by the electoral defeats of fringe candidates, were better placed to push through their own candidates. The Republican Party of the twenty-first century has a severe dearth of those voices of reason though as they have been replaced by dyed-in-the-wool Southern conservatives. Even the favorable conditions for non-presidential parties in congressional contests may have to be re-assessed. With the parties having moved further apart in recent years, the trend of punishing the presidential party in congressional elections, particularly those of the midterm variety, may somewhat subside as Democratic-leaning voters who may be dissatisfied with a liberal president will find it increasingly difficult to vote for a Republican candidate whose ideological views represent a stark contrast to their own.<sup>1961</sup>

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1960 As illustrated by Mitt Romney's 2012 campaign during which the perceived "Massachusetts moderate" had to convince the deeply conservative Republican base of his "severely conservative" credentials while keeping an eye on the far more moderate general election electorate. Shortly before the 2012 presidential election, Fareed Zakaria concluded that "[g]iven the direction in which [the Republican Party] has moved and the pressures from its most extreme – yet most powerful – elements, any nominee would face the same challenge: Can you be a serious candidate for the general election while not outraging the Republican base?" Zakaria 2012: "Romney is the GOP's pretzel candidate." *Washington Post*, September 26.

1961 Of course Democratic success in those elections then hinges on getting their own voters out to the polls, a feat that has not been achieved in a satisfactory manner in recent midterm cycles.

Where to from here?

Republican control at the state level is one indicator that the party's future may be anything but bleak. Some scholars and analysts of the American political system also feel that instead of entering a long period of electoral decline at the national level, Republicans and the Tea Party movement at the GOP's heart can look towards the future with a sense of hope as they will continue to significantly shape the country's policies.<sup>1962</sup> For the New York magazine's Frank Rich, the United States is "a nation that loathes government and always has,"<sup>1963</sup> a claim made in an extensive piece of his titled "The Tea Party will win in the end" which gives some indication as to what the author thinks about the future course of American politics. For Democrats and liberals, Rich contends, this means that "[t]he Goldwater revolution will ultimately triumph."<sup>1964</sup> Theda Skocpol also sees the lackluster record of the Obama administration as a possible opening for the anti-statist policies of the GOP, making the case that while "Americans may resent the Tea Party [...] they are also losing ever more faith in the federal government – a big win for anti-government saboteurs."<sup>1965</sup> Is that the case? Are Americans inherently anti-government as Rich argues? Donald Trump's success would indicate that there is a basis for that argument. However, it is always worth noting that despite winning a record number of votes in the Republican presidential primaries, Trump's total number of votes constituted less than a quarter of the number of Romney voters in the 2012 general election. Basing broader assessments about U.S. politics on single presidential elections let alone primaries is therefore not the most sensible approach. Fact of the matter is that the data in this book has shown that while Americans and young adults are disappointed with President Obama, they nonetheless appear to be more open to the concept of an activist government than in a very long time. Tomorrow's key demographic groups – Millennials and minorities – are in a variety of areas unashamedly liberal as they support a government that provides health care and actively intervenes on the behalf of the less fortunate. They may not be as left-leaning as their Social Democratic counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic but the rift that has emerged between the *southernized* GOP and these burgeoning segments of the population is substantial and can only be narrowed if Republicans prove they have a legislative agenda that works better than the

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1962 As indicated by the fact that a significant degree of Republican proposals pertaining to tax cut extensions and cuts in public expenditure have been implemented in recent years (see chapter II.3.4 and data from Linden, Stein 2013).

1963 Rich 2012: "The Tea Party Will Win in the End." *New York*, October 14.

1964 Ibid.

1965 Skocpol 2014: "Why the Tea Party's Hold Persists." *Democracy* 31, pp. 9–14, here p. 12.

Democrats' – easier said than done when a significant part of your base and elected officials wants the government to pass as little legislation as possible.

