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POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTISANSHIP: THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE IN 2008

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. MANN: I trust you all have discovered the coffee and goodies, which are out that away? Help yourself.

Good morning. Thank you all for coming. I'm Tom Mann, a senior fellow here at Brookings, and I'm delighted to welcome you to what Larry and I call the second quadrennial series of Brookings/Princeton seminars on the presidential elections. Brookings and Princeton, the Brookings Opportunity 08 Program, and the Woodrow Wilson Center for the Study of Democratic Politics are co-sponsoring this event. Larry and I have served as the organizers, and we'll be active participants in each of the seminars. Larry is the Donald E. Stokes Professor of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, and author of most recently *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. The objective of the first and subsequent events in this series is to see if we can't provide a little value added to the discussion and understanding of this particular election by drawing on a body of research done by political scientists trying to understand the fundamentals of the election process and seeing if we can't apply it directly to the contemporary campaign and election. So for those of you looking for insights on whether or not lipstick on a pig is or is not a sexist remark, you will be disappointed. We don't have any real insights to bring to bear on that, but we hope we have something to say today on parties and partisanship; two weeks from now

on such election fundamentals as the economy, the war, and the president; then two weeks after that a discussion of issues and ideology of gender and race; finally, in our pre-election seminar on the role of money, campaign ads, and mobilization efforts. We'll conclude the series after the election on trying to understand what happened. Of course, we are brilliant in our post-election analyses, explaining just what happened, but we'll take on the more difficult task of trying to say what it means for governance and for the future of politics and the party system.

Now today's participants have much to offer on the subject of parties and partisanship led by Larry who's written some critical papers, helping us understand the evolution of the party system over the last several decades. Then Alan Abramowitz to my left here -- Alan participated four years ago at our first seminar. He is the Alben W. Barkley Professor of Political Science at Emory University, author of numerous books in recent years. He's been, in addition to sort of general volumes on political parties and elections voting behavior, he's really been examining party realignment in the United States, and how it's playing out in presidential and congressional elections. We'll then turn to our colleague John Aldrich who's on my right here who is the Pfizer-Pratt University Professor of Political Science at Duke University. I think it's fair to say that John is the preeminent theorist of political parties. His book, *Why Parties*, is something all of us have to read and understand, and has

been a co-author of a series of volumes called *Change and Continuity in the Elections*. The most recent edition is in the 2004 and 2006 presidential elections. Then batting cleanup, my dear colleague E.J. Dionne; E.J., in addition to helping to raise three young children, has three major jobs: One -- and I mention these in increasing importance -- one as a columnist for the *Washington Post*, a syndicated column, second, as a professor at Georgetown University, and third, as a senior fellow here at Brookings. E.J.'s writings range from his first book that we all know, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, to his most recent volume *Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics After the Religious Right*. Now you will see in the materials you picked up that Larry and Alan have produced some tables and charts that they will be referring to.

One last, if you will oblige me, set of brief substantive comments. We all know that contemporary American politics is characterized by a sharp ideological polarization between our two major political parties who have been operating in recent years in a position of rough parody. You will see that in some of the documents of the long-time democratic advantage being completely neutralized, and in the last presidential election the two parties had almost exact parity, roughly 49 percent each of partisans and independent leaners. So the question is, how do we arrive at that point? What changed in our politics to bring us to this?

And next question, is the relative number of Democrats and Republicans in the electorate this positive in any way of presidential election outcomes? It's one thing for party ID to be a strong predictor of individual votes, but election outcomes are decided at the margin. And how and in what ways is partisanship relevant to the decisive margin? We know that in past eras in the '50s and '60s, a huge Democratic advantage in party ID could not prevent Republican landslides in presidential elections, but have things changed and does a significant advantage matter now? And is there such a significant advantage? Have we moved off parity to a position of Democratic advantage? How durable are the changes that we've witnessed in the last couple of years? Can they be overcome by one good party convention? How stable or ephemeral are these measures of partisan identification?

Finally, if the country has become more partisan, why are both candidates promising to rise above parties and partisanship? What's going on here? What is the logic of campaign strategies that lead both candidates to emphasize a world that doesn't seem to exist now? Well, that's the table setting. Now to the real substance, and we'll begin with Larry Bartels.

MR. BARTELS: Thanks Tom. It's a great pleasure as always to work with you in putting this series together and grateful for the hospitality of Brookings for organizing this and having us all here, and

thanks to all of you for coming on behalf of the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton as well as Brookings.

We thought we'd start today by talking about partisanship because from a political scientist's point of view, partisanship is really the most important element of ordinary Americans' connection with the political system, and one of the real important structuring factors of how the electoral process works. There are a variety of ways that political scientists have thought about and described party identification, as it's called in the American electorate, over the last several decades. The classical conception, which is still quite prominent and influential and I think has a great deal of truth in its favor, is that party identification is a kind of social identity, something like an intense attachment to a sports team or to a religious denomination. And people grow up in a particular partisan tradition, and imbibe the traditions and the values of a particular partisan camp. And that shapes the way that they think about politics and the way that they react to day-to-day events. Another way of thinking about partisanship is as a kind of running tally, where people look at the world around them and try to decide whether what's going on is good or bad, whether it's associated in their minds with Republicans or Democrats, if a particular party seems to be producing a great deal of positive social and economic change on one hand, or driving the country into the ground on the other hand. They update this little tally in their minds and think of

their views about the Republican Party or the Democratic Party as being more or less favorable than they used to be. That second way of thinking about things also has a great deal to be said for it. It's helpful especially in understanding how we observe changes over time in partisanship, both for individual voters and for the electorate as a whole, since although there is a great deal of stability to partisanship, it's much more stable over time if we observe the same individuals over a sequence of several years. We see that their party identifications are much more persistent and stable than their views about specific issues. But they do change at the margin in ways that are politically quite consequential, and this running-tally way of thinking about partisanship is quite helpful in understanding how that happens. What it doesn't do a very good job of I think is emphasizing the extent to which partisanship is itself an important factor in understanding the way people interpret the world because it turns out that there's a great deal of partisan filtering of day-to-day information that goes on, and people's reactions to political events as they come along turns out to be greatly shaped by party identification. If you look at people's views about particular issues or even fundamental values in the political realm that are supposed to be quite important in shaping the way that people think about politics, like moral traditionalism or egalitarianism. It turns out that those fundamental political values are more shaped by people's partisanship than they are shapers of people's partisanship. So people who come for

some reason or another to think of themselves as Democrats or Republicans tend to over a long period of time to change their views about a whole host of issues and values in ways that are consistent with that partisan identification. And even people's sense of very objective facts about the world's social and economic facts are greatly shaped by their partisanship. My favorite example of this is in a survey that was done in 1988 where people were asked about various things that had happened during the Reagan Administration, and how the country had changed over the course of the Reagan Administration. One of the things that people were asked about was whether inflation had gotten better or worse over the eight years of the Reagan Administration? And a majority of people who described themselves as strong Democrats said that inflation had gotten worse over the eight years that Ronald Reagan was president. In fact, the inflation rate declined from 13.5 percent in 1980 to 4.1 percent in 1988. So there was a huge improvement with respect to that indicator, but a majority of people who were viewing it from a Democratic perspective just didn't recognize that fact. And conversely, in a 1996 survey similarly people were asked about what had happened to the budget deficit during Bill Clinton's first term. In fact the deficit had shrunk from $255 billion to $22 billion, so declined by more than 90 percent. Nevertheless, a majority of Republicans in the 1996 survey said that the budget deficit had gotten worse during Clinton's first term. So people's views of these facts out in

the world that we would expect to be influencing their partisanship in important ways are actually much more shaped by their partisan predispositions.

