"World War II and the Democratic Party's Ideological Shift"

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While running for president in 1968 George Wallace said that "there isn't a dime's worth of difference between the two parties." The American party system, he suggested, was rigged to present the electorate with two versions of the same thing. Voters simply were not offered any real alternatives. While it seems doubtful Wallace surveyed the literature before commenting, his argument was firmly rooted in a vast and time-tested scholarship. Indeed, it has often been said that ideological differences—at least any of a serious or fundamental nature—are lacking in the American political tradition. Louis Hartz argued that in stark contrast to European thought, a classical liberal consensus was firmly planted in American culture and that any differences were minor and played out within the narrow confines of that ideological box.[1] Historians such as Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Boorstin led the "consensus school" which articulated a similar lack of ideological conflict in the U.S.[2] Hofstadter touches on political parties in making his broader consensus argument:

> It is in the nature of politics that conflict stands in the foreground….The fierceness of the political struggles has often been misleading; for the range of vision embraced by the primary contestants in the major parties has always been bounded by the horizons of property and enterprise. However much at odds on specific issues, the major political traditions have shared a belief in the right of property, the philosophy of economic individualism, the value of competition; they have accepted the economic virtues of capitalist culture as necessary qualities of man.[3]

In keeping with Hofstadter's argument, American political parties have from the beginning been said to lack ideology.[4] Visiting in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville noted the absence:

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[1] Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955).
[2] Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Knopf, 1948). Daniel Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). More recently, but prior to September 11, 2001, Francis Fukuyama suggested the American consensus surrounding classical liberalism and democracy had become a worldwide phenomenon. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest* (Summer 1989).
[3] Hofstadter, viii-ix.
[4] For an extensive discourse on defining ideology, see: John Gerring, "Ideology: A Definitional Analysis," *Political Research Quarterly* 50:4 (Dec. 1997), 957-994. I adopt Gerring's conclusion that "the definitional core of the

> What I call great political parties are those that are attached more to principles than to their consequences; to generalities and not to particular cases; to ideas and not to men. These parties generally have nobler features, more generous passions, more real convictions, a franker and bolder aspect than the others….America has had great parties; today they no longer exist….[And even when they did exist,] the two parties were in agreement on the most essential points.[5]

Fifty years later a young Woodrow Wilson denounced the lack of "principles" in America's political parties.[6] These organizations had failed to live up to the "responsible party" ideal. Ensuing decades and the Progressive movement brought ideological leaders including William Jennings Bryan, Teddy Roosevelt, and Wilson to the fore and generated a scholarly enthusiasm in the "Philosophy of History." Yet the movement's partisan impact was blunted because Progressivism amounted to a square peg next to the Democrats' and Republicans' round holes and failed to map directly onto either parties' political thought.[7]

Contemporary studies have noted the lack of ideological parties in the post-World War II era as well. The ideological heterogeneity within each party partly explains this. The Democratic party was, at least until recently, comprised of conservative "Southern Democrats"

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concept consists of three intertwined attributes – coherence, differentiation, and stability….One might note that this core definition of ideology takes no cognizance of whether a party's views on political matters are distorting, dogmatic, repressive, self-interested, or reflective of a particular social class or social order." Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6.

[5] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 167.

[6] Woodrow Wilson, *Congressional Government*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885). Wilson, "Cabinet Government in the United States," *International Review* 7 (Aug. 1879). Also available in: Wilson, *The Political Thought of Woodrow Wilson*, E. David Cronon, ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill), 29-53. William Y. Elliot picked up where Wilson left off: Elliott, *The Need for Constitutional Reform* (New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill, 1935).

[7] This era's historians—predecessors to the consensus school—emphasized political conflict and the inevitable progressive force of History. See, for instance: Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1909). Croly, *Progressive Democracy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998 [1914]). Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan, 1913). Beard, *The American Party Battle* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929). John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957 [1920]). Dewey, *Political Writings*, Debra Morris and Ian Shapiro, eds. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993). See also: James W. Ceaser, *Nature and History in American Political Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980). Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

and liberals based in the northeast.[8] Similarly, the Grand Old Party had its "Rockefeller Republicans" as well as its Goldwater conservatives.[9] Additionally, the Hartzian conception of a vastly constrained ideological sphere has enjoyed a long life in the political science literature addressing the party system.[10] Realignment theory partially broke the mold by arguing that sharp ideological conflict has marked the several "critical" or "realigning" elections in U.S. history.[11] Yet once these generational electoral contests are over, American politics reverts back to non-ideological tranquility.

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[8] Nicol C. Rae, *Southern Democrats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Edward G. Carmines and Michael Berkman, "Ethos, Ideology, and Partisanship: Exploring the Paradox of Conservative Democrats," *Political Behavior* 16:2 (June 1994), 203-218. Byron E. Shafer, *Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983). Shafer and Richard Johnson, *The End of Southern Exceptionalism: Class, Race, and Partisan Change in the Postwar South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[9] Rae, *The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Republicans from 1952 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[10] Austin Ranney and Willmoore Kendall, *Democracy and the American Party System* (New York: Harcourt, 1956). Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957). Clinton Rossiter, *Parties and Politics in America* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1960). Samuel Beer, "Liberalism and the National Idea," in *Left, Right and Center: Essays on Liberalism and Conservatism in the U.S.*, Robert A. Goldwin, ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965). Robert E. Lane, "The Politics of Consensus in an Age of Affluence," *American Political Science Review* 59:4 (1965), 874-895. Robert Dahl, ed., *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). Everett C. Ladd, *American Political Parties: Social Change and Political Response* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970). Theodore Lowi, "Party, Policy, and Constitution in America," in *The American Party System*, William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). Theda Skocpol, "Political Response to Capitalist Crisis: Neo-Marxist Theories of the State and the Case of the New Deal," *Politics and Society* 10:2 (1980), 155-201. Walter Dean Burnham, "The System of 1896: An Analysis," in *The Evolution of the American Electoral Systems*, Paul Kleppner, ed. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981) 147-202.

[11] There is a vast realignment literature: V.O. Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politics* 17 (1955), 3-18. Key, "Secular Realignment and the Party System," *Journal of Politics* 21 (1959), 198-210. E.E. Schattschneider, "United States: The Functional Approach to Party Government," in Sigmund Neumann (ed.), *Modern Political Parties: Approaches to Comparative Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 194-215. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960). James L. Sundquist, *The Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1973). Walter Dean Burnham, "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," *American Political Science Review* 59 (1965), 7-28. Burnham, "Party Systems and the Political Process," in William N. Chambers and Burnham (eds.), *The American Party System: Stages of Political Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970). For critiques, see: David R. Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. Byron E. Shafer, ed., *The End of Realignment? Interpreting American Electoral Eras* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

Only in the post-reform era, have scholars consistently focused on ideology as a central component of political parties. Research shows that the parties have become more ideologically cohesive internally and, thus, more polarized comparatively in this post-1968-1972 period.[12] Congressional studies are paying more attention to ideology, many noting the caucuses' increasing ideological cohesion.[13] Elections and voting scholarship notes a revival in parties, partisanship, and ideological voting at the individual level.[14] Other scholars explore ideology and parties in the states.[15] Finally, work is addressing the role of intra-party factions,

[12] See, for example: Shafer and Johnson. Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," *Journal of Politics* 60:3 (Aug. 1998), 634-652. John Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Warren E. Miller and M. Kent Jennings, with Barbara G. Farah, *Parties in Transition: A Longitudinal Study of Party Elites and Party Supporters* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986).

