

relection in 1996 and Republican reversals in Congress in 1998. But in the end, after all of the swings of the pendulum, it is conservatism in one form or another that has gained enormous ground. . . .

One of David Mayhew's most trenchant critiques of classic realignment theory is that it posited an inevitability to affairs that is simply not appropriate in a world defined by contingency. Who, after all, would have predicted September 11? That something resembling a realignment system can be observed is no prediction that it will endure and no guarantee that the process that brought it about is closer to its beginning than to its end. The future, if it can be seen at all, is best left to prophets. . . .

Politically, 2004 illustrated the outlines of a new electoral system, long in the making but now fully revealed. That system consists of a (slight) Republican majority, built on a reshuffling and rationalizing of party coalitions over several decades that has, on balance, favored Republicans; the ascendancy of a conservative public philosophy, which occurred hand-in-hand with the development of an infrastructure of conservative intellectual institutions; and the gradual rise of the new media, which fundamentally transformed the delivery of news and commentary in America, aiding Republicans in the process.

Any account of the rise of the Republicans must admit the importance of contingency. The GOP might still be the minority party, it could be argued, if not for vexing events in 1968 (Vietnam, race riots, and the rise of the counterculture), 1980 (stagflation, Iran, and Afghanistan), and 2002 and 2004 (September 11). But almost every majority party has owed much to events, many of them traumatic and unforeseen, which the public perceived that it handled better than its opponents. Where would the New Deal coalition have been without the Great Depression and Pearl Harbor, or McKinley without the Depression of 1893, or the first Republicans without Ford Sumner and Appomattox? In any event, if Republicans owed their political success after 2001 to September 11, it was largely because they had spent more than a generation establishing their bonafides as the national security party.

The 2004 election has a number of implications for the future. Republicans in Congress seem to possess a number of structural advantages that present a steep hill for Democrats to climb in their quest for a takeover. In presidential politics, the tide in 2004 ran in the Republicans' favor, making red states redder and blue states purpler. Bush's win was broad, as he gained ground in almost every demographic group. And, to a greater degree than at any time in recent American history, a president and Congress of the same party successfully pursued a comprehensive and

unified strategy that wove together the political, the electoral, and the legislative. . . .

A new system—the system of 2004—is in place, culminating a long process of partisan change. Yet even if Republicans gained ascendancy through a “rolling realignment” that resulted in an undisputed national majority in 2004, there can be no telling how long it will last. When Democrats looked out from the summit of their landslide of 1964—a victory much more impressive than the Republican win forty years later—they perceived an endless horizon of electoral success stretching before them. In retrospect, though, 1964 was the apogee of their power. They were undone not by the mechanistic workings of an inevitable cycle, but by events, their own mistakes, and a Republican Party agile enough to take advantage of those errors.

Someday, the reds and the blues of America in the twenty-first century will seem as quaint and odious as the blues and the greens of Byzantium or the whites and blacks of Florence. For the moment, red stands atop blue in the “51 percent nation,” like Hercules standing astride the world itself. Only Hercules has a narrow toehold indeed. Like a mythic Greek, Republicans may find that hubris and fate are their most threatening enemies.

## 75

EARL BLACK  
MERLE BLACK

From *The Rise of Southern Republicans*

*What was once the Solid Democratic South is no longer solid nor Democratic. Sibling political scientists Earl and Merle Black, experts on southern politics, dissect an important change that has been occurring since the 1980s. First with support for Republican President Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984 and then for Republican congressional candidates in subsequent elections, southern white voters now back Republican candidates more than Democratic ones. Professors Black find that the source of this “Great White Switch” was due initially to the issue of race and civil rights. Nowadays, the appeal of the Republican party for white southerners lies in its conservative party positions on issues like the scope of the federal government’s power, taxes, and family values. African American Democrats and moderate independent southerners still count, of course, and that’s why the South today is a*

*competitive, up-for-grabs region at election time—just like the rest of the nation.*