The second reason that partisanship is important from the point of view of political scientists obviously is that it has such a profound impact on the voting decisions that people make when they get to the polls, both in lower-level races and in presidential races. If you have the handout in front of you, you'll see that there's a picture of the relationship between the vote for President Bush in the 2000 presidential election and in the 2004 presidential election across the 50 states. And there's a very strong statistical relationship between the vote in each state in 2000 and the vote in 2004. Now you might say well, it's not surprising that states lined up in more or less the same way in 2000 and 2004, but if you stop and think about the fact that this relationship is so strong in spite of all the things that happened between those two elections. So we have the bitterly contested election outcome and post-election maneuverings in 2000. We have big shifts in domestic policy over this period, particularly the big Bush tax cuts in 2001 and 2003. We have the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the reordering of Americans, thinking about our role in the world in response to those events. We have the invasion of Iraq and the first years of the war and how that went. All of those things happened over this period of four years, but nevertheless the behavior of voters in each

state in the 2004 election is highly predictable on the basis of how they behaved in 2000. And that's really a reflection of the importance of these fundamental partisan attachments in shaping the way that people respond to new events and the way they make political decisions in a persistent way over long periods of time. I'm sure once we look at the relationship between how states voted in 2008 and how they voted in 2004, we'll also see a strong relationship in spite of the fact that we have an entirely new set of issues, a new set of candidates, a Republican candidate who not only is not a member of the current administration, but is doing his best to distance himself from the administration in spite of the fact that we'll see lots of Democratic ads in the next month with McCain hugging the president. So there's an important way in which partisanship structures voting behavior, and that relationship has actually increased substantially over time. The political science wisdom on partisan identification really emerged in the 1950s, and the picture that was painted by the scholars who studied elections in the 1950s was that these partisan identifications went a long way toward shaping people's political behavior. And there was a period in the 1960s and the 1970s where partisanship seemed to be much less important in shaping people's voting behavior. There were an unusually high number of defections from partisan identification by Republicans in 1964, abandoning their candidate, by Democrats in 1972, abandoning their candidate. And so if you chart over time the way in

which partisanship influences presidential voting behavior, you see a high level of statistical relationship between partisanship and voting in the 1950s, but then a substantial decline in the 1960s and 1970s. But since that point there's been a very substantial and very regular increase in the impact of partisanship on voting behavior at the presidential level through the 1980s and 1990s and into the current period. So people have talked a lot about the way in which Karl Rove invented the politics of energizing the base and securing the loyalty of partisan supporters in their presidential voting behavior, but the fact of the matter is that that shift in the behavior of voters was really not only well underway, but probably reached its high point by the time Karl Rove came along. And the elections of 2000 and 2004 are really a continuation of a pattern that emerged clearly through the 1980s and 1990s.

The other thing to say about the history of partisanship -- Tom alluded to this in his introductory comments -- is that there's been a big shift in the partisan balance over the last several decades. When scholars began to focus on partisanship in the 1950s, the Democratic Party had a big advantage in terms of net partisan loyalties in the electorate as a whole. And so the issue that scholars wrestled with in the 1950s was how Eisenhower managed to get elected in spite of this strong partisan advantage for the democrats, stemming from the New Deal period. What's happened is that that Democratic advantage has eroded

substantially, and again at a pretty even rate, over the subsequent decades. The Democratic advantage was substantial in the 1950s, smaller in the 1960s, smaller in the 1970s, smaller in the 1980s, and by 2000 had really evaporated entirely in 2004. The partisan balance between the two sides was just about exactly even. In recent years there's been resurgence in Democratic loyalties in the electorate. That's something that Alan's going to talk about a good deal more in his comments and the implication of that for the 2008 election. The other thing to note about that shift in partisanship is that at least the net shift in partisanship is really heavily concentrated in the South. At the beginning of this period that we're focusing on, the democrats had a huge partisan advantage in the South, stemming from the historical legacy of the Civil War, and the partisan balance in the rest of the country was really much more even. What's happened over time is that the partisan balance in the rest of the country on the whole has remained pretty even. But the partisan balance in the South has converged to what the rest of the country has looked like all through this period, which is to say the Republicans have made huge gains in partisanship, again quite gradually over this period and for a variety of reasons. But now the partisan balance in the South looks much more like the partisan balance in the rest of the country. And the partisan division is pretty even, which makes it increasingly important that partisans are voting as strongly as they are on

the basis of their partisan loyalties, and makes both the attempt of each party to bring these partisans out at the polls, and the attempts to sway undecided voters in the middle of the distribution increasingly important.

The last thing I wanted to say just a little bit about is the implications of partisanship for governance, and whether it makes any sense for people to view the world in these partisan terms or not. And the answer that political scientists have long insisted on, in spite of the popular conception that there's really not much real difference between the democratic and republican parties when it comes to policy, is that there are substantial differences, and if anything, those differences have increased in recent decades. That's true if you look at the behavior of members of Congress whose votes on a whole series of policy issues in Washington are substantially different. I have one picture in the handout that looks at the relationship between the voting behavior of U.S. senators in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a function of the views of their constituents. And you see that there is some relationship between having more liberal or conservative states and having more liberal or conservative senators. So the most conservative states on average have the most conservative senators, and the most liberal states have the most liberal senators. But there's a much larger gulf between a democratic senator and a republican senator, representing exactly the same state, exactly the same constituents, than there is between say a democrat representing the

most conservative state in the country and a democrat representing the most liberal state in the country. So at the same time, these states are electing very conservative Republicans and very conservative Democrats who are then acting on their ideological convictions on a whole range of issues that face them when they're actually voting in Congress. And at the presidential level they are also striking in pretty consistent differences in policy. The example that I focused on here has to do with patterns of income growth under Republican and Democratic presidents, which I've written about much more extensively in the book that Tom mentioned, *Unequal Democracy*. The pattern there is that we see very different patterns of income growth under Republican and Democratic presidents because they're consistently implementing different kinds of policies that reflect their different ideological priorities. So insofar as voters are thinking about politics in partisan terms and making decisions in partisan terms, it may make a good deal of sense -- at least in the sense that the states in the election are really partisan states, and what we can expect in terms of the next administration is really probably most predictable on the basis of whether the president and the congressional majorities are Republican or Democratic. Thanks.

MR. MANN: Thank you, Larry. We're off and running in good form. On to you, Alan.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ: Well, first of all I want to thank Tom and Larry for inviting me to be here today. And I'm going to sort of follow along and reinforce a lot of the points that Larry just made, and may be try to extend them a little bit further and talk a little bit about where things are right now. But I -- so I -- you should have a handout that is called "The Partisan Landscape in 2008," and I'm just going to go through this -- I'll go through some of these figures very quickly because, again, Larry's already talked about some of this. But the first figure here shows the trend that Larry was describing in party identification in the American electorate over the last five decades. And what you can see there is exactly what Larry was describing; that back in the 1950s and '60s, Democrats had a huge advantage in terms of the party affiliations of voters, and that has been diminishing steadily since then. And that by the 2002/2004 elections, what we see is that they've reached equality, that we have an exactly even balance in the proportions of Democrats and Republicans in the electorate. So really a pretty dramatic change, but one that's been a fairly gradual change, not something that took place in a single election cycle. Now the question that this raises, of course, immediately is why did that happen? And what is interesting is that when you start looking within the electorate, you see that this shift has been very uneven. It has not been something that cuts equally across all different groups in the electorate. In fact, Larry talked about the fact that there was an enormous shift in the

party loyalties of white Southerners who were in the 1950s by far the most Democratic group within the electorate, even considerably more Democratic than, for example, African Americans were back in the 1950s. And now, of course, white Southerners are in fact one of the most Republican groups in the electorate. But there are other groups that have shifted as well. For example, white Catholics were an overwhelmingly democratic group as well, and they are now only marginally more democratic than white Protestants. And white blue collar workers are another group that used to be very democratic. They're a smaller group now than they used to be, but they're also a much less democratic group. But the key to understanding this in my view is in trying to explain all these shifts has to do with the role of ideology. And so if you look at the second figure, which is on page 3, this shows the trend in democratic identification over time by ideology, and so for self-identified liberals, moderates, and conservatives. Now we can only go back to the 1970s with this because the National Election Study surveys did not begin including a question asking about ideological identification until 1972. Apparently before that time it wasn't considered worth asking, unfortunately, because it would be great to be able to go back further with this. But you can see that even starting in the 1970s, that when you break down this decline in Democratic identification in the electorate, that it varies -- the shift varies considerably. Among self-identified liberals, Democratic identification has actually

increased a bit. It was already very high, but it's gotten higher. Among self-identified moderates, it's stayed pretty stable, changed very little. But it's among the self-identified conservatives that we see this big decline from about a third of self-identified conservatives who are Democratic identifiers to now less than 10 percent of self-identified conservatives are Democratic identifiers. So that's why I believe that it's really ideology that's driving a lot of this change here, and the result of that is what you see in the next figure on page 4, which shows the average position of Democratic and Republican identifiers on this 7-point liberal/conservative scale over time. And what you see there is as these conservative Democrats -- or as conservatives are moving away from the Democratic Party and toward the Republican Party, while liberals are moving a bit further in the direction of the Democrats that the parties are moving apart, and the gap between actually doubles between the 1970s and 2002-2004. So quite a dramatic change here. Democrats are moving to the left; Republicans are moving to the right. Parties are becoming more ideologically distinctive, and in the table on page 5, you can see the difference between them is not just a matter of ideological identifications; it's not just the labels that people give themselves, but this also is true on a wide range of issues and in their responses to political leaders. So you can see in the 2004 national exit poll approval of President Bush: 10 percent of Democrats, 95 percent of Republicans approved of the job