[13] See, for instance: Nelson W. Polsby, *How Congress Evolves* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Gregory L. Hager and Jeffery C. Talbert, "Look for the Party Label: Party Influences on Voting in the U.S. House," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25:1 (2000), 75-99. Kim Quaile Hill, Stephen Hanna, and Sahar Shafqat, "The Liberal-Conservative Ideology of U.S. Senators: A New Measure," *American Journal of Political Science* 41:4 (1997), 1395-1413. David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Keith T. Poole and R. Steven Daniels, "Ideology, Party, and Voting in the U.S. Congress, 1959-1980," *American Political Science Review* 79:2 (1985), 373-399. Steven S. Smith, "The Consistency and Ideological Structure of U.S. Senate Voting Alignments, 1957-1976," *American Journal of Political Science* 25:4 (1981), 780-795.

[14] Larry Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996," *American Journal of Political Science* 44:1 (2000), 35-50. Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," *Journal of Politics* 60:3 (1998), 634-652. William D. Berry, Evan J. Ringquist, Richard C. Fording, Russell L. Hanson, "Measuring Citizen and Government Ideology in the American States, 1960-93," *American Journal of Political Science* 42:1 (1998), 327-348. Edmond Costantini and Linda O. Valenty, "The Motives: Ideology Connection among Political Party Activists," *Political Psychology* 17:3 (1996), 497-524. Edward G. Carmines and Harold W. Stanley, "The Transformation of the New Deal Party System: Social Groups, Political Ideology, and Changing Partisanship among Northern Whites, 1972-1988," *Political Behavior* 14:3 (1992), 213-237. Barbara Norrander, "Ideological Representativeness of Presidential Primary Voters," *American Journal of Political Science* 33:3 (1989), 570-587. Elinor Scarbrough, *Political Ideology and Voting, an Exploratory Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Teresa L. Levitin and Warren E. Miller, "Ideological Interpretations of Presidential Elections," *American Political Science Review* 73:3 (1979), 751-771.

[15] Joel Paddock, "Explaining State Variation in Interparty Ideological Differences," *Political Research Quarterly* 51:3 (1998), 765-780. Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, Jr., and John McIver, *Statehouse Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Kim Quaile Hill and Jan E. Leighley, "Party Ideology, Organization, and Competitiveness as Mobilizing Forces in Gubernatorial Elections," *American Journal of Political Science* 37:4 (1993), 1158-1178. Paddock, "Inter-Party Ideological Differences in Eleven State Parties: 1956-1980," *Western Political Quarterly* 45:3 (1992), 751-760. Paddock, "Beyond the New Deal: Ideological Differences between Eleven State Democratic Parties, 1956-1980," *Western Political Quarterly* 43:1 (1990), 181-90. Robert M. Entman, "The Impact of Ideology on Legislative Behavior and Public Policy in the States," *Journal of Politics* 45:1 (1983), 163-182.

considering, among other things, their ideological influences on the larger parties.[16] John Gerring aptly sums up this literature as such: "To put it baldly, the premise of nonideological parties no longer seems to fit the facts as we know them. Indeed, contemporary work by political scientists and historians points toward a new understanding of ideology's involvement in American party politics."[17]

Yet despite all this work that relates to parties and ideology, Gerring has produced the only comprehensive study of Democratic and Republican ideology spanning the full history of the party system. Challenging the Hartzian liberal consensus position, Gerring argues that from 1828 onward the Republicans (or their Whig precursors prior to 1860) and the Democrats have offered coherent, identifiable, and changing ideologies in opposition to one another. The "National" Republicans through 1924 emphasized Protestantism, moral reform, free labor, social harmony, and statism before transitioning in 1928 to a "Neoliberal" party rooted in antistatism, free markets, capitalism, right-wing populism, and individualism. Meanwhile "Jeffersonian" Democrats from 1828 to 1892 embraced white supremacy, antistatism, and civic republicanism before shifting into a "Populist" epoch of egalitarianism, majoritarianism, and Christian humanism. Democrats experienced a third transition to "Universalism" midway through the twentieth century with the adoption of civil rights, social welfare, economic redistribution, and inclusion. Gerring's thorough account of the parties' ideological development concludes with a

[16] Howard Reiter, "Party Factionalism: National Conventions in the New Era," *American Politics Quarterly* 8:2 (1980). Reiter, "Intra-Party Cleavages in the United States Today," *Western Political Quarterly* 34:3 (1981). Reiter, "Why Did the Whigs Die (and Why Didn't the Democrats)? Evidence from National Nominating Conventions," *Studies in American Political Development* 19 (Fall 1996), 185-222. Reiter, "Bases of Progressivism Within the Major Parties: Evidence from the National Conventions," *Social Science History* 22:2 (1998). Reiter, "Creating a Bifactional Structure: The Democrats in the 1940s," *Political Science Quarterly* 116:1 (2001), 107-129. Reiter, "Factional Persistence within Parties in the United States," *Party Politics* (May 2004).

[17] John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6. Hereafter referred to as "Gerring." See also: Gerring, "Continuities of Democratic Ideology in the 1996 Campaign," *Polity* 30:1 (Autumn 1997), 167-186. Gerring, "Party Ideology in America: The National-Republican Chapter (1928-1924)," *Studies in American Political Development* 11:1 (Spring 1997). Gerring, "A Chapter in the History of American Party Ideology: The Nineteenth-Century Democratic Party (1828-1892)," *Polity* 26:4 (Summer, 1994), 729-768.

consideration of the factors that drive this change. Ultimately, he finds, that there "is no general factor" and that "lots of things" drive ideological shifts.[18]

Relying on Gerring's typology, this paper explores the ideological change in the Democratic party following World War II, but breaks with his explanation of the cause of this transformation. Gerring suggests several things account for this particular ideological shift: a long period of economic growth, the rise of the middle-class, Keynesianism's ascendancy, the declining influence of labor unions, the emergence of racial politics, the lack of a challenge from the Left, the advent of television, and the Cold War. Yet Gerring does not even mention the one thing directly or indirectly tying all of these explanations (with the exception of TV) together. World War II was intimately tied to this enduring shift in the Democrats' public philosophy.

