

TRENDS IN AMERICAN POLITICS: THE FUTURE OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

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This short paper is an attempt to summarize several of the most important trends in American politics that relate to political parties and the electorate. In this period of rapid change, it is expected that political parties must also change or risk their survival. Some American observers have predicted the breakdown of the U.S. party system. Although this is one possibility, it is not inevitable. This paper examines several alternatives for the future of political parties in the U.S. First, trends that influence the parties are presented and explicated. Then, alternatives for changes in the electorate are examined and their potential consequences discussed. Finally, proposed changes in the parties in government and their chance of success are analyzed.

Trends in American Voting

Since politics is a dynamic process, it is natural that continuous changes and shifts occur. American politics historically has been characterized by gradual change and moderate conflict.¹ In the 1960's and early 1970's, however a series of more crucial and widespread changes occurred. Collectively they are referred to as the "New politics." While consensus exists concerning the presence of these trends, their consequences are less clear. All observers agree, however, that these recent tendencies are having and will continue to have a significant impact on the party system and the conduct of American politics.

Changes in Party Affiliation

Major changes are occurring in the long-term attachments to the political parties. These changes are reflected in two obvious ways: the weakening of party identification and increased ticket splitting. These trends combine to indicate that political parties as electoral organizations are progressively losing their hold on the electorate.

Loosening of Party Attachments

A very striking development since the mid-1960's has been the weakening of party identification. This is most evident in the increase in the proportion of respondents who fail to identify with either party. They instead classify themse-



ives as independent. Table 1 demonstrates the magnitude of this shift, It has been estimated that between 1964 and 1970 there were ten million additional voters that considered themselves independent. Since 1966 this has been mainly at the expense of the Democratic party although the gap between the parties has remained quite constant. It is also suggested that the potential for for further defections from the two parties is high. The Democratic party stands to lose support especially from southerners, Catholics, and younger voters. Republican defections will most likely occur among young, in the suburbs larger of the cities, and in the Northeast.²

Table 1
Party Identification, 1952-1972

	1952	1960	1964	1968	1972	Trend 1952-72
Rep. ^a	27	27	24	24	23	-4
Dem. ^b	47	46	51	45	40	-7
Ind. ^c	22	23	23	30	35	+13
D.K.	4	4	2	1	2	-2

*SRC data: Collected October or November each year noted.

^bStrong and weak Republicans

^bStrong and weak Democrats

^cIndependents and Leaners

More significant perhaps is the pattern of these defections. The greatest shifts towards independence have occurred among the younger voters. The data in table 2 illustrate that in 1975 almost half of those between the ages of 18 and 24 considered themselves independent. Although there have always been some generational differences, this large a discrepancy has an additional dimension. It reflects in part an inability of the parties to respond to the issues on which the young are especially sensitive. It is easier for the young to defect because their party attachment is not as well established.

Table 2
Party Identification by Age,
1975

	18-24	25-29	30-49	50+
Dem.	39	42	45	50
Rep.	15	14	21	29
Ind.	46	44	34	21

Source: Gallup Opinion Index, #120 (June, 1975)

Split-Ticket Voting

This weakened party attachment is also reflected in the recent trend toward splitticket voting. Prior to world war II over 80 percent of the electorate voted straight ticket (ie., for candidates all of the same party). By 1956 the percentage had dropped to 61. After the 1968 election, however, only 43 percent of those surveyed reported voting a straight ticket. Conversely, 54 percent of the voters split their ticket while 3 percent did not know.³ Observers indicate that the proportion of split-ticket voters was even higher in 1972, especially Democrats splitting away from McGovern. Behaviorally as well as psychologically, American voters are likely to support neither party fully. It is also significant that those found to split tickets regularly tend to be slightly younger, more educated, more white collar, and more suburban than the average middle class voter.⁴

Orientation Towards Citizen Participation

Americans are presently in a period of activism distinguished by a desire for democratic participation both within and outside of the political parties. A growing proportion of the electorate is demanding a more direct and continuing role in politics than parties have offered. It has become obvious that the American parties are inherently slow in reflecting and responding to these new demands. The status quo, coalition nature of the parties requires that a great degree of consensus be articulated before alterations in structure and operations result. Although these new demands for a direct active role in the decision-making process are not new to American politics, their magnitude has increased greatly in the last decade.