Ultimately, there appears to be little doubt then that in the mid to long term, the Republican Party will have to adjust to a changing nation that increasingly rejects the anti-statism of the white South that has become such a staple of the GOP's ideological foundations.<sup>1966</sup> The question now is if the GOP can have its very own "Clause IV moment" similar to the make-over given to the British Labor Party by Tony Blair in the mid-1990s. The chances for any such transformation look rather slim. Contrary to its European counterparts, the American party system largely consists of rather weak national and almost autonomous state parties, making it a bottom up, rather than a top-down system in which the national leadership has a rather limited say in the selection of candidates and the ideological preferences they possess.<sup>1967</sup> While there are theoretical approaches that put politicians and party elites at the center of this body,<sup>1968</sup> the recent past has shown the impetus for change and driving force behind course corrections to be primarily found at a lower level. American political parties in the twenty-first century then, as defined by Marty Cohen and his colleagues, are "organized attempts by intense policy demanders to get control of government."<sup>1969</sup> A party's policy positions are thus not thus not necessarily determined by the elite at the very top but rather by *intense policy demanders*, groups of people brought together by common demands who "do not put the good of the party ahead of their own goals" and "do not care about winning for the sake of winning office. They care about the policy gains."<sup>1970</sup> Summed up nicely, the authors conclude that for such policy demanders "[p]arties are a means to an end, and the end is the group's own policy agenda."<sup>1971</sup> Calls by the party establishment – represented for example through the

1966 See for example the increasing perception of the federal government as an "enemy" among Republicans as recent evidence of this. While 22 percent of self-identified Republicans saw the federal government as an enemy in 1996 that share had increased to 35 percent by 2015. On the other side, the share of Republicans who considered the federal government to be their friend decreased from 34 to 21 percent during the same time span. Cf. Pew Research Center 2015d: *Beyond Distrust: How Americans View Their Government*, November 23, p. 34.

1967 To sum it up in one sentence, "[i]n the modern [American] political system it is the constituents, not the parties, who hire and fire candidates." Maisel, Brewer 2012: *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 48.

1968 According to John Aldrich for example, "the major political party is the creature of the politicians, the ambitious office seeker and officeholder." Aldrich 1995: *Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*, p. 4.

1969 Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller 2008, p. 362.

1970 Ibid., p. 31.

1971 Ibid. For a similar theoretical approach that considers party factions rather than poli-

RNC – to help the party become more electable by embracing a more moderate position on a variety of topics<sup>1972</sup> therefore fall on deaf ears and have little to no chances of success if those reforms are seen to compromise the policy goals of a majority of *intense policy demanders*. Moreover, as we have seen time and again in this book, many of those contemporary conservative policy demanders see today’s political battles primarily as struggles between good and evil to begin with which not infrequently makes electability an afterthought – “these groups are often motivated by deep feelings of justice and moral necessity, they are not deterred by long odds,”<sup>1973</sup> is how Cohen and his colleagues describe the base of twenty-first century American parties. At what point those odds become too long even for core conservatives remains to be seen. That “it will be up to Republican primary voters to decide what direction they want their party to take”<sup>1974</sup> appears to be rather certain though. More centrist approaches emanating from the right concerning the role and size of government – such as George W. Bush’s brand of *compassionate conservatism* – tend to fail because within the ideologically cohesive universe of the twenty-first century *southernized* GOP they are “an idea without a constituency”<sup>1975</sup> of *policy demanders*, particularly among the deeply conservative primary crowd. Contemporary Republican candidates are thus well advised to give these ideological notions a wide berth.

The primary hurdle to future electoral success therefore appears to be the ideological composition of the party’s activist core. Moderate Republican “intense policy demanders” that could drive Republican politicians and policies in a different direction are today virtually extinct – even at the wider mass level, the party has turned into an incredibly ideologically cohesive outfit as it has become more *southernized*. According to Gallup’s ideological self-identification poll, 70 percent of Republicans considered themselves to be “conservative” in 2013, significantly up from the 62 percent that chose this option a mere eleven years earlier.<sup>1976</sup> This is also an important area in which today’s Republican Party differs from the Democrats of the 1980s, the last time one of the two major parties was forced to undergo a major overhaul when the *New Democrats* could count on the support of a still relatively sizeable Southern wing while moderates

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tionians to be the primary driving force of the American political party system cf. DiSalvo 2012: *Engines of Change: Party Factions in American Politics*.