Part of the reason Gerring misses this key connection is because he falls victim to a common affliction in American politics research. As several prominent political scientists have recently noted, Americanists have not given due attention to the role international forces play in domestic politics.[19] Frequently scholars treat the domestic and international realms as separate entities, existing independently of each other. Like brief thunder storms, international events are temporary distractions that can make the lights flicker on Capitol Hill. But once the storms pass, normal business resumes unperturbed and in accordance with previously scheduled events.

Gerring's otherwise superb treatment of party ideology is representative of the problem. To his credit he directly explains his domestic focus, arguing that "because foreign policy has rarely played a significant role in American electoral politics, I focus primarily on domestic policies." He continues in a footnote:

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[18] Gerring, 274-5.
[19] David Mayhew, "Wars and American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 3:3 (2005), 473-493. Ira Katznelson, "Rewriting the American Epic," *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*, Katznelson and Martin Shefter, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3-23

> Foreign policy issues have entered debate at infrequent intervals (generally under conditions of open or imminent military conflict) after which politics has resumed its normal pace and usual domestic preoccupations….[P]arty views on foreign policy have not corresponded neatly with the historical development of party views on domestic policy matters; which is to say, foreign policy ideologies have changed at different times and (often) for different reasons than domestic policy ideologies. Therefore, foreign policy provides a somewhat misleading guide to the public political identities of the American parties, and is best analyzed separately.[20]

This explanation raises some questions. First, exactly how "rare" and "infrequent" are major foreign policy issues? In its less than 220 year existence, the United States has fought "hot" wars for 40 of those years, was immersed in the Cold War for decades, and has been involved in numerous smaller international conflicts. So, not all that rare. Second, how can domestic and foreign policy ideologies be considered as totally separate things? Any casual political observer can see that these things frequently are tied to one another. Third, why, then, are international events—and wars in particular—largely absent in the American political science literature? For research that is narrow in scope, of course, there might be no need to consider international events. But for Gerring and many others whose research calls for such considerations, it seems that addressing foreign *and* domestic policy is avoided simply because it is hard. As Gerring says, wars and other international events have not always "corresponded neatly" with the standard domestic-based accounts of American political history.[21]

Yet some international events are clearly important and are capable of influencing domestic American politics. Far from existing in isolation, domestic and international events interact with and influence one another. International events, and particularly wars, have the ability to reshape the domestic political landscape—either by bringing new and previously unforeseen issues onto the agenda or casting old issues in a new light. In this manner international influences can upset domestic politics in a meaningful and lasting manner. World

[20] Gerring, 7.
[21] Ibid.

War II induced just such a process within the Democratic party. Tangentially, Gerring's domestic focus also leads him to overlook a fourth break point in Democratic ideology that occurred during—and to a large extent because of—the Vietnam war.

The Democratic Party's Postwar Ideological Transformation

Where World War II did have a lasting impact, though, was on the Democratic party ideology. Political scientist John Gerring has identified this late 1940s era as one of only two hinge points in the Democratic party's history (with the other occurring in the 1890s). Before the late 1940s, Gerring asserts, the party was rooted in William Jennings Bryan-style populism. The central dichotomy at the Democrats' core was "the people versus the interests." As such, Democratic themes included egalitarianism, majoritarianism, and Christian humanism. Between 1948 and 1952, however, the Democrats went through an ideological metamorphosis, developing into a party of "universalism." The central dichotomy driving the party was no longer rooted in class-based populism but centered around "inclusion and exclusion." Major themes became civil rights, social welfare, redistribution, and inclusiveness.[22] In analyzing this ideological transformation, Gerring only mentions World War II in passing, noting that some historians link it to the economic boom beginning in the 1940s.[23] David Mayhew has cautiously—and under the caveat of "speculation"—hypothesized that World War II might have played a more important role, but no one has investigated the supposition.[24] Upon close examination there is indeed considerable evidence that World War II was the key cause of the Democrats' shift from populism to universalism.

[22] John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17.
[23] Gerring, 251. The war is not even mentioned in a summary section of causes on page 274.
[24] Mayhew, "Wars and American Politics," 485.

Prewar Populist Democrats

Until recently there was a general consensus that the Democratic party could be thought of in terms of pre-1932 and post-1932. Prior to Franklin Roosevelt's election in that pivotal year, the party was plagued by constant disputes between its disparate, and often fundamentally opposed, elements. The party, for instance, contained natural opponents including northerners and southerners, urban blue collar workers and rural farmers, nativists and immigrants, as well as progressives and conservatives. In essence, the Democrats were a motley array of opposing forces unable to unify around a coherent ideology.[25]

All this changed, the standard view maintains, in 1932. Roosevelt not only saved the nation from the throes of the Great Depression, but also rescued his party from irrelevance. For the first time in decades the party had an identifiable ideology centered around the public philosophy of the welfare state. That is, Democrats were united in their support for redistributive social and economic policies, statism, and science. Political scientist Sidney Milkis captures the central claim:

> The decisive break with the American tradition of limited government…came with Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s and his deft reinterpretation of the "liberal" tradition in American politics. Liberalism had always been associated with Jeffersonian principles and the natural rights tradition of limited government drawn from Locke's Second Treatise and the Declaration of Independence. Roosevelt pronounced a new liberalism in which constitutional government and the natural rights tradition were not abandoned but linked to programmatic expansion and an activist national government. As the public philosophy of the New Deal, this new liberalism, in its programmatic form, required a rethinking of the idea of natural rights in American politics.[26]

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[25] Gerring, 187-8. See also: Walter Dean Burnham, "The System of 1896: An Analysis," *The Evolution of American Electoral Systems*, Paul Kleppner, et al., eds. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 158. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955). Sidney M. Milkis, *The President and the Parties: The Transformation of the American Party System Since the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1983), Chapter 3.

[26] Sidney M. Milkis, "Programmatic Liberalism and Party Politics: The New Deal Legacy and the Doctrine of Responsible Party Government," *Challenges to Party Government*, John Kenneth White and Jerome M. Mileur, eds. (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 109.

This account of Democratic ideological history complements Realignment Theory's emphasis on 1932. That year's "critical election" and the federal government's ensuing activist policies created a massive partisan realignment in favor of the Democrats. Sundquist writes: "The millions of voters who switched from the Republican to the Democratic party or were mobilized into the electorate as Democrats for the first time, attracted by the Democratic program and the Rooseveltian personality and leadership…made the latter the country's clear majority party for the first time in eighty years."[27] Even critics of Realignment Theory recognize the 1932 election as a turning point in American political history. Indeed, for critics, 1932 is perhaps the only election in the canon that actually meets the theory's requirements.[28] In addition, a statistical study from outside the Realignment literature demonstrates 1932's significance. Jerome Clubb, William Flanigan, and Nancy Zingale measure the amount of enduring electoral change each presidential election produced from 1836 to 1964. They show that Roosevelt's first contest for the White House produced the largest and most significant lasting change of any election in their study.[29] Thus, there is a scholarly consensus that 1932 signaled the beginning of a long Democratic reign in Washington.