This new orientation towards participation has resulted in many internal party modifications in areas such as delegate selection and campaign conduct. These reforms, however, are not likely to remove the more underlying frustrations of the electorate with the present party system. The trend toward political activity outside the party is continuing. Many people also are willing to use both parties to serve their own ends whether these ends be issue-oriented or ideologically-based.⁵

Increased Issue Awareness

At the same time, there has been a shift upward in voter awareness. Recent evidence suggests that voters are more issue-oriented and also perceive

a greater difference between the parties on major issues. They are increasingly likely to identify the Democratic party as more favorable to federal government action in program areas including social welfare and racial integration. If this trend were operating in isolation, the perceived distinctions between the parties on the issues coupled with the increased issue awareness of the electorate would tend to lead to increasingly structured party voting. The trends in voter affiliation, however, suggest this is not the case.

Party as Governing Organization

While trends of ticket splitting, independence in voting and issue awareness are evident in the electorate, new patterns are also developing in the parties in government. The movement toward the independence of elected officials from the party organizations is accelerating. The new style of campaigning with emphasis on the electronic media and professional management firms has reinforced the effect of direct primaries and freed those in office from the control of political parties.⁶ This has resulted in more personal appeals from the candidate without passing through the party. Partly as a result, party cohesion is very low in congress. Roll call votes where a majority of one party opposes a majority of the other are at an all time low.

The trend toward executive-centered parties has increased in recent years.⁷ The presidents increasingly dominate the national party organizations of their particular party and also control their congressional party by initiating most of the legislation. Presidents also serve as symbolic leaders of the party and formulate party programs and policy initiatives. Within the states, the more active governors have roles similar to the president at the national. As chief executives they have tended to accumulate much authority as policy spokesmen for their parties⁸. Many state parties have become as personalized and dependent on the governor as the national parties are on an individual president.

Electoral Organization Trends

The trends relating to the party identification and to the parties in Congress have been crucial to the party organizations. There have been several other trends which more directly relate to the organizations. Continued efforts at reform of the party organization are evidenced within both parties. These reforms have tended to weaken the state parties by applying national party standards. Concurrently, the increase in the number of presidential primaries has

deprived the state leaders of much authority in selecting delegates to the national conventions.

The recruitment process too tends to be undergoing a major change. Incentives of patronage and preferments on which the parties at one time could depend to recruit their activists have been eliminated by administrative reforms such as civil service. Non-material incentives have become common and necessary. These new incentives are generally ideological or issue-oriented and result in a new type of party activist. These contemporary activists tend to be more idealistic and oriented towards direct participation in the decision-making process. They are generally better educated and are not satisfied with the traditional roles of party workers. Their rewards are based on principles and policy programs rather than on patronage or favors. These activists increasingly tend to reject the traditional party beliefs of compromise, negotiation and pragmatism. This trend has led, not only to a very different kind of party worker, but also to a less flexible type of party leadership.

Finally, the trend in campaigns is worth noting. Since 1952 when Dwight Eisenhower used television to nullify the party organization advantages of Robert Taft, the electronic media have become crucial political factors. Candidates are able to appeal directly to the electorate without utilization of the party structure. Reinforcing this influence is the new technology and management of campaigns which also displaces the party as an intermediary electoral organization. This trend has led Joseph Napolitan to note that political parties are obsolete, replaced by the new technology and professional management teams: "The advent and broadening of the mass media has meant the slow demise of party organization."⁸ The parties themselves though battling it for years are increasingly dependent on professional consultants and management personnel.⁹

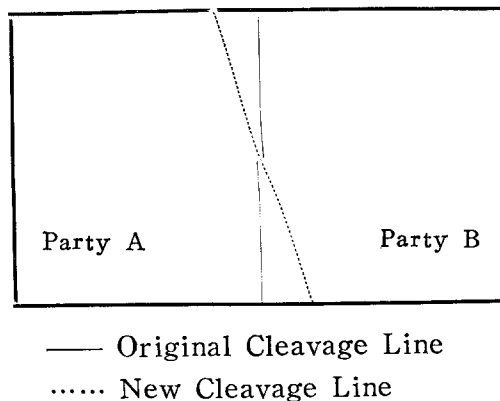
Summary

There are many trends in current American politics influencing the future of political parties. These trends affect every aspect of the parties and the American party system. Not all these tendencies are pushing in the same direction, nor are they of equal and consistent magnitude throughout the country. Although research on some of these trends is sparse there is general agreement as to their presence. A major question here is what impact these trends are having or will have on the party system. In order to attempt an answer, several concepts potential change are here analyzed. The first is the concept of party realignment.