1972 A point made through the RNC’s 2013 *Growth & Opportunity* report (cf. Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, and McCall 2013).

1973 Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller 2008, p. 30.

1974 Abramowitz 2014b: “Republican Leaders’ Two Choices.” *Democracy* 31, pp. 14–17, here p. 17.

1975 Teles 2011, p. 205.

1976 Cf. Jones 2014a.

and conservatives outnumbered liberals within the Democratic Party by margin of more than two-to-one.<sup>1977</sup>

The increasing share of Southerners and white evangelical Protestants within the Republican base has also had serious repercussions on the composition and policy preferences of the congressional GOP. As data by Keith Poole and his colleagues reveals, the GOP House conference's shift to the right according to the scholars' DW-Nominate scores took off in a remarkable manner in 1995 as the party's ranks were swelled with white Southern conservatives. Between the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1993–95, i. e. the final one before the GOP finally managed to win a majority of Southern congressional districts) and through the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (2011–13), the GOP's mean DW-Nominate score in the U.S. House moved to the right by 0.27 points (from 0.405 to 0.675), a significant shift considering that the scale goes from -1 to +1. What makes this even more remarkable is that if we take the 1993–95 mean score and compare it to all previous Republican scores in the dataset (which goes all the way back to 1879) we see that at no point was the Republican House conference 0.27 points more liberal than during the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress. The most liberal Republican mean score throughout the entire period stood at 0.214 during the 95<sup>th</sup> Congress from 1977 through '79 (which therefore was 0.191 points more liberal than the 1993 through '95 score). In other words, the move to the right within the GOP House conference over the course of less than two decades was bigger than any other rightward tack witnessed within the party over the 115 years preceding that period.<sup>1978</sup> The phenomenon being observed since the early 1990s can best be described as a *conservatizing loop*, a vicious circle in which the interplay between both the base and elected officials feed the constant shift of the GOP to the ideological right. Republican legislators who wish to *starve the beast* in Congress certainly help make the GOP more popular among those voters subscribing to a strong anti-government view while simultaneously harming the party's standing among the more moderate segments of society. The (subsequently) steadily increasing weight of such an anti-statist ideology at the base on its part drives candidates even further to the right, with Republican officials knowing that elections can only be won – or challengers from the right defeated – by accruing a staunchly conservative voting record. With each successive election then, the GOP's ranks in Washington are filled with more and more conservatives at the expense of moderates, a process

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1977 Cf. From 2013: *The New Democrats and the Return to Power*, p. 254. From (founder and former CEO of the *Democratic Leadership Council*) responds to the question of whether Republicans can reform their party by answering that “[i]t’s possible, but I think it will be much harder for them to do it than it was for us. The reason is that their party is much more ideologically homogenous than ours.”

1978 See data assembled by Poole 2013: *House Polarization 1<sup>st</sup> to 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses*. Data as of July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.



which then once again serves to also deplete centrist elements at the base as these voters will defect into the Democratic camp or stay away from politics and elections entirely. All of this has led Harvard professor and Tea Party scholar Theda Skocpol to arrive at the conclusion that the GOP is “a breathtakingly radical party at this point.”<sup>1979</sup>

This purging of moderates from Republican ranks has therefore made it virtually impossible for any sort of movement akin to the *Democratic Leadership Council* of the 1980s to gain traction within the GOP. After decades of the aforementioned *conservativizing loop* there simply are not enough members within Congress or at the base left who can form a sufficiently large group to push for moderation and compromise. Such a shift to the right has also meant that when right-wing Republicans are attacked by fellow members of the party, it is primarily for their supposedly liberal stance on a particular set of issues. Being too conservative is virtually impossible in such an environment. Case in point the 2012 presidential primary race and the candidacies of Rick Perry and Rick Santorum. Both candidates were criticized and sometimes derided for their overly conservative positions by non-Republicans. When Rick Perry was attacked by his fellow Republicans though, it was for granting in-state tuition fees for the children of illegal immigrants in Texas while Rick Santorum, on the other hand, was chastised by his primary opponents for supposedly being a friend of “big labor” due to his opposition to a nationwide right-to-work law.<sup>1980</sup> If even extremely conservative candidates have to protect themselves against attacks from the right, it comes as no surprise that the party then struggles to appeal to moderates during the general election campaign.