Not only did 1932 purportedly bring about a sea change in Democratic ideology, but it also brought the party to power for the better part of the next several decades as Realignment

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[27] Sundquist, 214. See also, V.O. Key, Jr., "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politics* 17 (Feb. 1955): 3-18. Key, "Secular Realignment and the Party System," *Journal of Politics* 21 (May 1959): 198-210. Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970).

[28] Everett Carll Ladd, "Like Waiting for Godot," in *The End of Realignment*, Byron E. Shafer, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 27. Samuel T. McSeveney, "No More 'Waiting for Godot': Comments on the Putative 'End of Realignment,'" in *The End of Realignment*, Byron E. Shafer, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 90-1. Joel H. Silbey, "Beyond Realignment and Realignment Theory: American Political Eras, 1789-1989," in *The End of Realignment*, Byron E. Shafer, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 4-5, 14. Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 141.

[29] Jerome M. Clubb, William H. Flanigan, and Nancy H. Zingale, *Partisan Realignment: Voters, Parties, and Government in American History* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980), chapter 3. See especially Table 3.1a, pages 92-3. This analysis covers elections from 1836-1964 and, thus, does not actually cover every election in American history. Yet one can infer that no election since 1964 has had such a dramatic, lasting effect.

theorists and others have noted. As such, it might be natural to understand 1932 as the be-all-end-all of the American party system.

Yet it is important to note that these two outcomes (i.e., ideological change and electoral dominance) represent two separate and not necessarily connected claims. The first identifies an intra-party ideological hinge point. Theoretically, a shift in Democratic ideology could make the party less popular, more popular, or result in no popularity change and could occur independently of any specific election. By contrast, Realignment's emphasis on 1932 is more broadly concerned with the relationship between the two major parties and their relative levels of success with the public as measured in elections. In theory, then, the two developments are not absolutely co-dependent. Practically, however, it is not a coincidence that these two literatures both emphasize 1932 because there is obvious overlap between them. In addition, it makes for a neat, logical, causal narrative. It is comforting, in a sense, to have everything coalesce around 1932. Under this appealing and accessible plot line, the Democratic party, led by Franklin Roosevelt, reacted to the Depression's economic horrors and the do-nothing policies of Herbert Hoover with a new ideology geared toward the nation's challenges. As a result, the electorate rallied to the Democratic banner, crushing Republican dominance rooted in the "System of 1896," and ushering in a new political era.

James Morone and Gerring, however, argue that the transition was not quite so seamless. Morone notes that while the administrative state was greatly expanded under FDR, this was merely a natural response to the Depression: "The New Deal administrative inventions did not break sharply with the past. Roosevelt left behind a far greater government, but not one fundamentally different from…that he found."[30] Gerring builds on Morone's analysis by

[30] James A. Morone, *The Democratic Wish: Popular Participation and the Limits of American Government*, revised ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 129.

demonstrating that the New Deal is the outgrowth of Bryanism and Wilsonianism and that the party's ideology fundamentally changed, not with Roosevelt and the New Deal, but following World War II. Gerring reframes the period by identifying the Democratic party's ideological hinge point in the late 1940s.[31] Contrary to the traditional view, Gerring maintains the party was unified from 1896 on. "There was more cohesion and continuity within Democratic ideology between 1896 and 1948 than is generally recognized. This ideology was not oriented on Jefferson, nor was it oriented on the technocratic management of the welfare state; rather it was *Populist* in tone and policy."[32]

The Populist ideology at the heart of the prewar Democratic party was rooted in the rhetoric and politics of three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. Bryan, Woodrow Wilson, Roosevelt, and their partisan colleagues were tied together by a belief in market regulation and wealth redistribution based on the public interest ideals of evangelical Christianity. "Democrats' political philosophy could be encapsulated in the ideal of majority rule and in the populist narrative in which the people fought for their rights against an economic and political elite….From 1896 to 1948, Democratic candidates sounded the bell of political and economic freedom and advocated for the rights of the common man."[33] Indeed, Bryan, Wilson, and Roosevelt, in style and in policy, argued on behalf of the common man in a way pre-Bryan Democrats did not. Policy proposals, invoking the language of reform, were tailored to benefit and appeal to the "people" whereas Democrats of the prior era focused on the past by invoking the Founders. Monopolies and big business were targeted because they purportedly operated in opposition to the people's interests. Hope, change, and reform invested the Populist-era Democrats, standing in stark contrast to their traditional, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian influenced

[31] Gerring says the transition happened between 1948 and 1952.
[32] Gerring, 188. Italics are in original.
[33] Gerring, 189.

predecessors who were tied to the status-quo as established at the Constitutional Convention. As Gerring writes, "Inseparable from this new way of practicing democracy was a new way of thinking about democracy. Throughout the nineteenth century…democracy meant preserving the rights of the people against the depredations of the state, not the right of the people to rule. Beginning in 1896, the party reframed its understanding of democracy from minority rights to majority rule."[34]

Gerring's examination of the Roosevelt presidency highlights these links to the post-1896 Democratic party. The New Deal-era Democrats are frequently noted for their working-class coalition. However, organized labor began moving to the Democrats long before the 1930s. Indeed, overt efforts to bring the working-class into the party fold began as early 1896. Initial ties with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) began in 1906 following the party's newfound support for union programs and proposed legislation. Gerring writes, "The 'labor' orientation of the New Deal, in other words, was not so new."[35] Former President Hoover agreed. Referring to the New Deal, he said: "The whole gamut is Bryanism under new words and methods."[36]

All this, of course, is not to suggest that only minor changes accompanied Roosevelt's presidency—far from it. The most profound change, as identified by Sidney M. Milkis, was the transformation of the presidency and its relationship to the party system.[37] Political parties had always been primarily ensconced in state and local politics; governing at the national level was often only an afterthought. Roosevelt and his New Deal allies recognized that this feature of American politics limited the ability of a president to initiate the kind of progressive action needed in the early 1930s. As a result, Roosevelt engineered a reshuffling of American

[34] Gerring, 193.
[35] Gerring, 227-8, quote on 228.
[36] Joan Hoff Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975), 212.
[37] Milkis, *The President and the Parties: The Transformation of the American Party System Since the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). See also, McMahon.

government in which the executive was at the center of the action and in a better position to direct a coherent policy agenda. In addition to this crucial institutional development, New Deal policies created a federal government that was a much more prominent and vital feature of Americans' daily lives.