Party Realignment

When discussing party realignment, most political scientists are concerned with shifts in party identification of voting blocs from one party coalition to another. The basic cleavages in the electorate are altered, resulting in a rearrangement of the elements within each coalition. Certain voting blocs that generally supported one party prior to realignment now support the other. Figure 1 illustrates this alteration of the basic cleavages and the resulting new pattern of support. If the whole rectangle represents the electorate, the original cleavage line defines the composition of the parties prior to realignment. The new cleavage line resulting from party realignment cuts into both original coalitions resulting in shifts not only of individuals, but also of elements of the original coalitions. This example indicates that many elements in each coalition might not be affected by the realignment or might themselves be divided and not easily placed in either coalition.

Figure 1
Hypothetical Shift in Basic Electorate Cleavages

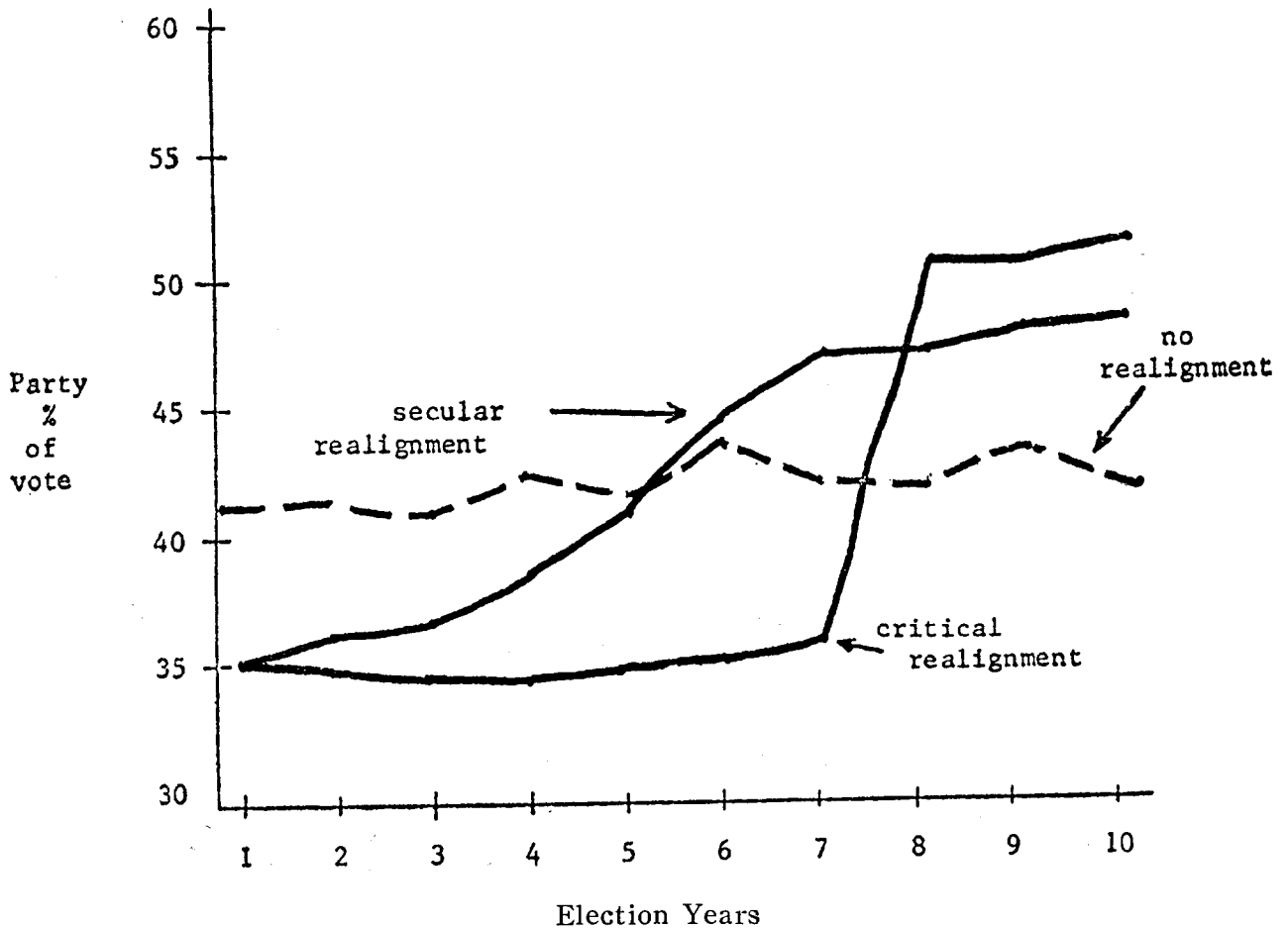


Party realignment might come about in two distinct ways but it is probably some combination of them. Secular realignment is a gradual long-term alteration in party attachment. It results from cumulative social trends occurring over a series of elections. Social mobility, urbanization, increased education, generational changes, and demographic modifications, lead to shifting party attachments which over time modify the relative strengths of the parties. In secular realignment there is no sudden or sharp redistribution of party strength, although a crucial change in the composition of party support is occurring. The result of

these gradual and many times imperceptible processes is a new party alignment. Secular realignment usually includes countervailing movements across the cleavage lines, but only its cumulative effect is apparent. Figure 2 represents a hypothetical secular realignment of party strength.

Figure 2

Hypothetical Secular and Critical Realignment



Realignment can also take place through a sharp and durable shift in the electoral strength of the parties. A critical election or series of critical elections can lead to a decisive alteration of electoral cleavages. Large numbers of party identifiers of one or both of the parties might be shaken permanently from this attachment. In the past, critical elections have resulted from major

economic and political upheavals such as the Great Depression or the Civil war. The critical election or elections are marked by a broad depth and intensity of electoral involvement. The resulting realignment made evident in the vote persists at least for several succeeding elections. Even in the most critical of these realignments only a portion of the electorate is involved. Remnants of the old party alignment always survive.¹⁰

It is most probable that there is not generally one critical election which results in party realignment as pictured in Figure 2. Secular realignment is more common than these isolated critical elections or political transformations. The most critical election probably represents a break in electoral continuity but does not result in a complete establishment of a new durable party alignment. Elections prior to the realignment are uneven and ambiguous and generally blend together. Elections succeeding the critical election serve to assimilate the various elements into the new coalition. Once a stable and persistent coalition of voters is established, party support from the elements of the coalition will remain consistent for a number of elections. Minor fluctuations that occur are most likely accountable to short-term forces and demographic shifts.