President Bush was doing at that time. Support for the war in Iraq: 15 percent versus 89 percent. And then on some other issues that are not quite as closely tied to President Bush and his policies, you still see very large differences. Not as large as on the war or the president, but the percentage who are pro-choice on abortion: 78 percent of Democratic identifiers, 37 percent of republican identifiers. And favor activist government, this is sort of a simple question they ask in the exit poll about do you think the government should be doing more to solve problems, or it's already trying to do too many things. Turns out that is very good at separating Democrats from Republicans: 68 percent of Democrats think the government should be doing more, and 70 percent of Republicans think that government should be doing less. And so we see these fairly dramatic differences.

So the parties are moving apart ideologically. The balance between them is getting closer and closer. And obviously it looks like it's pretty bad news for the Democratic Party, which used to have this big advantage in party identification, and now that's disappeared. But the other side of that story is that as the balance has come closer and closer together, as a result of this increasing ideological division between the parties, what we're seeing is increasing party loyalty in voting behavior. And so you'll see a figure on page 6 that shows the trend in defection rates of Democratic and Republican identifiers in presidential elections by

decade. And so this is combining several elections together, and what you see there is back in the 1970s -- and of course this is influenced somewhat by the 1972 election where so many Democratic identifiers voted for Nixon, but also 1980 when a lot of Democrats defected and voted for Reagan -- 30 percent of Democrats voted for Republican presidential candidates versus 10 percent of Republican identifiers. The 1982-1990 period, which includes the '84 and '88 elections, we see that diminishing somewhat, the difference. And in the most recent periods, 1992-2004, what we see is that both parties have very low rates of defection -- actually the democrats a little bit lower than republicans -- with Bill Clinton of course winning the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections. But even in 2004, very low rates of partisan defection: about 7 percent of Republicans and 11 percent of Democrats who defected in the 2004 presidential election. So much higher rates of party loyalty in voting behavior, so while the Democrats have fewer partisans, the partisans they've lost were the ones who were the most likely to defect in these elections.

So what's been happening since 2004? And of course we really don't have the kind of data we'd like to have. We will have it in another year or so or less, but we can look at some of the data that is available that's sort of suggestive about what's been happening to party identification. And so on page 7 you can see the trend here -- this was

from the Gallop poll and it's their yearly compilation of party affiliation among voters. Going back to 1988 and you can see what's happened recently. If you go back to 2002-2004, there was again almost an equal split between Democrats and Republicans, actually a very small Republican advantage, and we saw that also in the exit polls. In the 2004 exit poll, there were slightly more Republican identifiers than Democratic identifiers. But then since 2004, there's been this shift so that -- and they carry it through 2007, and I've added the data from 2008 from the polls where they've asked that party affiliation question. They don't always ask it but a number of polls. So this is based on thousands of interviews, and you can see the Democratic advantage now is -- at least before the Republican Convention -- was the largest it had been in this entire series, an 8-point advantage. When you include the people we call "leaning independents," because it turns out that if you press independents -- you know, a lot of people call themselves independents, about 35 percent or so of the electorate -- if you press them and say do you usually feel closer to one party or the other, that about two-thirds of them generally lean toward one party or the other. And those "leaning independents" actually look, think, and behave much more like partisans than like pure independents. They typically vote for their party at just as high a rate as weak partisans, sometimes higher. Their views on the issues are very similar to those of partisans. So we tend to think of them as sort of "closet

partisans" if you will. And you can see there the Democratic advantage is even larger because more of these independents lean toward the Democrats than toward the Republicans, so up to a 13-point advantage.

Now this is based on all respondents. It's not based on registered voters or actual voters, so keep that in mind. So one thing to think about in terms of how this might play out in the election is that the advantage is going to be smaller in all likelihood among registered voters, and then slightly smaller still among the actual voters. At least that's been the historical pattern that the voters -- people who actually vote -- are more Republican than the entire pool of eligible voters. Why is this happening? I mean, why are the Democrats gaining ground? I think certainly one can't dismiss the reaction to President Bush and his policies, the negative reaction, the very strong -- very high disapproval of the president's job performance that we've seen over the last several years, a concern about the economy, all these sorts of factors, the kinds of things Larry was talking about. But I think there are some longer term things driving this perhaps. One of them is the changing demographic makeup of the American electorate. You know, the American electorate is changing, and we sort of don't notice this that much because it's very gradual. But I have a little figure here on page 9 that shows one way of looking at this, which is the decline of married white Christians in the United States electorate. And it's funny. If you ask people -- if you just

ask people to guess and say what percentage of American voters do you think would be married white Christians? Most people would guess it's a large majority. It's actually a minority. It used to be a majority, in fact back in the 1950s it was close to 80 percent of voters were married white Christians. But what's been happening over time is that the percentage of whites in the electorate has been declining, from 95 percent in the 1950s down to about 75 percent now. The percentage of people who identify themselves as Christians of any kind is still an overwhelming majority. It's still about 80 percent, but that's down from over 90 percent. And the percentage who are married is way down also. The percentage of Americans who are married is lower now than at any time as far back as we have data on this. And when you break that out by generation, what you see is that among those under the age of 30, fewer than 20 percent of those under the age of 30 are married white Christians; now that's largely because very few of them are married. Some of you may have noticed this, that people under the age of 30 right now just don't get married, or they get married later, or they don't get married at all. Well, may be eventually they will, you know. We're still hoping with our kids. It's a real change. It's a real sea change because in the 1950s and '60s, the overwhelming majority of people in their 20s were married. The group that had the lowest marriage rate at that time was senior citizens, and that was largely of course because of widowers. So now what we're seeing is that

this group is much -- and that's a very politically significant demographic. There's a huge gap. There's a much bigger gap in political attitudes and partisanship between single and married people than there is between men and women. The marriage gap is much larger than the gender gap, something that doesn't get nearly as much attention as it should, and it reflects differences in outlook and lifestyle and values and a whole range of things. So as the demographics are changing, obviously this means a sort of core supporters of the Republican Party are becoming a shrinking percentage of the electorate. Now Republicans have been able to compensate for that until recently by gaining an increasing share of support among married white Christians. But they've kind of maxed out there because it's among conservative married white Christians that they've gained the most foothold. But they've already got 90 percent of that group. You can't get much higher than that. So it will be interesting to see in the future as this continues how that plays out. There is a generation gap emerging in American politics. The table on page 10 shows that. This is from the 2006 exit poll where democrats did -- we did see a shift in the composition of the exit poll of the electorate between 2004 and 2006, where it went from a slight Republican advantage to about a two- to three-point Democratic advantage in party identification. So we've already begun to see that shift, and that shift occurred almost entirely among those under the age of 30. So everybody shifted

Democratic in terms of their vote, but in terms of party ID, you can see that it's the under 30s who are already -- even before Barrack Obama -- so the generation gap we're seeing this year in presidential preference didn't begin with Barrack Obama. It's gotten larger certainly with Obama.