However, Gerring is right in noting that the vast expansion of government during the 1930s was a direct response to the Great Depression—not a coherent, planned set of policy initiatives long envisioned by Roosevelt. Federal government intervention was initially conceived of as a temporary solution to a crisis and, even then, only after Roosevelt realized that traditional solutions such as balancing the budget would be insufficient. The period was characterized by experimentation. Roosevelt famously asserted as much in his commencement address at Oglethorpe University in 1932: "The country needs…persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it: If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something. The millions who are in want will not stand by silently forever while the things to satisfy their needs are within easy reach."[38]

Gerring's key insight here is that the central theme of governing around a welfare state did not fully emerge within the Democratic party until the 1960s. New Deal policies were rooted in decades-old Democratic ideology. Bryan had more of a statist predisposition than did Roosevelt, and redistribution had its origins in 1896 with calls to increase the federal tax base. Agricultural aid programs were endorsed early in the century and became a central party initiative during a 1920s agricultural depression. Similarly, economic regulation, initially in the form of reining in "trusts," was first featured in the late 19th Century and then remained at the core of Democratic policy. "In other words," Gerring argues, "FDR's stance vis-à-vis the Great Depression was no more radical than might have been expected of his forebears Bryan and

[38] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Oglethorpe University Address," May 22, 1932.

Wilson….Most of these [New Deal] policies are rightly viewed as the culmination of plans laid several decades previously."[39] The transformation of the party system and the presidency Milkis emphasizes can similarly be viewed as the natural Democratic response to the particular problems facing the nation in the early 1930s. It is important to emphasize that this assertion does not negate the profound institutional and policy changes FDR brought about. Rather, it is to suggest, like Gerring, that from a purely ideological standpoint, there was nothing new. The New Deal was arguably just the logical culmination of a Democratic ideology developed over several decades and a forced response to the nation's greatest domestic crisis.

Postwar Universalist Democrats

If the New Deal marked the triumphant application of a Democratic Populist ideology rooted in turn of the century Bryanism, what followed? Gerring suggests that a "Universalist" ideology emerged at the end of the 1940s, reaching its culmination in the 1960s and '70s. That is not to say that everything changed. The post-1950 Democrats had a similar understanding of social justice, welfare, and wealth redistribution as did New Deal and Bryan-Wilson era Democrats. Yet crucial elements did change. Equality came to be associated with inclusion and formed the basis for postwar Democratic ideology. Gerring argues:

> [In] the wake of World War II, the party's egalitarian agenda was broadened to include a host of social groups and political issues that did not fit neatly into the socioeconomic perspective and the masses-versus-elites dichotomy of the Populist period. Equality in the 1890s or the 1930s did not mean the same thing as equality in the 1950s and 1960s. Forsaking the shrill polemics of Bryan, the party now adopted a soothing tone and reassuring demeanor. The rhetoric of reconciliation replaced that of resentment. The all-inclusive American People subsumed the figure of the Common Man…The organizing theme of Democratic ideology changed from an attack against special privilege to an appeal for inclusion. Party leaders rewrote the Democratic hymn-book; Populism was out, and Universalism was in.[40]

[39] Gerring, 228.
[40] Gerring, 233.

Tolerance, understanding, and inclusion became key components of the Democratic platform which stood in stark contrast to the divisive "people vs. the powerful" rhetoric that preceded it.

Two major changes in Democratic ideology are evident in the postwar era and differentiate the Populist era Democratic party from its Universalist era counterpart. The first is economic policy, particularly around labor issues.[41] During the first half of the century, Democrats embraced organized labor and the working man and rhetorically pitted them against business interests. But postwar Democrats worried less about capitalism's excesses because John Maynard Keynes and John Kenneth Galbraith persuaded them that regulatory measures were sufficient to avoid serious economic depressions.[42] Historian Alan Brinkley articulates the scope of the transformation:

> By the end of World War II, the concept of New Deal liberalism had assumed a new form; and in its assumptions could be seen the outlines of a transformed political world. Those who were taking the lead in defining a liberal agenda in the aftermath of the war still called themselves New Dealers, but they showed relatively little interest in the corporatist and regulatory ideas [they previously endorsed]. They largely ignored the New Deal's abortive experiments in economic planning, its failed efforts to create harmonious associational arrangements, its vigorous…antimonopoly and regulatory crusades, its open skepticism toward capitalism and its captains, its overt celebration of the state. Instead they emphasized those New Deal accomplishments that could be reconciled more easily with the vision of an essentially compensatory government.[43]

In sum, liberal Democrats came to embrace capitalism. The lessons learned during the war, combined with previous New Deal policies, led to a dramatic softening of their prior economic views.

Also in the economic realm, organized labor became something of an electoral liability beginning in the 1950s to the extent that candidates went to great lengths to demonstrate that

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[41] Gerring, 233-8.
[42] John Kenneth Galbraith, *American Capitalism* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1952).
[43] Alan Brinkley, "The New Deal and the Idea of the State," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980,* Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 109-10.

they were not beholden to the AFL or the Congress of Industrial Labor (CIO). Additionally, the party became increasingly amenable to business. As Gerring explains:

> [In] the Populist era, Democrats had sought to portray themselves as the friends of the businessman and the upholder of capitalism; however, this position was attenuated by the party's shrill cries against the depredations of "monopoly," "big business," and "usurious" business practices. In the postwar era, the party dropped its litany of economic protest themes, and [in stark contrast to the prewar era] Populist-leaning candidates generally faired poorly in the candidate selection process. [In sum,] Democrats' embrace of "the American capitalistic system" was, for the first time in party history, unalloyed by Jeffersonian suspicions.[44]

The party gradually reduced labor's influence, culminating in an altered method of selecting presidential candidates. By 1972, the Democratic nominee was determined by primary elections. As such, union leaders were no longer able to position themselves as powerful forces in the "smoke filled rooms" where candidates were previously chosen.[45] Thus, the Democrats had moved from divisive pro-worker and anti-business rhetoric to a public stance of less support for organized labor coupled with less criticism of business interests. Though they certainly did not transform into libertarians, the party's postwar acceptance of business was a remarkable development.

The Democrats' ideological pivot from prewar Progressives to postwar Universalists can also clearly be seen in their shift from focusing on majority rule to emphasizing pluralism and minority rights.[46] As many have pointed out, blacks especially became a consistent feature in

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[44] Gerring, 235 and 236. Gerring argues that "only McGovern, Carter (in 1976), and Mondale integrated Populist themes into their rhetoric on a regular basis, and these occasional notes of protest were not nearly as vehement or shrill as those registered by their predecessors in the 1896-1948 period. It might also be pointed out that only one of these candidates made it to the White House," with the other two suffering overwhelming defeats. Gerring continues: "Thus, although Populists were the most successful candidates during the 1896-1948 period they were, by and large, the *least* successful candidates in the postwar period."

[45] James W. Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), Chapter 5. James I. Lengle, *Representation and Presidential Primaries: The Democratic Party in the Post-Reform Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981). Byron E. Shafer, *Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983), 55-7, 78, 86-7, 92-7, 361. Graham K. Wilson, *Unions in American National Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 44.