What path will Republicans pursue over the coming years then? As Pietro Nivola of the Brookings Institution rightfully notes, “parties [...] are in the business of winning elections,” adding that any political organization which “loses sight of that bottom line is in trouble – and hence sooner or later is likely to come to terms with it.”<sup>1981</sup> While the situation the GOP finds itself in may not be uniquely hopeless it is still rather worse than, as already indicated, the foundations upon which the Democrats could rebrand themselves in the 1980s and early '90s. Republican attempts to win the white South and the subsequent domination of the party's ranks and ideology by the region have left the GOP largely devoid of any remaining moderate (by nationwide standards) intraparty factions that could push the GOP in a more centrist direction. While the re-

1979 Quoted in: University of California Television 2012: *The Tea Party with Theda Skocpol (Conversations with History)*. Comment made at 56:09.

1980 The attacks on Perry were already described in the chapter on the Tea Party's immigration views (II.3.1). For Santorum cf. Gilbert 2012: “Amid Wisconsin labor strife, Romney attacks Santorum as weak against unions.” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 29.

1981 Nivola 2013, p. 34.

maining white Southern Democrats and their allies were able to provide the party with a moderate makeover, culminating in the election of two Southerners running on a ticket that promised to reform welfare and eventually brought “the era of big government” to an end,<sup>1982</sup> any Republican candidate with aspirations to win the presidency finds a political environment in which a moderate position on a variety of topics, ranging from health care to the size of government and socio-cultural issues, severely decreases the odds of winning the party’s nomination. The dual *Southernization* and *Evangelicalization* has purged the GOP of compassionate conservative let alone liberal elements, in the process creating a political organization that can win in certain settings – such as congressional contests in which their base has a far better turnout record than the Democratic core of minorities and millennials – but finds it increasingly difficult to fashion broad nationwide coalitions. Another key difference between today’s Republican Party and its Democratic counterpart of the 1980s is the existence of a strong regional focus within the former. Reform-minded Democrats of that era found allies among Southern Democrats without encountering a sufficiently strong regional faction within the party that was able to bring these efforts at overhauling the party to a complete halt. Within the Republican Party of the twenty-first century on the other hand the Southern bloc is powerful enough to stifle dissent – but at the same time lacks the electoral muscle to get Republican candidates back into the White House without support from some of the more moderate regions of the country.<sup>1983</sup> From a slightly different angle this also became evident during the party’s 2016 presidential primaries. Donald Trump’s campaign had a distinctly Southern perhaps even “Wallaceist” flavor, mixing populist anti-government rhetoric with racial undertones – an assertion underscored by his strong showing across the South. While his support base of racially conservative working class whites<sup>1984</sup> helped him ultimately obtain the

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1982 In his 1996 State of the Union address, Bill Clinton told Congress that “[t]he era of big government is over.” Clinton 1996: “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union.” January 23. Online by: Peters, Woolley: *The American Presidency Project*.

1983 As was discussed in chapter II.1.3, George W. Bush required around a third of the non-Southern electoral vote to win and retain the presidency. According to the latest apportionment of electoral votes, a Republican candidate will have to win at least 29.1 percent of the non-Southern electoral vote to win the presidency, even if that candidate carries all eleven Southern states.

1984 For the views of Trump supporters pertaining to racial issues cf. Pollard, Mendelsohn 2016: “RAND Kicks Off 2016 Presidential Election Panel Survey.” *RAND Corporation*, January 27, Cohn 2015: “Donald Trump’s Strongest Supporters: A Certain Kind of Democrat.” *The Upshot / New York Times*, December 31, Kalkan 2016: “What differentiates Trump supporters from other Republicans? Ethnocentrism.” *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, February 28, and Tesler, Sides 2016: “How political science helps explain the

nomination despite being stuck at a ceiling of around 35 percent throughout most of the early primary season, it appears rather unlikely that Trump's brand of nativism will allow him to garner a majority against the Democratic coalition. The South received the candidate it wanted – at a substantial cost of the GOP's image among minorities. That the second place choice was a Southern senator with a distinctively Christian conservative anti-government message is another indicator about the extent to which the Republican Party has become both southernized and evangelized.