REPUBLICANS FROM THE SOUTH have transformed American politics. The collapse of the solid Democratic South and the emergence of southern Republicanism, first in presidential politics and later in elections for Congress, have established a new reality for America: two perennially competitive national political parties. Not since Democrats battled Whigs before the Civil War has there been such a thoroughly nationalized two-party system. The Democratic party has always been a national enterprise, commanding durable strength in both the South and the North. Traditionally, the Republican party's geographic reach was quite different. A broadly based *northern* party, Republicans maintained active wings in the Northeast, Midwest, West, and Border states but secured only a nominal presence in the South. Apart from the short-lived Reconstruction era, for many generations southern Republicanism "scarcely deserv[ed] the name of party. It waver[ed] somewhat between an esoteric cult on the order of a lodge and a conspiracy for plunder in accord with the accepted customs of our politics."

When the Republicans recaptured both houses of Congress in 1994 for the first time since 1952, they did not construct their Senate and House majorities in the old-fashioned way. Republican control of Congress traditionally involved a purely sectional strategy in which enormous Republican surpluses in the North trumped huge Republican deficits in the South. The novel feature of the Republicans' 1994 breakthrough was its national character. Republicans won majorities of House and Senate seats in both the North *and* the South, a feat they had not achieved since 1872, and their new southern majorities were vital to the Republicans' national victories. Across the nation Republicans as well as Democrats now realistically believe they have fighting chances to win both the White House and Congress in any particular election. Focusing on elections to both the Senate and the House of Representatives, this book examines the regional causes and national consequences of rising southern Republicanism.

It is easy to forget just how thoroughly the Democratic party once dominated southern congressional elections. In 1950 there were no Republican senators from the South and only 2 Republican representatives out of 105 in the southern House delegation. Nowhere else in the United States had a major political party been so feeble for so many decades. A

half-century later Republicans constituted *majorities* of the South's congressional delegations—13 of 22 southern senators and 71 of 125 representatives. This immense partisan conversion is our subject. Just as the emergence of southern Republicanism restored competition to America's presidential politics, so has the rise of Republican senators and representatives from the South revitalized congressional politics.

The old southern politics was transparently undemocratic and thoroughly racist. "Southern political institutions," as V. O. Key Jr. demonstrated, were deliberately constructed to subordinate "the Negro population and, externally, to block threatened interferences from the outside with these local arrangements." By protecting white supremacy, southern Democrats in Congress institutionalized massive racial injustice for generations. Eventually the civil rights movement challenged the South's racial status quo and inspired a national political climate in which southern Democratic senators could no longer kill civil rights legislation. Led by President Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas, overwhelming majorities of northern Democrats and northern Republicans united to enact the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Landmark federal intervention reformed southern race relations and helped destabilize the traditional one-party system. In the fullness of time the Democratic party's supremacy gave way to genuinely competitive two-party politics.

But if the old solid Democratic South has vanished, a comparably solid Republican South has not developed. Nor is one likely to emerge. Republican politicians hold majorities of the region's House and Senate seats, but their majorities are much smaller than those traditionally maintained by southern Democrats. Even more important, neither Republicans nor Democrats enjoy majority status among the southern electorate. In the old southern politics, whites overwhelmingly considered themselves Democrats and voted accordingly. Political battles in the contemporary South feature two competitive minority parties rather than the unmistakable domination of a single party. . . .

Modern competitive two-party politics is grounded in the region's rapidly growing and immensely diverse population. The central political cleavage, as ancient as the South itself, involves race. When the Republican party nominated Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater—one of the few northern senators who had opposed the Civil Rights Act—as their presidential candidate in 1964, the party attracted many racist southern whites but permanently alienated African-American voters. Beginning with the Goldwater-versus-Johnson campaign more southern whites voted Republican than Democratic, a pattern that has recurred in every subsequent presidential election. Two decades later, in the middle of Ronald Reagan's

presidency, more southern whites began to call themselves Republicans than Democrats, a development that has also persisted. These two Great White Switches, first in presidential voting and then almost a generation later in partisan identification, laid the foundations for highly competitive two-party politics in the South. Gradually a new southern politics emerged in which blacks and liberal whites anchored the Democratic party while many conservative and some moderate whites formed a growing Republican party that owed little to Abraham Lincoln but much to Goldwater and even more to Reagan. Elections in the contemporary South ordinarily separate extraordinarily large Democratic majorities of blacks from smaller Republican majorities of whites.