[46] Gerring, 238-45.

the party's rhetoric.[47] Of course, it should be noted that the staunchest supporters of segregation—including Harry F. Byrd, Sr., James Eastland, Sam Ervin, John Little McClellan, Richard Russell, John C. Stennis, Strom Thurmond and even eventual convert Lyndon Johnson—all hailed from the Democratic party. Yet, among those elements of the party supporting racial liberalism (and this became the dominant strain by at least the 1940s), Gerring's extensive content analysis yields interesting findings. Initially, Democrats, especially President Harry Truman, made an attempt to frame racial issues through a Populist lens by painting minorities, like laborers, as oppressed common people dominated by a cabal of powerful economic elites. But by 1948, as seen in that year's convention platform, the party had adopted the new and now familiar frame of "civil rights" and "minority rights:"

> The Democratic Party commits itself to continuing its efforts to eradicate all racial, religious and economic discrimination. We again state our belief that racial and religious minorities must have the right to live, the right to work, the right to vote, the full and equal protection of the laws, on a basis of equality with all citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution….We call upon Congress to support our President in guaranteeing these basic and fundamental American principles: (1) the right of full and equal political participation; (2) the right to equal opportunity of employment; (3) the right of security of person; (4) and the right of equal treatment in the service and defense of our nation.[48]

This rhetorical shift was significant. It demonstrated that these issues were group-based rather than afflictions pertaining to the great mass of common people. A similar group-based emphasis permeated the Democratic approach to poverty.[49] The class-based rhetoric of Populist-era Democrats was replaced by framing poverty as an abstract "social issue" with complex causes.

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[47] Merle Black and George B. Rabinowitz, "American Electoral Change: 1952-1972," in *The Party Symbol*, William Crotty, ed. (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1980). Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 115-137. Everett Carl Ladd, *Where Have All the Voters Gone?* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978). Gerald M. Pomper, "From Confusion to Clarity: Issues and American Voters, 1956-1968," *American Political Science Review* 66 (1972): 28-45. Pomper, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: What, Again?" *Journal of Politics* 33 (1971): 916-40. Sundquist, 382-93. Jules Witcover, *Party of the People: A History of the Democrats* (New York: Random House, 2003).

[48] 1948 Democratic Platform, in Schlesinger, ed., *History of American Presidential Elections: 1789-1968*, Volume IV (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), 3154.

[49] Gerring, 241-5.

As Gerring puts it, "there were still victims—the poor—but no longer any victimizers" like trusts or big business.[50]

Democrats no longer saw a nation polarized between two groups, a small economic elite and the masses. The prewar notion of the common people now appeared romantic and ill-informed.[51] Rather, there existed a vast middle into which numerous minority groups did not fit, and remedies were thus required. So, while Populist era Democrats were focused on bringing down the small economic elite and lifting the masses, postwar Universalist era Democrats focused on helping relatively small, targeted minority groups and were suspicious of the masses who held them down. Ironically, mass society—once the intended beneficiary of Democratic efforts—had come to replace the conniving economic elite as the party's target.

Gerring provides numerous examples of this new focus throughout the party's Universalist epoch.[52] In addition, this change is clearly reflected in Democratic party platforms. They began to frequently list a series of specific minority groups along with tangible steps the party or candidate pledged to take on their behalf. The 1952 platform, for instance, contains specific promises to veterans, children in general, children of migrant workers in particular, American Indians, as well as racial, religious, and ethnic minorities.[53] Reaffirming most of these, the 1956 platform also adds farmers, the handicapped, poor children, and the elderly to the list, while the 1960 Democrats extend their reach to the mentally handicapped, the temporarily

[50] Gerring, 241-2.
[51] Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (New York: Knopf, 1969).
[52] Gerring, 238-45.
[53] "1952 Democratic Platform," in Schlesinger, ed., *History of American Presidential Elections: 1789-1968*, Volume IV (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), 3267-3281.

disabled, and women.[54] The party's platforms from its prewar Populist era do not reflect this same kind of laundry list approach that the Democrats adopted in the postwar era.

Gerring aptly assesses the eventual results of this group-based focus: "The multifocused Democratic agenda kept spreading outward as the decades progressed, incorporating the demands of an ever wider set of ethnic, racial, sexual, and issue-based groups. Eventually, all sorts of groups were endowed with inalienable rights."[55] The extension appeared to have reached its post-modern zenith when Democrats' codified "the right to be different" and "the rights of people who lack rights" in 1972.[56] The extension has continued. "The pinnacle of this help-everybody rhetoric," Gerring writes, "was reached in the party's recent embrace of multiculturalism." Indeed, the 1992 platform including the following provision: "As the party of inclusion, we take special pride in our country's emergence as the world's largest and most successful multiethnic, multiracial republic. We condemn anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, bigotry and negative stereotyping of all kinds. We must help all Americans understand the diversity of our cultural heritage."[57]

Gerring argues that these two broad factors—economic moderation and group-based minority rights—engendered a Democratic party based around inclusion.[58] While the Populist era Democrats focused on class divisions within society, postwar Universalists focused on national unity constructed around a series of disparate groups which ultimately were encouraged to assert their individuality. "Consensus, tolerance, compromise, pragmatism, and mutual understanding…were the ideals to which the Democratic leaders aspired, ideals that were central

[54] "1956 Democratic Platform" and "1960 Democratic Platform," in Schlesinger, ed., *History of American Presidential Elections: 1789-1968*, Volume IV (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), 3355-85 and 3471-3510.
[55] Gerring, 244.
[56] "Democratic Party Platform of 1972," last accessed 4 April 2005, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showplatforms.php?platindex=D1972
[57] Gerring, 245.
[58] Gerring, 245-50.

to the party's Universalist weltanschauung, in which all peoples, all faiths, and all lifestyles were embraced (at least in principle)."[59] Indeed, as Gerring hints, some have questioned the extent to which conservative Republican peoples, evangelical Christians, and those pursuing traditional lifestyles were embraced, tolerated, and understood, but it is the party's ideological foundation that is most important here.

There is a substantial literature demonstrating that similar intra-party changes occurred following World War II throughout the democratic western world. Otto Kirchheimer has shown that western political parties transformed from hardened ideological entities into "postwar catch-all" organizations. In addition, like the American Democrats, these parties dropped their emphasis on class and sought to attract members throughout the entire population.[60] These results were reinforced by John Clayton Thomas' study of fifty-four political parties in twelve countries which found "a dramatic narrowing in the scope of domestic political conflict."[61] In this context, identifying the Democrats' ideological hinge point in the late 1940s makes even more sense.