Party Realignment Possibilities

One of the most popular diversions of American political observers today is to suggest to what degree political parties are in a state of realignment. It has been over 40 years since a major realignment occurred and past realignments have come approximately once a generation.¹¹ Although the criteria for such realignment differ, the time appears to be ready. There are several possible realignments for the future: (1) ideological realignment of the two parties, (2) strengthening of the New Deal coalition, (3) an emerging Republican majority, (4) the emergence of third or fourth parties, and (5) dealignment and decomposition of the party system. Each will be summarized within the context of the current trends in American politics.

Ideological Realignment

In light of the new political awareness of the electorate and the increase in issue voting, some have argued that a vast ideological realignment is in order.¹² Normally this is presented relative to the party in government, although by inference it necessitates a similar realignment of the party electorate. This approach implies that only by reordering politics in ideological terms can the

parties really have a chance to govern and the electorate be able to make informed and rational decisions.

Generally such proposals have recommended an electoral shift around a liberal-conservative dimension. Elements of the Republican party would join with the more conservative elements of the Democratic coalition and form an ideologically conservative party. The liberal party would be composed of mostly liberal elements of the Democratic party supplemented by more liberal Republicans. Based on what is known about the electorate, such a realignment appears doubtful. Despite an increased ideological content of voting decisions, most of the electorate makes decisions in a less-structured manner. Also such a realignment assumes that all issues can be easily be distributed along one continuum (liberal-conservative). Research data indicate that American politics is much more complex. Furthermore, recent attempts by two candidates to purify the parties ideologically have failed. Goldwater and McGovern each received about 39 percent of the vote for their effort.

Even if the limitations of the electorate can be overcome, there are forces operating within each party that counter such a realignment. Few officeholders and party leaders are willing to surrender or risk the relative comfort of their present positions for ideological purposes. Although party identification has been weakened, there appears to be very little impetus for such a massive restructuring. Despite a potential for shifts toward the right or left within each party, it appears unlikely that new parties will be formed along strictly ideological grounds. American politics is too complex for such a realignment to transpire except perhaps in a very slow and imperceptible manner over several decades.