Yet modern southern politics involves more than its obvious racial divisions. The South, an increasingly complex society, is the largest region in the United States. More than 84 million people, three of every ten Americans according to the 2000 Census, now reside in the eleven states of the old Confederacy. During the 1990s the region's population grew by 19 percent, much faster than the increase (11 percent) that occurred in the rest of the nation, and its congressional delegation expanded from 125 to 131 seats in the 2002 apportionment. The South's population growth was rooted in the liberating effects of civil rights legislation and the tremendous expansion of the economy. As Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein have concluded, "The decline of the agrarian South and the rise of a modern economy grounded in manufacturing, defense, tourism, services, and technology has been, by anyone's measure, one of the great success stories of the late twentieth century—but in creating a more diversified society, the South's transformation made it difficult for Democrats to speak for the interests of all, as they once claimed to do." Whites and blacks born and raised in the region no longer had to leave in search of better opportunities in the North. Many individuals reared elsewhere in the nation and world—whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and others—now found the South an acceptable, even desirable, place in which to work and retire.

The rise of a middle and upper-middle class has produced millions of voters with substantial incomes subject to substantial federal and state taxation. Many of these upwardly mobile individuals, wanting to keep the lion's share of their earnings, view the Republicans as far more sympathetic than the Democrats to their economic interests and aspirations. Another major fault line divides white southerners who are part of the religious right political movement (strongly pro-Republican) from the much larger group who are not (slightly pro-Republican). And among whites who are not attracted to conservative religious groups, men are strongly pro-Republican while women are more evenly divided in their

partisanship. Thus economic class, religion, and gender also structure the social foundations of southern two-party politics. . . .

The unique characteristics of the South's modern House delegation can best be appreciated when set against historical patterns of representation. . . .

White supremacy was the undisputed political theory and standard practice of the racist white Democrats who ended Reconstruction. Violence, intimidation, and extensive ballot-box fraud converted a congressional delegation that was nine-tenths white Republican in 1866 into one that was almost four-fifths white Democratic by 1874. An artificially Democratic electorate replaced an artificially Republican electorate. There was nothing remotely "normal" or "constitutional" about the relentlessly undemocratic and morally corrosive mechanisms that restored white Democrats to their preeminence in the southern House delegation.

Although white Republicans (unlike black Republicans) could never be stamped out completely, the term "Solid South" accurately described the white Democrats' prominence in Congress. As the protracted agrarian upheavals of the late nineteenth century subsided and the remaining black voters were driven out of the political system, the southern delegation settled down to almost perfect white Democratic domination. Having eliminated their racial and partisan opponents from the electorate, racially conservative white Democrats chosen by racially conservative white voters easily monopolized the region's congressional delegation.

The Great Depression and New Deal maintained the lopsided partisan division of the southern House delegation. Outside the South the greatest economic catastrophe of the twentieth century revived the Democratic party and discredited the Republican party in many congressional districts. Because southern Republicans already hovered close to zero, in the South the Great Depression simply gave most whites additional reasons to hate Republicans and powerfully reinforced Democratic supremacy. Before federal intervention into southern race relations, congressional representation in the region amounted to a simple story of sustained white Democratic power.