And finally how will this play out in the 2008 election, just very quickly, on page 11 you'll see there's a trend data here from the Gallop tracking poll. Now, we're going to have to see what happens now. This includes the last week here, September 1-7, includes the week of the Republican Convention and a couple of days after, but not the full impact of the Republican Convention, and of course, you know, how things play out over the next several weeks. But you can follow this, by the way, and the Gallop website has a great feature, Election 2008, and it gives a breakdown of candidate support for a variety, a whole variety of different demographic characteristics every week. They do a weekly compilation, and of course it's based on a very large number of interviews. You can see here the Republicans already lined up solidly behind McCain, even before Sarah Palin came on the scene, so it's hard for me to imagine that Sarah Palin really is going to produce a whole lot more unity among Republicans beyond what we see here. Will it increase turnout among Republicans? Maybe, I mean, you know, but I'm a little skeptical about that because everything we know says Republicans vote anyway, you know, whether they like their party's candidate or not. Independents, you

know, splitting pretty evenly. Democrats -- so the shift you see here is after the Democratic Convention, then you see the Democratic vote consolidating a little bit more behind Obama. A little bit less than the week, you know, that includes the Republican Convention. I'm sure it will be a little bit less still, perhaps, or maybe independents shifting toward McCain. That will be interesting to see what happens. But from what we know about the trend in party identification, you know if Obama can consolidate the Democratic vote to the point where it has been, you know, in other recent elections, it should be very difficult for John McCain to overcome the Democratic advantage in party identification.

Finally, just reinforcing a point that Larry made, he showed the consistency between 2000 and 2004. So I prepared a little figure here on page 12. This shows the relationship between the Bush margin in the 2004 election and McCain's margin versus Obama in 2008 based on polls. This is based on the pollster.com, which is a wonderful website, their trend analysis of each state and where each state is. Now I did this yesterday morning before -- yesterday about thirty state polls came out -- so some of these dots may move a little bit, but not that much. And I think when all is said and done -- the takeaway point here is that it's a very very strong relationship. It's not quite as strong as the relationship in Larry's graph, but that's because these are polls, and some of these polls are old, and in some of these states, we have only one or two polls. Delaware, for

example, there was only one poll that was done in like February, and it showed Obama ahead by 9 points. They haven't bothered -- nobody's bothered to poll Delaware again. They polled Alaska several times. I don't know why they haven't polled Delaware. Delaware has more people than Alaska, not many, but it does have more. They're a lot more concentrated is what they are. Actually --

SPEAKER: They don't have their own media market!

MR. ABRAMOWITZ: Yeah, that's right. But I think when all is said and done when we get the actual vote data, that that relationship is going to be even stronger. This is a correlation of -- for those of you into statistics -- of .92 versus the correlation Larry showed you which is around .97 I think. But this is still pretty impressive, considering we've got totally different candidates. So again, the point here is that partisanship -- the reason for this is partisanship, you know that these states don't move very much. So it doesn't mean the election is going to come out the same, it just means that one can predict where each state is going to come out with a high degree of accuracy based on how it voted in the previous election. So I think I'll stop there.

MR. MANN: Alan, thank you very much. Now we turn to John Aldrich who will take the, you know this broad view of partisanship and link it to the candidates and the strategies. John?

MR. ALDRICH: Thank you. I appreciate very much being invited here. I'm glad to get something in about 2008 because only two months from today we'll be in the 2012 presidential nomination campaign. I have four or five points that I'd like to make, two of them interesting, maybe --

MR. MANN: And who's going to judge which --

MR. ALDRICH: We'll hold an election in about two months! The first one I'd like to point out is that we sort of think as our baseline '50s, '60s, '70s. In terms of partisanship, this was a historically anomalous period. We start there because when we teach elections, elections started in 1952 because that's when the American National Election Studies was first conducted, and Congress started in 1953 or 1954 because that's when *CQ Weekly Reports* first started putting out data for us. But in fact those were an anomalous period on either side. The '50s, '60s, and '70s were a time when party -- call them party elites -- office holders, candidates, the chief parts of the organization, the high-level activists, were sending out -- were a more diverse group within each party than either before or since. This was particularly true on the Democratic side. You had the Democratic majority, but you had, you know, two very clearly different signals coming out about what it meant to be a Democrat, and how they're going to say vote in Congress. All right? So you had Southern Democrats on the one hand, and you had, you know, a chunk of

the Northern Democrats on the other. Republicans also were divided into Main Street and Wall Street: Taft and Dewey, and then Taft and Rockefeller Republicans. So that from a voter's perspective, the party was sending out a diffuse signal that it was not clear what you were getting a priori from knowing someone was a Democrat or Republican as a candidate for voting behavior as an office holder for evaluating them. And the polarization, which has happened at the elite level, starting in the late '70s and build, starting to build up through to today, has meant that there's been a sorting out so that it's a cleaner signal for voters and so on to respond to. That was true both before and after this anomalous period. And a lot of the charts that you're -- that we've been walking you through are sort of reflections of the change from that anomalous signal. Now when those of us who are a certain age were in school and taking political science courses -- sorry, didn't mean to look at you Tom!

MR. MANN: It pursed a little! I think we're all at that age up here actually!

MR. ALDRICH: V.O. Key, Jr. referred to party identification as a standing decision. You would vote your party in the absence of the reasons to the contrary. Or Phil Converse referred to the normal vote as what happens with a faceless, nameless, issueless candidate were running. It turns out most of the time most of the candidates have at least a face, a name, or one issue, and so there's a way of -- and so that's just

a normal vote that can be deflected away. But when the signal is diffuse of what it stands for, then you get this anomalous behavior relative to all the rest of the period. It doesn't stand for very much. Now it stands for something. Right? And we have all these continuities across places. So I want to use that -- I think this is why partisanship matters more today for the voter because it tells them more about what the candidate's office holders are going to be doing.

I'm going to use this to make two points: One is that -- one concerns the presidential campaign, and the second is really a cautionary tale, that party's not everything and that -- straightforwardly everything -- and that concerns elections, remembering there is more than just a presidential election going on. The first point about -- is about McCain and Palin. It actually applies to Obama and Biden also to the extent it is a sharper and clearer right now. Their campaign message is reform and the effect of Palin in mobilizing the base. You mobilize the base and reform and do things differently. That is a potentially contradictory message. I say "potentially contradictory" because someone has to be effective in pointing out that it is contradictory. But you're either mobilizing the base to do what the base always does in the Republican Party or in the Democratic Party, or you're changing things around. You're either reforming or you're not reforming. And so it's a potential contradiction that they're trying to run on, and they will be successful in running on it as long

as nobody is able to effectively point this out at what the contradiction, not that there is a contradiction, but what it means. What consequences this would have that would matter to voters. Okay? So that's one aspect.

Second aspect, which is a cautionary tale that partisanship means an awful lot but not everything, is -- I'll use the example of my state, North Carolina, and whether it is a red or a blue state. Consider 2004, which is the last time we've had a presidential campaign where we can assess this. My forecasting ability is sharp for 2004, much weaker for 2008. We are known as a red state. We always vote in recent periods for Republican presidential candidates. While there's the occasional Democratic senator, it's occasional, and so far they have been one term in the recent period, and a majority of our representatives are Republicans for the U.S. House. Kerry said well, we're going to put North Carolina into play. We saw may be three ads in August, and then no ads. I got to go to a conference in Pennsylvania in 2000. It was the first time I'd gone -- it was October -- it was the first time I'd gone to visit a presidential campaign since I'd moved to Duke in 20 years. It was total silence; there's like no commercials. A few this year; hardly any last year -- in '04. They gave up because they realized it's not a state in play, okay? So, it's a red state. In 2004 they did better than they expected except that in all other elections at the state and local level, it was a surprisingly strong blue state. And it has been trending that way over the last 15, 20 years. Almost always elect

Democratic governors. In 2004 the State Assembly went from a -- the Lower Chamber -- went from a small Democratic advantage to a substantial one. The State Senate was actually tied and went to a clean Democratic advantage. My favorite specific instance is the person who ran on the Republican nomination for governor was a State Senator, young, articulate, ambitious, ready-to-go guy from the middle of Helms' territory, Jesse Helms. A part of the state in which neither Duke nor Chapel Hill -- UNC -- reside. And so there was an opening for the State Senate seat. It was won by the first validly gay woman legislator in the middle of Jesse Helms' territory. So, it was a very strong and trending blue. And so the question is what is it about -- if we're in a partisan, polarized period -- how is this occurring? And how is partisanship a guide to understanding the range of elections? Well we have it all geared up towards understanding national elections, national issues, the ideology. My interpretation of ideology is that it's what the parties tell us it is. During the '60s, whether it was going to turn out that civil rights was a liberal or a conservative issue or a Democratic or Republican was up for grabs. Abortion cut across both party lines. Eventually the parties decided to tell us what it meant to be liberal and conservative on those issues. So -- but those were all national issues. State -- so one of the reasons you can have North Carolina and a number of other states trending in one direction at the presidential level and the other direction at a state and local level is

that there are other issues. It's not very often that mayors of small towns lobby Congress for or against or thanks or no thanks to bridges to nowhere. Rather they are worrying about how that money ended up being spent building roads, schools, those kinds of issues, and so one thing is a different set of issues at stake. The second is that there are different mixes, of course, of sort of how liberal and how conservative people are even on your national issues. And that is to say there are different signals, even in a relatively highly polarized period, there are different signals being sent out by the parties and the candidates and office holders and the people involved in signaling what the party is at different levels and different circumstances.