The South's unique values have also created another sizeable conundrum for the Republican Party and its elected officials in particular as some national leaders are attempting to soften the party's stance. Nivola is right when he says that parties have a built-in survival instinct that puts a premium on drawing up strategies to win elections. As parties continue to lose elections they will eventually do what is necessary and adapt to the environment around them – at least in theory. Any calls to change the party's image and strategy in order to make inroads into certain parts of the electorate will in all likelihood fall on deaf ears in Dixie though because what appears to be the right course of action for the national GOP stands in stark contrast to the experiences of Southern Republicans. From a Southern Republican perspective there is no need to alter the party's ideological foundations. Their brand of racially charged anti-statism and vehement opposition to a progressive position on moral and socio-cultural issues is precisely what has gotten these Southerners elected, with Republican success rates in the South at or near all-time highs. Moderating their tone or values would instead prove to have disastrous consequences though as a right-wing challenger might possibly swoop in to steal a safe seat. The GOP's two decade long *Southernization* in Congress along with the inherently connected polarization processes mean that a majority of Republican legislators now find themselves in such an environment though where moderation offers few advantages but many pitfalls.

Has the country thus been lost by conquering the South? There can be little doubt that the decisions and actions taken by Republican leaders such as Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and last but not least Ronald Reagan put the Republican Party on a trajectory towards its current *southernized* and *evangelized* state. The means that helped win the white South – in particular a focus on using the electorate's racial resentment to the party's advantage through racially charged rhetoric and a continued pandering to religious conservatives – have become part and parcel of contemporary Republican campaigns, diminishing the party's standing among younger and minority voters. At

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rise of Trump: the role of white identity and grievances." *The Monkey Cage / Washington Post*, March 3.

least at the presidential level the uphill battle for the *southernized* twenty-first century GOP seems rather steep, particularly as these elections see a better turnout among core components of today's Democratic alliance compared to their less popular congressional counterparts. Significant inroads into these burgeoning segments of the electorate appear unlikely while Republicans continue to espouse the values of the white South. Hispanics may be a bit more inclined to take a conservative stance on an issue like abortion but it is far less relevant to them and their decision making process than it is to many white evangelical Protestants. In terms of importance, "*it's still the economy, stupid*" for many minority voters. The problem for the GOP is the Hispanic predisposition towards an activist government which undoubtedly makes them an easy target for liberal politicians and their policies. Ultimately then, the GOP's path over the past 35 to 50 years has turned it into a white and to a large extent devoutly evangelical party; two groups whose electoral muscle has atrophied significantly in recent years and whose clout is set to contract even further over the coming decades.

There are no simple or easy answers for how to proceed from here on out. Lessons from the GOP's Southern Strategy do nonetheless offer a path forward. This book has shown that the views and values of tomorrow's key electoral segments – millennials and minorities – are alien to many white Southerners who on their part despise a government that is perceived as favoring the undeserving poor minorities. If the GOP wishes to replicate its success in the South on a national basis it will have to adopt a strategy similar to the one it employed to conquer the white South. That is to say it will have to adjust its positions to fit the electorate it is seeking to conquer rather than hope that time will solve the party's problems by making voters more open to the benefits of supply side economics. This is of course easier said than done. More centrist candidates that acknowledge the role the government does have to play in the day to day lives of its citizens will have to be supported in words, dollars, and deeds for years if not decades to come. The Tea Party and Donald Trump after all are the result of half a century of realignment, built upon the constant Republican demonization of liberal positions and simultaneous embrace of George Wallace's racially charged anti-statism along with a hefty dose of nativism – a similar shift back to the political center within the GOP may very well take just as long. Such a "long and dogged struggle to root out radical obstructionism on the right"<sup>1985</sup> is a worthwhile endeavor though because its absence will bring about the loss of the nation at the expense of winning the South.

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1985 Skocpol 2014, p. 14.



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