World War II as Catalyst for the Democratic Party's Postwar Ideological Transformation

The primary question left to be addressed is how the ideology of the Democratic party was transformed from prewar Populism into postwar Universalism. In other words, what accounts for Democrats altering their economic populism in favor of economic moderation and dropping their "people versus the powerful" rhetoric in favor of a group-based, minority rights

[59] Gerring, 250.
[60] Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems," in *Political Parties and Political Development*, Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 177-200.
[61] John Clayton Thomas, "The Decline of Ideology in Western Political Parties: A Study of Changing Policy Orientations," *Sage Professional Papers in Contemporary Political Sociology*, 06-012 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975), 46. See also: Thomas, "Ideological Trends in Western Political Parties," in *Western European Party Systems: Trends and Prospects*, Peter H. Merkl, ed. (New York: Free Press, 1980), 348-66.

approach? Gerring argues that no single theory can fully explain intra-party ideological change because so many factors are at work. However, he maintains "there is a great deal one can say about the nature of specific moments of party change."[62] Thus, every instance of a party's ideological change is inherently going to be idiosyncratic and the result of several factors tied to that particular time. Yet scholars can certainly explore what caused any particular instance of ideological change. With regard to the 1948 Democratic hinge point, Gerring offers a number of causes. Several revolve around economics: a long period of economic growth, the rise of the middle-class, the ascendancy of Keynesianism, and the declining influence of labor unions. He also suggests the shift was influenced by the emergence of racial politics, the lack of a challenge from the Left (e.g., the Communist party, Huey Long, the Progressive Party), the advent of television, and the Cold War.[63]

One obvious omission is the impact of World War II. This is not to suggest that the other factors Gerring mentions were irrelevant—on the contrary, it seems logical to think they played a role. The key point here, though, is that World War II was also important in this transition. In addition to its direct implications on Democratic ideology, it also played an indirect role in many of the factors Gerring identifies. This oversight is no surprise. Indeed, like the American political science literature in general and that of American Political Development in particular, international factors are almost always ignored. In the case of World War II this is a particularly egregious oversight. While the war undoubtedly worked in conjunction with other contributing forces, it was clearly a key causal agent. In the space that follows, Gerring's reasons for the Democrats' ideological shift are considered, followed by an assessment of World War II's overall role in this transformation.

[62] Gerring, 274.
[63] Gerring, 274.

Economic Factors

The proposed causal economic factors for the Democrats' new ideology are the long period of growth preceding the late 1940s, the country's growing middle class character, Keynesianism, and the initial decline of organized labor. As discussed above, the prewar Democrats were focused on a "people vs. the powerful" rhetorical style while the postwar Democrats made their peace with capitalism and business. The former stance is much more likely to be successful in an era of vast economic inequality (the first three decades of the 1900s) or a period of economic hardship (the Great Depression). In other words, class warfare as waged by prewar Democrats had obvious constituencies: first, poor laborers who worked hard under difficult conditions and, later, victims of the country's worst economic depression. On the flip side, the burgeoning and dominant middle class of the late 1940s combined with a humming economy gave such class based appeals less salience. Such appeals would have required the endorsement of the newly constituted middle class (or the upper class), yet this demographic had new concerns of its own. As a result, the fierce class-based rhetoric of the prewar Democrats fell on deaf ears. The natural audience for this message had dissipated.

These developments were reinforced by the Democrats' adoption of Keynesianism, the economic theory of maintaining a market based economy augmented by governmental policies to promote consumption, increase employment, and stimulate business. While this embrace signaled the collapse of the hotly contested doctrine of pure laissez-faire economics, it also put the party in a position of defending the market economy. As historian David Kennedy writes, "if earlier liberals conceived of the economy as a mechanism that needed fixing, the Keynesians thought of the economy as an organism that needed feeding but that otherwise should be left to

its own devices."[64] Keynesianism, then, shifted the Democratic party's view of economics in general and the government's role in the economy in particular. Obviously, the full adoption of Keynes' theories was related to the strong economic growth and the growing middle class it helped produce. It was also tied to the beginning of the end for organized labor.

As discussed above, labor unions began a long, slow decline in influence in the postwar era. Passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, along with the growing economy and emergence of a strong middle class which made the bill viable, all contributed to labor's dwindling power. The Democrats' newly adopted Keynesian policies limited their commonalities with organized labor. As historian Nelson Lichtenstein notes, a "forced retreat narrowed the political appeal of labor-liberalism."

> [The] turning point came between 1946 and 1948 when a still powerful trade union movement found its efforts to bargain over the shape of the postwar political economy decisively blocked by a powerful remobilization of business [now at ease with Democrats] and conservative forces. Labor's ambitions were thereafter sharply curbed, and its economic program was reduced to a sort of militant interest group politics, in which a Keynesian emphasis on sustained growth and productivity gain-sharing replaced labor's earlier commitment to economic planning and social solidarity.[65]

The four economic factors referred to above are, thus, intimately tied together. The growing economy and resulting middle class (factors one and two) moderated Democrats' suspicion of capitalism and led them to buy into America's market economy—albeit with their New Deal modifications. In addition, the economy's vitality proved the feasibility of Keynesianism (factor three). And these developments, in turn, led to labor's initial slip (factor four).

These four related economic factors, then, clearly played a role in the Democratic party's new ideological makeup. Yet it is necessary to take a step back and ask a more fundamental

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[64] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 359-60.
[65] Nelson Lichtenstein, in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 122-3.

question: what produced this roaring economy that spurred these important changes? Economists and historians have addressed this question. Most argue that the war ended the Great Depression and created the strong economy.[66] They argue the Keynesian-inspired massive federal spending galvanized the economy with multiplied effects on the civilian sector. As a result, they contend, the nation reached full employment and increased GNP and personal consumption—and out of all this a strong middle class emerged. Economist Herbert Stein is representative of this camp. He notes that prior to the war, the nation was perpetually mired in stagnation and permanent deficits with no easy solutions. In addition, there were still ten million people unemployed and there was no prospect that private investment could mitigate the problem. But "the war changed all of that dramatically." Full employment became a reality; the issue of secular stagnation was put to rest; businessmen became involved in federal economic policy; the federal debt, enormous budgets, and the pay-as-you-go tax system were erased; and opposing economic factions were able to unite behind the war effort. "All of this," Stein writes, "came about primarily as a result of conditions created coincidentally and accidentally by the war."[67]

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[66] See, for example, Michael A. Bernstein, *The Great Depression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 207. John Morton Blum, *V was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), 90-1. Tyler Cowen, "Why Keynesianism Triumphed or, Could So Many Keynesians Have Been Wrong?," *Critical Review* 3 (1989), 525-6. Stanley Lebergott, *The Americans: An Economic Record* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 472 and 477. Seymour Melman, *The Permanent War Economy: American Capitalism in Decline* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 15-6 and 19. Albert W. Niemi, Jr., *U.S. Economic History* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1980), 390. Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-45* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 36. Robert C. Puth, *American Economic History* (Chicago: Dryden Press, 1988), 521 and 531-2. Herbert Stein, *The Fiscal Revolution in America: Policy in Pursuit of Reality*, Second Revised Edition, (Washington: AEI Press, 1996), 169-70. Harold G. Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 14. J.R. Vernon, "World War II Fiscal Policies and the End of the Great Depression," *The Journal of Economic History* 54:4 (1994), 850-868. Gary M. Walton and Hugh Rockoff, *History of the American Economy*, 6th edition (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990), 520, 523-4, and 535. Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A.: America During World War II* (Arlington Heights, IL: H. Davidson, 1986), 14 and 20.

[67] Stein, 169-70.