MR. MANN: John, thank you very much. Okay, E.J., what does it all mean?

MR. DIONNE: Well, first I thought all those points were interesting!

MR. ALDRICH: Thank you!

MR. DIONNE: And also I want to announce that the Brookings/Emory/Princeton/Duke consortium has done a new study, which found that pigs have a favorable rating of 36 percent, but lipstick-wearing pigs have a favorable rating of 48 percent. And we will have a learned conference on the implications of this for the outcome of this election.

I am grateful for all those commentaries because the -- my theme, and I think all these commentaries point in that direction -- is we used to talk about blind partisanship, and now I think you can talk about clear-sighted partisanship. I think that partisanship is now far more coherent than it was 50 years ago, but I want to sort of tell three stories from each of the commentaries. I loved Larry's point about how we view things through a partisan lands-off, and my favorite example of this is the story of Mayor Daley in Chicago, the first Mayor Daley. Seeing somebody drowning in Lake Michigan, literally walking across the water, pulling the person out, bringing him onshore, and the headline the next day in an anti-Daley newspaper was "Mayor Daley can't swim." So, it all depends on your line of vision.

My favorite comment on ticket-splitting came from the great journalist, Richard Rovere, who used to write for the *New Yorker*, and he did a long interview with a taxi driver one day -- I'm always suspicious of taxi drivers when used, but I honor Richard not because of the taxi drivers, but because of the journalist -- he did this long interview with the taxi driver who talked about what a strong Republican he was, and this was in 1964, and so Rovere said I assume you'll be voting for Barry Goldwater? And the taxi driver replied, "oh no, sometimes you gotta forget your principles to do what's right." And I leave that with you because that is for me one of the most interesting ethical statements I ever heard, and I've

been pondering it for 40 years, and so I stick it in your head. Thomas heard me tell this story too often.

Alan spoke of Catholics being less Democratic, and I have always loved the story of Mrs. O'Reilly, a straight Democratic voter, being taken to the polls by her son who's become rather wealthy and rather more Republican. He asked his mom, "How are you going to vote?" She says straight Democratic. And he says, "You know mom, if Jesus came back to Earth and ran as a Republican, you would vote against him." And Mrs. O'Reilly replied, "Oh hush, why should he change his party after all these years?" And I think one of the keys to realignment is there are a lot of people in the country who think he has changed his political party after all these years, although the liberals are fighting back. A friend sent me word that there is a new button out that reads "Jesus was a community organizer and Pontius Pilate was a governor." And so we'll see how that works.

And I think our theme of the day is from Yogi Berra who said "predictions are really hard, especially when they're about the future." But I think this notion of rational partisanship is really important. John made the essential point, when you go back 50 years, just think about it. In the Senate, James Eastland and John Stennis, two of the most conservative members of the Senate, were in the same party as George McGovern and Ted Kennedy. Barry Goldwater and Norris Cotton --

anybody remember Norris Cotton? -- were in the same party, two conservatives, as Jacob Javits and Ed Brooke. This is a remarkable -- this is -- this doesn't happen much anymore. There are stray indicators, you know, stray focus on either side, but Southern democrats are far more moderate, in some cases liberal but mostly moderate, than Southern Democrats were. And there are very few progressive republicans anymore. In deed, Republicans can't even call themselves liberal Republicans anymore, and that used to be a proud term for a lot of people in the Republican Party.

We've spoken a lot over the years about how the South has realigned to the Republicans, and that's true. What we only started noticing gradually is that that Southern realignment has called forth realignment in the North. Put simply, the states that voted for John Breckinridge in 1860 -- Tom and I met commenting on that campaign -- are now Republican states and most of the Lincoln states, with a few exceptions -- Ohio and Indiana notably -- most of the Lincoln states are now solidly Democratic states. The map is reversed. I think it's my friend Dan Boltz at the *Washington Post* who first noticed in 1996 that a whole series of suburban counties around Philadelphia, around Chicago, basically through the Northeast, Midwest, and far West -- that had been loyally Republican -- shifted to Bill Clinton in 1996. The best examples being those collar counties Montgomery, Bucks, Delaware County around

Philadelphia, which were roughly 60 percent Republican counties. They were still Lincoln Republican counties, are now competitive in shifting toward the Democrats. They were part of Governor Ed Rendell's political base. So you have these -- this -- the first realignment called forth a second one, and that's part of the philosophical coherence of the political party. So of course people are more partisan, because partisanship is linked to a whole series of ideas and commitments.

I would -- I just want to take one small issue with Alan when he said democrats have moved to the left. In one sense that's true, if you take it, you know, in terms of which party is on the left and which party is on the right. I personally think that Jacob Hacker in his book *Off Center* makes a fairly persuasive case that Republicans have actually moved more to the right than Democrats have to the left. What's happened is that the republican left, which actually used to be significant, has now just moved entirely into the Democratic Party, but that's a quibble because I really don't disagree with what anyone else has said.

And I think in recent years these partisan trends -- oh, just for my other favorite fact about this realignment -- I'm from New England and I'm a Red Sox fan. In New England, it used to be a Republican region. Today there is one Republican, Chris Shays in Congress, from all six New England states. It's the solid North. And in my home state of Massachusetts, in 1966 of the 14 House members were Republicans.

Today it's 0 for 12. And that's a kind of extreme indicator of how this realignment is working.

Now I think having achieved this sort of philosophical realignment, there are forces at work that are reinforcing it. The first is a change in the structure of the media. I would make that first given what I do in one of my jobs. I appreciate Tom mentioning it. I have three kids and three jobs, and I hope to keep it that way until I get them all through college, but at these fine expensive institutions.

The structure of the press has changed quite radically since the 1940s and 1950s. The model was in that long period through to about the mid 1980s or early 1990s was of a kind of Walter Lippmann-style non-partisan press. Now we can quibble a lot about the meaning of the word "non-partisanship." There were papers editorially more liberal. I do think there was such a thing as a liberal press in the 1964 election. Barry Goldwater really did get a rotten press, but that was a long time ago. I think on balance the model was essentially non-partisan. What's happened since the late 1980s is that we have reintroduced something that we were very accustomed to the 19th century, which is a partisan media parallel to the old media.

Rush Limbaugh was the real pioneer in that respect. And in the '90s, conservatives colonized most of the AM talk radio dial with the exception of African American radio, which is the main competitor to right-

wing talk on the radio dial. That was followed by the rise of cable. First you had CNN, which was very much in the old model, but then you had the rise of Fox News. And it's no accident that Roger Ailes was an early producer of a Rush Limbaugh TV show. Rush isn't good in television, but he's very smart at what he does on radio. But then he founded Fox News. There is another partisan voice. And then the left struck back, largely on the web. And then I think at this point if conservatives dominate AM radio, I think the liberal left is stronger, though, not as dominant in terms of website. So what you have is this rational partisanship being reinforced by parts of our media system.