New Democratic Coalition

Revitalization of the New Deal coalition has been suggested as a possibility by some observers. This renewal would result in a reordering of the Roosevelt coalition. It is suggested that the ethnic-labor-Black coalition would be linked with the "new Democrats," the educated elite that leans toward the Democratic party on ideological grounds.¹⁴ A successful reconstitution of the Democratic party assumes many things. Among its assumptions are : (1) new Democrats are willing to link with old elements of the coalition and vice-versa; (2) the trend toward the weakening of party attachments is reversed in favor of the Democratic party; (3) Blacks are satisfied with remaining solely in the Democratic coalition; (4) the

Democratic coalition can successfully integrate the more issue-oriented individuals and groups under one party label without the reinforcing social-economic division that existed in the 1930's.

There are some factors favoring a renewed Democratic coalition as an alternative, despite the severe test it presently faces.¹⁵ First, when examining races other than the presidency, Democratic strength is still impressive. The Democratic party still controls about the same proportion of the vote for Congress, seats in state legislatures, and statewide offices that it did ten years ago. Second, it has been suggested that much of the current dissatisfaction with the parties is short-term in nature and will pass as leaders and policies change. James Sundquist sees a cycle back to the New Deal politics. He sees many parallels between the Eisenhower and Nixon years. Between these two periods there was a decline in the number of independents. Although a gradual decomposition of the two party system might continue in the short run, it eventually will be checked and even reversed in favor of the Democratic Coalition. Strengthening of party attachment along party lines similar to the 1930's is likely, according to Sundquist.¹⁶

Emerging Republican Majority

Kevin Phillips has become a spokesman for the realignment theory that suggests the liberal Democratic coalition has given way to a new Republican majority.¹⁷ This theory is based on the assumption that the fastest growing areas of the country are Republican and that this trend will continue. This new popular majority is white and conservative and based initially on the Southern Strategy. This primary stage is to be followed by the blue collar, ethnic, Roman Catholic phases in the North. Phillips argues that the Republicans benefit directly from the social issue.¹⁸ This conservative coalition strategy is based on the assumption of the "silent majority." It assumes a continuation of the ethnic and social bloc voting and the formation of new strong party attachments sympathetic to the Republican party. In the process it neglects the major political active groups which are on the increase and by default have moved to the Democratic party.

Some critics of this conservative strategy concede that it might succeed at least in the short run. A narrow-based coalition built on the politics of polarization could win elections though it would have a limited ability to conciliate conflict, and might lead to greater divisions in society.¹⁹ The Republican coalition, however, does not seem to be in the offing. After two presidential wins in a

row, the second in landslide proportions, Congress and the state offices are still held by Democrats. Also, although Democratic identifiers have been deserting or weakening their traditional ties, the Republican party has not been the beneficiary. Instead these people have become independent from either party. In light of Watergate and related events it appears unlikely that the law and order theme will benefit the Republican coalition as Phillips assumes.

Third or Fourth Parties

George Wallace's success in obtaining almost ten million votes in 1968 renewed the possibility of other parties developing to challenge one or both of the major parties. Until that election, minor parties had been declining in popularity as well as in number. The ability of Wallace to become a national candidate, coupled with the weakening of traditional party ties and the potential of electronic media, have led to much speculation concerning the potential for third parties in the party system or even the development of a multiparty system.

The presence of the strong Wallace showing is evidence to some that 1968 was a critical election or one of a series of critical elections. The trend toward more ideological and issue-oriented citizens and the volatile nature of the electorate, especially the youth, suggests a real possibility of third parties becoming more crucial forces. Despite this greater potential for third party development, there is little evidence to suggest that the major parties are threatened by a new party coalition. The challenge to the two major parties is generally limited to a third party's potential in deadlocking the presidential race. No third party presently appears to be systematically developing viable continuing organizations. The American Independent party under which George Wallace ran in 1968 in most states did poorly when Wallace was off the ticket in 1972. Also this party ran few candidates for other offices even in 1968. The success of the Wallace movement was not extended to the party itself. Attempts at third parties on a liberal end have never materialized and are presently little threat to either of the major parties.