Most of the white Democrats who served through the mid-1960s defended racial segregation and worked hard to prevent civil rights legislation. Gradually, however, as the older Democratic segregationists departed, they were replaced by younger white Democratic politicians who understood that cultivating biracial coalitions was essential to their survival. Many of the white Republicans who began to win congressional elections positioned themselves as far more conservative on racial issues than their Democratic opponents. Yet with widespread acceptance of the finality of

racial change, little remains of the overt racial rhetoric that often characterized the first generation of southern Republican congressmen. By and large, Republican House members from the South emphasize their economic and social conservatism. After federal intervention the gap between white Democrats and white Republicans began to narrow, but as late as 1990 white Democrats still outnumbered white Republicans by better than three to two.

Striking partisan changes in southern representation occurred during the 1990s. In 1991, following the last election based on districts established after the 1980 Census, the South's delegation consisted of 72 white Democrats, 39 white Republicans, and 5 black Democrats. Ten years later, after the creation of many new majority black districts, it included 71 white Republicans, 1 white independent . . . who caucused with the Republicans, 37 white Democrats, and 16 black Democrats. . . .

In the South the Reagan realignment of the 1980s was a momentous achievement. By transforming the region's white electorate, Ronald Reagan's presidency made possible the Republicans' congressional breakthrough in the 1990s. The secular realignment of southern white voters, chiefly involving conservative men and women, occurred in two distinct stages. Greater white support for Republican presidential candidates commenced in 1964, but the more fundamental Republican advantage in partisan identification emerged two decades later. The extended lag between the presidential and partisan realignments allowed Democrats to dominate southern elections to Congress long after federal intervention had ended racial segregation and started to destabilize the one-party system.

The Great White Switch in presidential voting appeared immediately after Congress passed and Democratic president Lyndon Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Republican Barry Goldwater easily defeated Johnson among white southerners. Since 1964 more whites have voted Republican than Democratic in every single presidential election. Similar changes in southern party affiliation, however, did not immediately accompany the white switch in presidential voting. Partisan realignments require political leaders whose performance in office expands the party's base of reliable supporters. Not until Reagan's presidency did more southern whites begin to think of themselves as Republicans than as Democrats. Reagan was the first Republican presidential candidate to poll back-to-back landslide majorities from white southerners; and his vice president, George Bush, captured the presidency in 1988 by running on the strategy that Reagan had mastered: attracting substantial majorities from conservative and moderate whites, while implicitly concealing the votes of blacks and liberal whites.

Important as his electoral victories were, Reagan's presidency had a far more crucial impact upon many southern whites. His optimistic conservatism and successful performance in office made the Republican party respectable and useful for millions of southern whites. Many of them, for the first time in their lives, began to think of themselves as Republicans. The Great White Switch in partisan identification created a much more competitive playing field for two-party politics, one that ultimately encouraged, expanded, and intensified Republican campaign activity for Senate and House seats.

The Republican approach to top-down party building in the South was modeled upon its successful strategy in presidential elections: realign white conservatives as a reliable source of Republican support and neutralize white moderates as a consistent foundation of Democratic strength. Reagan attracted a majority of white conservatives into the Republican party and persuaded many other conservatives to think of themselves as "independents" rather than as Democrats. The Republican president had a different impact on southern white moderates. He eroded their traditional attachment to the Democratic party and increased their Republican ties, thereby neutralizing a huge, longstanding Democratic advantage among this critically important segment of the southern electorate.

By realigning white conservatives and *dealigning* white moderates, Reagan produced a *partial* realignment of the southern white electorate. . . . "The situation was ripe for the culmination of the Republican southern strategy" emphasized [Numan] Bartley. The California Republican turned out to be the most popular president among southern whites since Franklin Roosevelt. Utilizing "anecdote over analysis," acting from "ideological principles when possible" but willing to "compromise when necessary," as Charles W. Dunn and J. David Woodward characterized his style, Reagan appealed to the emotions, aspirations, and interests of the region's conservative and moderate white voters. According to journalist Lou Cannon, who had covered Reagan's entire political career, "the ideological core of Reaganism" encompassed three priorities: "lower tax rates, a stronger military force and reduced government spending." These objectives resonated powerfully among conservative and moderate whites in the South. Deliberately avoiding any explanation of how his priorities might be simultaneously achieved, Reagan instead promoted "values that have a base in the collective subconscious of every American," according to Dunn and Woodward. Reagan "promised a new era of national renewal emphasizing traditional values—the dignity of work, love for family and neighborhood, faith in God, belief in peace through strength and a commitment to protect freedom as a legacy unique to America."