Secondly you have an age transformation. One of my favorite statistics is that in 1984, Ronald Reagan received somewhere according to the exit polls between 57 and 60 percent of the votes from Americans under 30 years old. In 2006 voters under 30 voted 60 percent Democratic. John Kerry's only age group that he clearly carried was voters under 30 years old whom he carried with 54 percent. You have a real generational change going on, and I think that if the young voters of the mid 1980s were a harbinger of a new conservative era, I think this new generation may be the harbinger of something different and something certainly more progressive. And so I think this age shift is very important, and we can debate what that's about. I think some of it -- and I'll close with this -- is a reaction to President Bush that's not at all unlike --

although more, although deeper -- than the reaction to Jimmy Carter's years as president. There's George Bush, himself, and I won't stay long on that because otherwise everybody will start yelling at each other. But I think Bush was a uniquely partisan figure, both on the negative side -- and those of you who read my column know what I think -- but also on the positive side.

That I think we forget how hard it is to hold together the conservative coalition. You know when you think about it, a Wall Street investment banker who lives on the Upper East Side of Manhattan has remarkably little in common with a white Mississippi socially conservative farmer. This is a very complicated coalition. And philosophically, you know, libertarian conservatives are very different from traditionalists or religious conservatives. And it takes a certain genius and a certain kind of personality to hold that together. The two people who were successful were Ronald Reagan, who did it all the way through, and George Bush, who did it at the beginning of his term but not at the end of his term. Of course, one of the striking things now is conservatives who thought he was the savior in 2004 now are saying well, he was never really a conservative. But nonetheless, Bush had I think, was uniquely well positioned to hold this together because he really combined all three wings of the Republican coalition in himself. He is an Evangelical Christian and he speaks like his language is remarkably evangelical. He

is a country club business person's Republican. And he is, as we all know, a foreign policy hawk. And so he was, all by himself, the whole of the republican coalition. Well all of that and then some other things called forth a naturally partisan response on the other side, so again deepening this split.

The rise of cultural politics, which has been mentioned in different ways by all of the panelists, I think has also aggravated this. I think John's point is very important, and we utterly forget that matters like abortion, for example, used to be bipartisan. There were strong Republican pro-lifers and pro-choicers and strong Democratic pro-lifers and pro-choicers. That's still more true than people realize. I actually went during the Democratic Convention to a meeting of Democrats For Life, an actually coherent group inside of the Democratic Party. But that issue and all of the cultural issues have become more linked to party in recent years. Just one quick story on that: I remember in my hometown of Fall River, Massachusetts, there was a Democratic Party boss who loved the 1948 election because in 1948 Massachusetts there was a birth control referendum. And the Republicans were for legalizing birth control, and Democrats -- a lot of Democrats were against it. They were Catholic. And this Democrat said what a great year. All the priests got everybody registered to vote against birth control, and then they came out and voted the straight Democratic ticket. And, well, you know, they carried

everything in Massachusetts in 1948. That's a big change from then to now. But I think cultural politics have deepened the sense of partisanship, and my own view on the Palin choice is that Democrats who highlight the cultural aspects of that or the religious aspects of that are actually making a mistake. And I think you can see in the Obama campaign's reaction. They don't want to emphasize that part of her. I think what Democrats want to emphasize is the question of whether she is actually prepared to be president of the United States. And so what we have now are philosophically coherent parties. Now are we in the middle of realignment? Until the last two weeks, it appeared very strongly that we were in the middle of a partisan realignment. And, you know, we can talk about sort of what's happened to the campaign in the discussion period. Certainly the makings of a partisan realignment are there. My friend, David Winston, a very smart republican pollster -- he and I get together regularly to see which one of us is going off the rails, and it's a very helpful dialogue that we have. David one day said something I thought was quite brilliant. And he said that for most voters, ideologies are not really a collection of ideas. Ideologies are tools, and voters will pick the tools or tool kit that they think solves -- might solve the problems that they face at a given moment. When the country voted for Ronald Reagan in 1980, it wasn't that there was this enormous shift to the right philosophically. There wasn't. There's no evidence from the polling that supply-side

economics suddenly became popular on Election Day in 1980. It was that voters sensed that things were going wrong under Jimmy Carter. That got connected to the Democratic Party and to liberalism even though I think it's highly debatable whether Jimmy Carter was a liberal. I think he disputed it himself. And voters said all right, we're going to try this other package and see if it works. And through most of the 1980s there were a lot of bumps, but it tended -- things looked better in 1984 than they did in 1980. And a lot of the underlying issues the country still hadn't moved sharply to the right, but this tool kit looked better. I think we are in exactly the opposite situation at the moment. The conservative tool kit looks very rusty on issues ranging from the decision to go to war in Iraq to the handling of Katrina to the effect of tax cuts for the wealthy on the broader economy, and I think voters are very open to trying a different tool kit.

And so I'll close with two metaphors: One comforting to Democrats, the other comforting to republicans. I think the popular metaphor among Democrats right now is to the 1980 election. The election stayed close, close, close, close until the last debate when Ronald Reagan persuaded swing voters that he wouldn't blow up the world, that he was a safe choice, and there was a huge shift to Reagan. Some of this is debatable. I personally believe that the polling indicates strongly that there really was a Reagan tide in the last, you know, week or five days of that election and it was voters who really wanted to change,

but finally trusted Reagan enough to give him the shot. I think the same could be true in this election. That the election will look close, close, close, but that if Obama succeeds in persuading doubtful voters that he's safe enough, there's an opportunity to have Obama win by more than the narrow margin you see in the polls. And there are things operating against that, but we can get to that in the discussion.

I think the comforting example for Republicans is 1976. Jimmy Carter emerged from his convention with a lead -- what was it, guys, like 30 points in his -- in the convention. And all the way through the campaign -- and remember, this is a post-Watergate election. The Republicans are deeply unpopular. But there are two important things. One is Gerald Ford was not Richard Nixon, and Gerald Ford spent the whole campaign raising doubts about Jimmy Carter. Jimmy Carter won by a couple of percentage points in the end, and might have lost that election if Gerald Ford hadn't decided that Poland was a free country in the middle of the last debate. And so I think the Gerald Ford model is the John McCain model, and the Ronald Reagan model is the Barrack Obama model. And I have a hunch that which model you lean toward depends entirely on partisanship, which reinforces all of the themes that this panel has just made. Thank you very much.

MR. MANN: E.J., thank you very much. I'm going to turn to your questions after I ask each of our panelists to give a short response to

the following question that at least occurred to me in listening to all the presentations. If one considers the partisanship in the '50s, '60s, '70s versus partisanship in 2008, we have a Democratic advantage, but a much smaller one now than in the past. But at the same time considerably less partisan defection in voting patterns. The parties -- the Democratic Party in particular -- are much more unified. We know that the topic of our next seminar, the fundamentals, the economy, the war, the reputation of the incumbent president, all work to the Democrats' advantage. Given this set of considerations, is there sufficient room in this partisan structure for McCain -- the McCain/Palin ticket -- to overcome the partisan advantage, the strong headwinds blowing against the Republican Party sufficient to win the election? So let's begin with Alan.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ: Well I would say it's possible because the party balance is still fairly close. And again, as I mentioned earlier, you have to discount the advantage that, you know, we see in the polls for Democrats -- even before the Republican Convention, the advantage the Democrats had among every -- eligible voters, and even perhaps among registered voters a little bit. That advantage in the actual electorate is likely to be smaller although, you know we don't know how it's going to play out with probably a very high turnout election. And a lot of mobilization going on that I know you're going to be talking about in the future, and this huge mobilization going on in this election. That's another

big kind of unknown here that I think is -- you know, we're looking at this election here through this cloudy glass, and I have a feeling that the turnout is going to be much higher than we had even last time. I know that there's a tremendous mobilization effort going on even in my state of Georgia, which is not, you know, I think one of the prime targets for Obama, but -- you know so that could really change things, but, you know if you take the polls as accurate, the party balance is still close enough that I think it's possible if the Republicans can get, you know, a little bit higher defection rate from Democrats and can get a majority of the independents to vote for them. And I think that's what we're seeing right now. A lot of the national polls right now are showing a small McCain lead, and it's coming from mainly higher Democratic defection rates than Republicans, and it's coming from independents tilting a little bit more toward McCain in the aftermath of the convention. Now will that continue I think is, you know, in my opinion not that likely, but, you know it's certainly conceivable that that could happen.

MR. MANN: So it's possible, it's conceivable. Is it likely or unlikely?

MR. ABRAMOWITZ: I don't personally think it's very likely, but, you know, I'm not going to say it couldn't happen.

MR. MANN: Right. Larry?