Dealignment and Party Decomposition

Dealignment is a concept devised for reference to the reduction of party identification within within both parties. Dealignment is most evident in the large proportion of the electorate that considers itself independent. Though dealignment does not necessarily result in depoliticalization of the electorate, it

does have serious consequences for the party.²⁰ Walter Burnham contends that evidence indicating an imminent realignment of the parties might be countered by a shift away from attachment to either party coupled with a decrease in participation. He terms the result of this process decomposition of the party.²¹

The current trends, then, might lead to a politics without partisans. It has been suggested that the entire period since 1896 has been characterized by a decomposition and contraction of partisan structures and activities. The New Deal era is seen only as a temporary deviation from this trend toward gradual disappearance of political parties in the United States.²² Assuming the parties serve a useful role as intermediaries between the voters and government, elimination of political parties from the American scene could have profound impact on the conduct of American politics. It would most likely lead to a greatly expanded discretion in the hands of decisionmakers. Interest groups would have more influence because there would be no mechanism to aggregate countervailing electoral power. It would be difficult to imagine electoral politics as well as a democratic system without political parties. According to Burnham, however, the U.S. may already have moved beyond any possibility of realignment due to the advanced state of party decomposition.²³

Responsible party Government : Probable or Impossible?

One of most comprehensive and controversial proposals for change of the American political party system is that of the responsible party model. When presented in 1950 by the American Political Science Association's Committee on Political Parties, it created a series of debates which have lasted to the present time.²⁴ Perhaps no other report in American political science has ever engendered more controversy and criticism. The proponents of responsible party government, led by E. E. Schattschneider, argued that democracy in America requires two highly centralized competitive parties. Only by making parties responsible to their members as well as to the national electorate can democracy be furthered.

This Committee report presented a model in which the parties had centralized control and were responsive to party members. The Committee took the position that a responsible party system is the only institutional mechanism that is able to provide the nation with effective and democratic government. The report contended that of all the rival forms of political organization, presidential parties are the principal rallying points for the public interest of the nation. Centralized party government is not only perceived as the most practical means of organizing

democracy but also serves as a mobilizer of majorities and a protector of liberty. Party government is envisioned as synonymous with democracy by its major supporters.²⁵

Responsible Party Functions and Goals

Under the responsible party model three "indispensable" functions would be performed. First, parties would select the particular issues upon which the elections were to be contested. This would enable the people to express themselves effectively on these issues through their vote. Although this might, in effect, deprive the people of a chance to express their will on other issues, party government would enable the people to choose a general program from two alternatives. The assumption of the responsible party model is that all major issues would fall into one of two hierarchical orderings, each represented by one of the parties.

Second, the proponents of the responsible party model argue that it would energize and activate public opinion. The people themselves are not able to assume responsibility for expressions of their own will; some sort of extragovernmental agency is needed to activate public opinion. Under this model, parties provide such an agency. In addition to providing alternative general program choices, the parties serve an educational and motivational function.

Finally, the advocates of this party model contend that party government would establish popular control over government by making those in power collectively responsible to the people. This would be achieved by increasing party discipline and cohesion among the members of legislative bodies. Under this model an organized and unified group of public officials would be responsible to the entire electorate rather than each official being responsible to his particular constituency.

In order to bring about these functions and facilitate party responsibility, a set of specific reforms was suggested. The responsible party model would be designed to :

- 1) provide an explicit statement of party programs, priorities, and principles at least once every two years.
- 2) insure nomination of candidates loyal to this party platform.
- 3) conduct issue-oriented campaigns by stressing programmatic differences between the parties and making this choice to the voter straightforward.
- 4) guarantee widespread and meaningful intraparty participation through

democratic party processes and responsible leadership.

- 5) bind officeholders elected under the party label to the party program and to the party policies and priorities.

Under the responsible party model, therefore, parties act as intermediary institutions between the public and the decision-makers. Each of the two parties have a conception of what the public desires and each offers a program designed to satisfy the majority of the electorate. During the campaign the majority of voters in each constituency that its program will best fill the constituents' desires. At the election, the voter, although casting his vote for a specific candidate, supports this candidate primarily because of his party label and only secondarily because of individual qualities. Under the responsible party model, the party that wins the majority of the offices takes over the entire power of government. It also has full responsibility for the government's actions and is accountable for the programs it puts into effect.