In 1980 the Democratic and Republican parties also differed in many important respects over the proper role of the federal government. "The Democratic party platform favored affirmative action, federally funded abortions, and busing, and it endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment to the point of denying party support to candidates who opposed the amendment and encouraging boycotts of states that refused to ratify it," Bartley noted, whereas "Reagan's Republican platform disavowed busing and abortion, ignored the Equal Rights Amendment, demanded prayer be allowed in the schools, and advocated family values." Throughout the campaign he emphasized "a visceral hatred of burgeoning federalism," of the ever-growing presence of federal laws, rules, and regulations in domestic affairs. "I would take the lead in getting the government off the backs of the people of the United States and turning you loose," promised Reagan. As a former Democrat who had switched to the Republican party late in his life, Reagan knew how to appeal to a southern white electorate that contained many born-and-bred Democrats. "Now I know what it's like to pull that Republican lever for the first time because I used to be a Democrat myself," Reagan would say. "But I can tell you—it only hurts for a minute."

Rising congressional Republicanism in the oldest regional stronghold of the Democratic party has reshaped the Republicans into a truly national party for the first time since Reconstruction. Not since Whigs fought Democrats in the 1830s and 1840s has American politics been based on a thoroughly nationalized two-party system. Because leaders in both parties can easily see ways to win or lose their House and Senate majorities, the national stakes of each election cycle are permanently high. A retirement here, an unexpected death there, to say nothing about short-term political trends helping one party or the other—all these factors contribute to the seesaw nature of the modern party battle. In its unmitigated ferocity contemporary congressional partisanship reflects the new reality that the results of national elections are no longer foregone Democratic victories or assured Republican triumphs.

Thus the South's political transformation holds extraordinary consequences for America. Old-fashioned sectional conflict has dissipated, but sectional considerations continue to pervade national politics through the conservative agenda pursued by Republican congressional leaders from the South. As it has been in presidential politics for some time, the South is now at the epicenter of Republican and Democratic strategies to control Congress. In order to comprehend national political dynamics, it is therefore more important than ever to understand the changing South.

76

## JOHN GARCÍA

From *Latino Politics in America*

*In his study of Latino gains in the political arena, John García bases his research on the 2000 election—and his findings are even more valid as the decade continues. His list of Hispanics in the House of Representatives and in the Senate ends with 2001 data, but it could easily be brought up to date, adding several more Latinos to both lists. As the Latino population in the United States has grown, so has Latino participation in politics. Both political parties know this, and both are trying hard to win Hispanic votes. García discusses the movement of Latinos into new areas of the country where their presence is significant in schools, in the workplace, and in politics. Surely, this is only the first edition of what will be many editions of Latino Politics in America.*

THE CLOSENESS OF THE [2000] presidential election, growth of the Latino electorate, notable partisan attention directed to the Latino communities, and more Latinos seeking elected office all provide evidence for the political gains that Latinos take into the new millennium. Amid another round of elections . . . at all levels there are important developments that Latinos can impact, as well as be impacted by. Both parties are vigorously contesting for control of both chambers of Congress; the latest round of redistricting opens more opportunities for Latino office competition; gains in naturalization and voter registration afford another chance to exercise political clout; and both political parties are continuing their targeted efforts to expand their respective Latino support. . . .

As already noted, gains in political representation, increased participation, and impact on the public policy-making process have been continuous objectives for the Latino community. Following the 2000 elections, there were high expectations among Latinos for gains in presidential appointments at the cabinet and White House staff levels. At this time, only one Latino (HUD Secretary Mel Martínez) serves in the cabinet, and Antonio González serves as special counsel to the president; there have been other Latinos appointed to various sub-cabinet positions, com-