MR. BARTELS: I think the Republicans are swimming upstream for the reasons that you described and others. I think there are two significant historical uncertainties that work in their favor. One has to do with the point that all of us have made in one way or another that each of the major parties is a heterogeneous collection of people with different interests and priorities. On the Democratic side, one of the real coalitional struggles has been to hold together within the same party. African Americans on one hand and lots of progressive and less progressive whites on the other hand, and the fact that the Democratic candidate this time is for the first time an African American will test the strength of that coalition in a way that it hasn't been tested before. The other issue is that all of the analysis that we've done and talked about with respect to the impact of partisanship is focused at the presidential at least almost entirely on situations in which the incumbent president or vice president was leading the party ticket. And now we have a situation where not only are the incumbent president and vice president leaving the scene, but they're not even welcome at the Republican Convention. And so the extent to which McCain succeeds in distancing himself from the Bush Administration and the record of the Bush Administration will be important in determining the extent to which he can manage the contradiction that John Aldrich referred to between on one hand trying to mobilize and energize the Republican base, but on the other hand trying to go beyond

the Republican base and appeal to independents by casting himself as something different than what the Republicans have been for the past 8 years.

MR. MANN: Thank you. John?

MR. ALDRICH: So I'd like to also make a couple of comments about race and this historical moment. It's very important in very many ways. I guess it was -- I guess E.J. who said that in 1980 people had to feel comfortable with Ronald Reagan's hand on the button, and they did with Reagan, didn't with Goldwater. In the Democratic case, they had to feel comfortable with Catholics. They didn't with Al Smith, they did with John Kennedy. Will enough people in a close election where independents, for example, could be enough to tip the balance either way, will they feel comfortable enough for an African American leader? And that's a very tricky -- difficult thing for us to be able to understand because most of it is sort of implicit in most people's heads, and they don't understand.

MR. MANN: E.J.?

MR. DIONNE: My colleague, George Wilson, said if Democrats don't win this election, they should find another country. There's something to that. When you look at the underlying structure of the election, it should be a Democratic year. The ideal Democratic candidate is a stick with a sign that says Democratic candidate on it.

Because if you ask voters simply in a generic way do you want a Republican or a Democratic president, at least until a couple of weeks ago, it was a very solid and consistent Democratic lead. I'm glad John raised the race issue because that is an imponderable, and it operates in an interesting way because I think there are -- it operates very differently among voters under 45 than among voters, say, over 50. And we don't quite know how much that is, but clearly, voters under 45 for a whole variety of reasons are much more comfortable with racial diversity. Now as I believe strongly that we are not a racist country A, B this is all operating at the margins because there are some people who may vote against Barrack Obama because he is an African American who never would have voted for any other Democrat, so in a sense those voters are politically irrelevant. The relevant voters are voters who might have voted for another Democrat and are somehow pushed away from Obama because of their racial feelings and that they live in certain key states. So we're actually I think talking about in terms of racial politics a small number of voters who either will or will not be significant, partly depending on these mobilization efforts because the electorate is going to change. I have no doubt that more young people are going to vote, not just because of Barrack Obama, but that's a -- there's a four-year trend now of expanding participation by voters under 30, and I have no doubt that there will be a much larger African American participation. I was down in North

Carolina and somebody made a very interesting point that in a lot of general elections in African American legislative districts there is virtually no opposition. So there is nothing in a local race to push African Americans to the polls. Well, there is at the top of the ticket this time. So and not only that, but you also have very active efforts to create a bigger African American vote. So there will be a kind of counterbalance to whatever racial voting there is. But lastly, you know, John McCain may be George Bush in the eyes of the Obama campaign in terms of his voting record and his views on a whole series of important issues, but it is important that biologically he is not George Bush, and Bush's name is not on the ballot. And that there was one poll I saw that Obama would beat Bush by 20 points, and so what we don't know is how successful McCain can be in disentangling himself from Bush. And he made a very audacious move -- I decided that McCain could write a memoir of this campaign called the "audacity of chutzpah." You know, he made an audacious move where he suddenly went from being the candidate of experience before the Republican Convention to the candidate of change after the Republican Convention. And either he makes that work or he doesn't. So everything underlying this election points to an Obama victory, and then you have all of these qualms and doubts and Democrats are such terrible worriers that they're going to get ulcers between now and November.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ: I can give you a statistic. On the voter mobilization stuff, I can tell you in the state of Georgia this year there's been an overall increase in registration of 9 percent, 6 percent among whites, 14 percent among African Americans, 23 percent among this "other" category which is a combination of Hispanic, Asian, whatever. And looked at slightly differently, 41 percent of the new -- the increase in registered voters coming from African Americans in the state of Georgia, over half is coming from non-whites in the state of Georgia. Thirty-seven percent is from under 30, voters under 30. So I mean if that's any indication of what's going on, you know, I think that we are going to see a different, a somewhat different, electorate.

MR. DIONNE: By the way, I want to plug a chart that you can find on the web that Alan did because it's a chart to ease everybody's conscience and worries where there was all this -- well, he labels the charts. One was the Gallop poll as reported. The other was a rolling 10-day average on the Gallop poll numbers. If you just looked at sort of day-to-day reports, it looked like a nervous stock market, up and down and up and down and up and down. Alan wrote this wonderful caption that said you know, "oh Obama's going to win, whoops, we should have nominated Hillary," oh everything's fine if you just went by that. When you did the 10-day average, the line was virtually flat. It was a 4-, 3- to 4-point Obama lead through the entire period. And I think one of the really interesting

questions will be after all of this fluctuation with the two conventions, you know, will it be a permanent kind of gain for McCain or will we go back to what had been the norm almost all year?

MR. ABRAMOWITZ: And the other part I make to people about the polls is that if you go back and look at -- you talk about 1980 -- actually in 1980, even in the final Gallop poll before the election, Carter was only trailing Reagan by 3 points, and Carter was leading Reagan in the final *Washington Post* poll that year. And in 2000, 10 days before the election the Gallop tracking poll had George Bush leading Al Gore by 12 points, okay, 12 points. So, you know, I -- don't take these things too seriously.

MR. DIONNE: At the *New York Times* where I was working, I worked on polling. We only had Reagan -- I think we had Reagan winning by 1 point, and we went back and re-interviewed everybody after the election to figure out what happened here. And there were -- what happened -- one of the things that happened is a significant number of the Carter voters ended up not voting and that was part of it. And you wonder, by the way, whether -- I don't recall whether a lot of them were in the West who happened to have the election decided before they got a chance to go to the polls. But there was clearly some disaffection and there was some switching, so I think we ended up explaining about 8 of 10 points or something, you know, in this way. But it does show how, you

know, either polls can be wrong or they can be right, but not be -- not right at the moment and not match the election results. Pollsters always say the latter, and most everybody else says the former.

MR. MANN: Okay, I paid for this microphone and I'm going to use it. I have listened to my esteemed colleagues, and I think all of us have and we've learned something -- a good deal. It doesn't necessarily carry us to sort of a definitive conclusion, but I thought they were a little, a little hedging in their bets, suggesting -- and for good reasons because of one, the open seat, it's McCain, not Bush on the ballot, and second, because of the race factor and the real uncertainty about how that's going to play. These are unknowns and imponderables, but I don't think what flows from the broader discussion is pure uncertainty about the outcome, and a belief that it's bound to be exceedingly close that is very much like 2000 and 2004. I don't -- that's a possibility, it's not necessarily a likelihood, and therefore I will give you -- I will go out on the limb more than my colleagues and say I think the preponderance of the arguments and evidence they have made, plus the additions, factors that I've simply put on the table that we'll be discussing in subsequent seminars, point probably to an Obama victory and a comfortable one. But it's based on two things that I've heard today in this seminar, namely can McCain separate himself from Bush while agreeing with Bush's policies on all of the matters of central importance to the public? Now just changing

physically may be enough, but here's where the second point comes in -- and, by the way, this really draws on John's point about base mobilization and a reform candidate. What does reform mean? It's in cullet, but what does it mean if it's not linked to altering the sort of the coalitions in support of policies that might touch problems that Americans experience and care about? That comes to the second point. The advantages that are there are only realized if a campaign effectively moves them to the center of a debate so that the public notices them and draws the very points of contradiction that John suggested. So my own sort of personal view is that the underlying substance behind the McCain/Palin ticket about reform is undermined by the substance of what they have in mind doing in that the Obama campaign over the next 5 plus weeks, if it is to be predicted based on what they have done over the last 19 months, will be focused on illustrating that point and substituting a reform agenda not based on some notion of getting rid of the bad guys and moving the good guys in, but focused in particular on issues that matter at a time in which the country is greatly stressed. If that happens and they succeed, my guess is these broad forces favoring the generic Democrat will be diminished in part by the uncertainty of the racial resentment backlash, but not sufficient to turn this into a dead heat election, and therefore the most likely outcome is a somewhat more comfortable election for Obama and Biden, but nothing approaching the kind of landslides that we had in a less polarized partisan

environment. So there you have it; someone out on the limb. We have no time, but we're going to take a couple of questions anyways. We've got a mike coming up.