Criticisms of the Responsible Party Model

This comprehensive report drew criticism from two general directions: those who found it undesirable and those who saw it as improbable in the American political system. Some argue that responsible party government weakens federalism by strengthening the national party at the expense of the states. They also contend that this model would lead to a more ideologically intense and ultimately divisive type of politics and also to the loss of consensus that now transcends party boundaries. The pluralist nature of the American system would be destroyed because the party would dominate political representation and control of the decision-making process. This new type of party politics would also foster a multiparty system, it is argued. Interest groups and other nonparty organizations are necessary inputs in a democratic society. Their role would be eliminated or at least minimized under this model. Responsible party government is further criticized as undesirable because it would destroy the deliberative and independent nature of our elected officials. Legislators would be forced to vote the party line and would cease to be free or dependent only on their constituency. There is evidence to believe that this would be unpopular in the United States. Only 23 percent of the population desires their representative to follow the party line against personal feelings. A majority reject the concept of increased party cohesion or party discipline over candidates.²⁶

The responsible party model has also been widely criticized as not being

realistic within the framework of American politics and society. These observers contend that the American electorate is not involved nor interested enough in politics to view it in programmatic terms. Voters simply do not view candidates in terms of party programs.²⁷ The electorate in the United States is not split along ideological lines nor along a consistent issue cleavage. Rather it is characterized by general consensus around a moderate position. To institute responsible party government would require a sweeping resocialization of the electorate.

The responsible party model also is considered improbable because of the diffuse, decentralized nature of the parties. This model does require a strict organizational hierarchy which is not available in the present political parties. It is argued that the institutions of American government would not facilitate the changes necessary. Federalism, separation of powers, and the electoral machinery (especially the direct primary) all tend to decentralize the political parties. Any attempts to change the party system would require major changes in institutions, which are generally supported by the electorate in their present form.

Most of the debate over responsible party government occurred prior to the mid-1960's. It is here contended that recent trends are modifying aspects of the party system as well as the conduct of American politics. Some of the specific reform proposals of the 1950 report have been made while others have been ignored. It is perhaps very useful at this time in history to reanalyze the prospects and possibilities of responsible party in the United States in terms of the trends discussed earlier in this paper.

Electoral Trends and Responsible Parties

At least one observer of American political parties contends that the nation is more ready for responsible parties today than it was in 1950.²⁸ A new issue awareness in the voters is supported in current research. The evidence demonstrates a clear distinction between the parties in the minds of many voters on the major issues. This is reflected in increased agreement among voters that the Democratic party represents liberal ideological positions and the Republicans conservative positions. This awareness of policy differences is a prerequisite for responsible parties. Although it is far from universal, the trend appears to be in the direction of increased issue-voting and clearer perceptions of party distinctions along issue lines.

Other trends in the electorate appear to be working against responsible parties, however. The trend toward independence and the corresponding weakening

of party attachment indicate that strong, centralized national parties might have a difficult time gaining consistent support. The rejection of parties altogether by portions of the population, especially the younger voters, illustrates another major obstacle to a model based on strong parties. The strengthened belief in participatory democracy, though one of the central tenets in responsible party model, does not necessarily reinforce this model. It might work counter to the hierarchical leadership element required in responsible parties. Although the electorate appears more ready for activist politics, it does not follow that this could be channeled into the two political parties.

Several trends evidenced in the party organizations also might increase or inhibit the possibility of responsible parties in the future. The tendencies toward stronger executive-centered organizations is a beginning in providing the kind of leadership needed in centralized parties. This has extended by the nationalization of politics in government. Past sectional distinctions have been minimized and the power of congressional enclaves is gradually being reduced by the spread of party competition throughout the states.²⁹

Developments of strong national politics also has been furthered by the weakening of local and state party organizations. Recent reforms by both national organizations have narrowed the discretion of the state parties, especially in their delegate-selection process. Although there is no guarantee that the decline in the power of state and local organizations will be effectively transformed into more centralized national power, this trend, too, is a precondition of responsible parties. Continued reform efforts might not proceed in this same direction, nor be successful, however.

While there has been a nationalization of political parties, this has not automatically led to increased intraparty cohesion. The trend discussed above indicates just the opposite, at least in terms of Congress. Party-line votes are more rare today than they have been previously, despite the increase in party competition across the country. As a result of the direct primary system, the new emphasis in campaigning, and the continued belief of the electorate in independent congressmen, officeholders are able to isolate themselves from the party leadership.

On the basis of these trends it appears unlikely that responsible parties will develop in the near future. While several trends signal a possible movement in that direction, other tendencies are towards the weakening of the party hold on both the electorate and the elected officials. The responsible party model assumes that both these elements will be highly attached and integral parts of the party

system. Although the setting regarding responsible parties might be somewhat more favorable than it was 20 years ago, the potential for fulfillment of this model remains quite minimal.