MR. DIONNE: We talk too much, like Joe Biden, on this panel.

QUESTIONER: Thanks. Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. I want to put my question in the form of a statement and get reactions, if I can do that. And it is that the two factors that I think are apt to be most -- I have a sense -- that are apt to be most significant in this election are the debates and Geo TV, and Geo TV is another session. So here's the statement. That the debates are going to be more determinative in this election than they have been in past elections, and the closest models would be '80, but also '84. In Obama's case, the two issues that he must be successful on -- excuse me, this will not be about issues, but about character. In other words, you won't win because you were better on explaining the economy; that the people who have not yet made up their minds are looking at this for different reasons. They are looking at Obama with two question marks. One is, as John has suggested, about race, and the second is sort of that sort of seasoning strength. Is this guy seasoned enough? Is he strong enough? With McCain, and it's the '80 and the '84 debates. It's the '80 debate because he needs to assure the not-yet-decided voters that he's not a bomb

thrower, that he does understand the role of diplomacy, that we're not electing two hawks to come back to replace Bush and Cheney. And the second is what happened in the '84 debate, which is the question of age. Walter Mondale said that that moment in the '84 debate when, you know, the question of age came up and Reagan said I will not use the youth and inexperience of my opponent to partisan advantage. Mondale said that was the day I knew the election was over. So, anyway, that's the statement I'd just love to get some reaction to.

MR. MANN: Okay, who would like to jump in?

MR. DIONNE: I can be quick. As I agree with everything you just said with one caveat, which is I actually think it's very important for Obama to be much clearer and crisper than he's been about his economic program, particularly to swing white working class or lower middle class voters, basically economically distressed whites, that he gets where they are, he understands what they're going through and that they a. understand what he would actually do. He needs to be much crisper on here are three or four things, including the fact that he cut taxes for them more than McCain would, and that more generally that he can move them from here to there. And actually there's no one who did this better than Bill Clinton, so I hope in yesterday's session with Clinton for Obama's sake they talked a lot about how you send that economic message

because I believe that's critical to Obama's chances of getting those swing voters.

MR. MANN: John, are there debates in 2008?

MR. ALDRICH: Yeah, I think the debates have less effect in terms of convincing people where they stand, but it's to seal the deal. It's a make the sale, say, this is a person I can feel comfortable with for the next four years leading. And I suspect that's harder for Obama, that I think the worry about McCain as a bomb thrower I think is less than it has been in other times. And at least as far as we can tell, his -- I can never quite tell when he gets down to small and intense for, you know, an hour or so -- that he seems so vibrant and healthy that the age doesn't show up in quite the same way that it did for Reagan in going into that debate. There was a reason why it appeared there.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ: I was going to say that I think the character issue is going to play a role, but I also really think that the swing voters are looking to see which one of these candidates is going to be able to do something to address the real problems and concerns that we're facing now, you know, with the economy, with housing, you know jobs, I mean all those things. So I don't think those issues are going to be unimportant at all. I think they're going to be very important.

MR. BARTELS: There's a pretty strong historical tendency over the course of a presidential campaign for the polls to move in the

direction of whichever party is advantaged by the underlying fundamentals, and especially by the economy. So my guess is that if both candidates perform well in the debates, which I suspect they probably will, there'll be some movement in Obama's direction. But that movement will not reflect so much the impact of the debates as the debates as an occasion for people to focus on the election in the decision and come to the point where they're likely to come on the basis of the state of the country more than anything specific that the candidates say.

MR. MANN: All right. This is going to be our second and, unfortunately, last question. Thanks to Alan; he's got to catch a plane.

QUESTIONER: This will not be addressed to Alan. The question is about independents, even -- I take it that there are enough independents out there, I mean the third of independents who are really independent, to overcome the Democratic advantage if they swing Republican. So I'd like to know two things about the independents. One, a little bit more about the real independents. Do we know much about who are they in terms of knowledge level, for example, -- and I mean this not facetiously -- do they know that there's a Republican incumbent president and that one of the agents of change is actually a Republican; and secondly, how are they distributed in terms of the electoral map, that is, okay so, you know a third of a third is really independent. Is that evenly

distributed around the country or is there anything important going on in terms of the key battleground states?

MR. MANN: Larry, why don't you start on that.

MR. BARTELS: Yeah. One thing that's important to bear in mind and we've talked a lot about the increasing partisanship of the electorate, but when we say that, we really mean literally the electorate, the people who turn out to vote. And one of the things that's happened over the last 30 years of so is that there's been an increasing divergence between on one hand people who are intensely interested in partisan and energized and involved in the electoral process. But on the other hand, a substantial number of people who are kind of uninterested and much less attuned to this partisan conflict. My colleague, Markus Prior, at Princeton has a terrific book called "Post-Broadcast Democracy" that attributes that in part to the fact that there's so much more media choice now, so the people who are interested in politics as E.J. mentioned can spend all their time watching Fox News and listening to PBS radio and reinforcing their political views, but other people can spend all their time watching game shows rather than having to listen to the president give a speech or watching the evening news. As to who those independents are who are showing up at the polls, the most important thing to know about them is that they are less involved and less engaged and less informed, and so their behavior tends to be much more variable and much more responsive

to the short-term forces of the election year rather than being rooted in anything about their demographic characteristics or their own personal histories. So in Democratic years, they tend to swing much more vociferously toward the Democrats, and in republican years they tend to swing much more vociferously toward the Republicans.

MR. DIONNE: It's a really interesting question, and I don't know if we know -- I have never seen anything that suggests that the distribution of true independents is different state by state, but I could be wrong. There may be something out there that I've never seen. You know, it's always been my impression that Southern independents are disproportionately former conservative Democrats who are basically Republican, and sort of Northeastern independents are disproportionately former moderate Republicans who are now basically Democrats. But to me 2006 was a very interesting election because there were two things that happened simultaneously, which in a sense are the two things Obama needs to have happen. On the one hand you had a real mobilization of the Democratic base. Democrats voted 93 percent for Democratic candidates for the House. Now you say well, that's expected. Well, in 1980 Democrats only voted 80 percent for Democrats in the House. So you had a real consolidation of the base and traditionally Democratic groups became more Democratic, but Democrats also carried moderates and independents by about 3:2. Now, so if you think Nancy Pelosi has an

easy job, think about the fact that she's got a more mobilized base and a bunch of members who were elected by moderates and independents, and I think something like that model -- if Obama is going to win -- has to happen again in this election.

MR. MANN: John?

MR. ALDRICH: So there's actually -- so the distribution -- so the pure independents are so small in number that it's hard to get -- to know where they are. That's -- so along with that there's another, I mean, there's another factor that may matter because it was happening -- we want to know is if it's Ohio in 2004, where are the, you know, 2000 or 3000 people and that's really hard to -- so what -- there's another set of people and that's the people who might vote for Bob Barr as a libertarian, right? I mean, if it's really close, you only need, you know, a percent or two which is like what he's likely to get. And in this case they're more likely to come from Republicans than Democrats, the way Nader took more from the Democrats than Republicans. And then if it really really is close, it actually could be, you know, Barr could swing it.

MR. MANN: Well, obviously we could go on, and actually we will two weeks hence. For now I want to thank my co-director, Larry Bartels, and Alan who had to rush off to get a plane, to John Aldrich and my Brookings colleague, E.J. Dionne for a very interesting and informative discussion. We are adjourned.

(Applause)

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