Summary : Reform and Change in the American Party System

This paper has examined trends and possible changes in the American party system. It is apparent from this discussion that the trends are confused and point in divergent directions. One certainty however is that the party system is going through a period of great stress and that some form of change is imminent. Between the two extremes of responsible party government and politics without parties are a multitude of more moderate alternatives to the present system.

It is expected that the political parties will respond to these trends as they have in the past. Moderate and gradual alterations in the party coalitions and the party system will be initiated to slow or reverse several of these trends, especially those related to party affiliation and voting behavior. Party reform efforts begun in the late 1960's will most probably be expanded into other aspects of party organization. Whether even maximum efforts by the political parties to reverse the trends in the electorate will be successful is unclear. Without such major efforts, however, it appears that party decomposition is the most likely of the various realignment possibilities. The trends indicate a continued dealignment of the American electorate.

Footnotes

1. See especially Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1972), chapters 21-24, for a discussion of conflict and change in the U.S.
2. For an excellent discussion of this trend, see James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1973), especially Chapter 16.
3. *Gallup Opinion Index*, Report No. 42 (December, 1968), p. 9.
4. Walter DeVries and Lance Tarrance, Jr., *The Ticket-Splitter: A New Force in American Politics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), Chapter 3.
5. For a good discussion of increased citizen participation and its effect on the political party system, see Samuel Lubell, *The Hidden Crisis in American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1970), pp. 39-68.
6. Dan Nimmo, *The political Persuaders* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1970),

- and Joseph Napolitan, *The Election Game and How to Win It* (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1972), present good illustrations of the new campaigning. Also see Robert Agranoff, ed., *The New Style in Election Campaigns* (Boston: Holbrook Press, Inc., 1972) for an excellent selection of readings on this subject.
7. Judson L. James, *American Political Parties in Transition* (New York: Harper and Row, Pub., 1974), especially pp. 247-251.
 8. Napolitan, *The Election Game*, p. 17.
 9. See Nimmo, *The Political Persuaders* and Napolitan, *The Election Game* for discussions of the dependence of party organizations on professional consultants.
 10. The most comprehensive book on critical elections basically from a historical view point is Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1970). The impetus for interest in this concept is found in V.O. Key, Jr., "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politics*, 17 (1955), 3-18. Much of this discussion on critical elections is based on these two works.
 11. It is generally agreed that the historical realignments occurred in 1800, 1828, 1860, 1896, and 1932, or approximately once every generation.
 12. Generally, these are the strong party government proponents that are examined later in this paper.
 13. The classic work on the complex nature of political behavior is Angus Campbell, et. al., *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960). They found that only 3 or 4 percent of the electorate saw politics primarily in ideological terms. Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in David Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 207, concluded similarly that only 10 to 17 percent of the electorate has a contextual grasp of "standard" (i.e., liberal or conservative) belief systems.
 14. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, pp. 370 ff. sees a strengthening of party attachment along lines of the party systems of the New Deal and not along some new lines.
 15. John S. Saloma III and Frederick H. Sontag, *Parties: The Real Opportunity for Effective Citizen Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 321-324, discuss these more fully.
 16. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, pp. 270-273.
 17. Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970)
 18. For a discussion of the social issue" see Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Real Majority* (New York: Coward, McGann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1971), especially Chapters 3 and 20.
 19. Lubell, *The Hidden Crisis in American Politics*, pp. 267-268. See Saloma and Sontag, pp. 324-332, for an indepth analysis of the emerging Republican majority.

20. Gerald Kent Hikel, *Beyond the Polls: Political Ideology and Its Correlates* (Lexington, Lexington Books, 1973), p. 90.
21. Burnham, *Critical Elections*, Chapter 5
22. *Ibid.* pp. 132-133.
23. *Ibid.*, especially Chapter 7.
24. *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*, Supplement to *American Political Science Review* 44 (1950). See Austin Ranney, *The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), for a comprehensive examination of the assumptions and possible consequences of this theory.
25. This is evident in all the works of E.E. Schattschneider, especially *Party Government* (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1942).
26. Jack Dennis, "Support for the Party System by the Mass Public," *American Political Science Review*, 60 (September, 1966), 606.
27. Donald E. Stokes and Warren E. Miller, "Party Government and the Saliency of Congress," in Angus Campbell, et. al., ed., *Elections and the Political Order* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), pp. 194-211.
28. Gerald M. Pomper, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System? What Again?" *Journal of Politics* 33 (November, 1971), pp. 916-40.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 938.