A smaller group of scholars contend World War II's influence had less impact than is generally thought. None contend that it played no role, only that it was not the sole cause. Kennedy, for instance, says the war worked in tandem with the New Deal:

> Not with a bang, but a whimper, the New Deal petered out in 1938….[Full economic] recovery awaited not the release of more New Deal energies but the unleashing of the dogs of war….When the war brought recovery at last, a recovery that inaugurated the most prosperous quarter century America has ever known, it brought it to an economy and a country that the New Deal had fundamentally altered.[68]

Economists J. Bradford de Long and Lawrence H. Summers offer a stronger prewar argument. Utilizing pre- and postwar output data, they maintain that 80% of the economic recovery had already taken place by 1942. To the extent this is true, "it is hard to attribute any of the pre-1942 catch-up of the economy to the war"— though, as De Long and Summers acknowledge, one could argue that President Roosevelt began wartime mobilization well before the Pearl Harbor attack formally drew the U.S. into the war.[69] Still another view is offered by economist Robert Higgs who argues that the major shift occurred not prior to (or as a result of) the war, but in its immediate aftermath.

> World War II got the economy out of the Great Depression, but not in the manner described by the orthodox story. The war itself did not get the economy out of the Depression….[Rather,] certain events of the war years—the buildup of financial wealth and especially the transformation of expectations—justify an interpretation that views the war as an event that recreated the possibility of genuine economic recovery. As the war ended, real prosperity returned.[70]

Thus, Higgs argues that war ended the Great Depression but in a roundabout way. Rather than the war bringing the economic downturn to an end as most scholars contend, the conflict induced

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[68] Kennedy, 363.
[69] J. Bradford de Long and Lawrence H. Summers, "How Does Macroeconomic Policy Affect Output?," *Brookings Papers on the Economic Activity* 1988:2 (1988) 433-494, quote on 467. For similar accounts see: Christina D. Romer, "What Ended the Great Depression?," *The Journal of Economic History* 52:4 (1992), 757-84, see especially pg. 782. Peter Temin, "The Great Depression," *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 328.
[70] Robert Higgs, "Wartime Prosperity? A Reassessment of the U.S. Economy in the 1940s," *The Journal of Economic History* 52:1 (1992), 58.

a postwar boom from 1946 to 1949.[71] What is important to note here is that critics of the proposition that World War II ended the Great Depression and initiated a strong economy are few in number and divided amongst themselves as to whether most of the action occurred before or following the war. In addition, they all acknowledge that the war played a significant role and merely quibble about the total credit many scholars give it.

The war also initiated the Keynesian triumph and its embrace by Democrats. Economist Tyler Cowen writes: "The onset of the war brought significant increases in demand and government spending, and eventually, government control over investment—precisely what Keynes had recommended."[72] As a result, rather than just pointing out the inequalities and downfalls associated with a pure market economy, Democrats were now in a position of supporting the economic system. As Brinkley puts it, "Keynes's economic doctrines…suggested ways to introduce in peacetime the kinds of stimuli that had created the impressive wartime expansion. They offered, in fact, an escape from one of liberalism's most troubling dilemmas and a mechanism for which reformers had long been groping. They provided a way to manage the economy without directly challenging the prerogatives of capitalists."[73] That is, the war experience demonstrated that governmental intervention in the private sector was extremely complicated and at some point became unnecessary. In addition, it showed that vast new regulatory functions were not required either. Rather, indirect economic oversight through monetary and fiscal "levers" combined with a moderate welfare state was sufficient. These initiatives were no longer viewed as temporary solutions to stem the flow until a more fundamental solution was settled upon. Instead, these measures had become the solution. The

[71] Ibid, 41.
[72] Tyler Cowen, "Why Keynesianism Triumphed or, Could So Many Keynesians Have Been Wrong?," *Critical Review* 3 (1989), 525.
[73] Brinkley, 108-9.

renewed wartime faith in economic growth, Brinkley continues, "led…to several ideological conclusions of considerable importance to the future of liberalism. It helped relegitimize American capitalism among a circle of men and women who had developed serious doubts about its viability in an advanced economy. It robbed the "regulatory" reform ideas of the late 1930s of their urgency and gave credence instead to Keynesian ideas of indirect management of the economy.[74]

These factors, as discussed above, contributed directly to labor's initial decline. While the war did not directly induce labor's less prominent position in the Democratic party, it did directly contribute to these main factors for labor's diminished position. The party's adoption of Keynesianism, the strong economy, and a burgeoning middle class—all of which the war played a role in cultivating—gave labor's shrill appeals to the American working class less credibility.

In sum, Gerring argues that economic changes played key causal roles in the Democratic party's ideological shift at the end of the 1940s. This is certainly the case. Yet, these phenomena did not emerge out of whole cloth—they were directly related to World War II. Political scientists, including Gerring, have overlooked the war's importance as a causal variable.

Other Factors

Four other factors—the emergence of racial politics, the lack of a leftist challenger, Cold War anticommunism, and television—are also offered as reasons for the Democratic party's postwar ideological shift. The first three can obviously be tied to the war. The war's connection to race and the absence of a serious challenge from the left will be addressed briefly, followed by a more detailed analysis of anticommunism. The postwar (but apparently pre-Bill O'Reilly) "shift from 'hot' stump speaking to the 'cool' medium of television—mandating a softer, more

[74] Brinkley, 109.

personal, more conciliatory brand of rhetoric"—is the only factor that is completely unrelated to the war.[75]

Gerring aptly notes the importance race played in altering the Democrats' ideological position:

> The symbolic power of this issue within a party historically devoted to the cause of white supremacy can hardly be overestimated. Although Truman tried to dress the civil rights issue in Populist garb, this was one issue that would have been difficult to contain within the majoritarian premises of William Jennings Bryan. The party's inclusionary vision in the postwar era was a direct attempt to respond to this new issue and its newly politicized constituencies. The resulting ideology…was then reinforced by the addition of a passel of new groups seeking to assert their own civil, political, and economic rights.[76]

This analysis is certainly accurate but lacks the obvious connection to World War II. The civil rights issue did not emerge out of thin air.

Rather, African Americans' valuable contributions to the war effort, combined with an altered moral and intellectual climate emanating out of the war, elevated the race issue onto the national agenda. Manpower shortages in 1944 forced the military to put black soldiers on the front lines with whites. Polling evidence strongly suggests this integrationist experiment altered the racial attitudes of white soldiers.[77] Blacks' status as second class citizens was also an embarrassment to America's claim to the moral high ground in the fight against Nazism and fascism. The awkwardness only increased once blacks were fighting and dying for the country. Liberal intellectuals, historian Alan Brinkley notes, started moving "from a preoccupation with 'reform' (with a set of essentially class-based issues centering around confronting the problem of monopoly and economic disorder) and toward a preoccupation with 'rights' (a commitment to

[75] Gerring, 274.
[76] Gerring, 253.
[77] Philip A. Klinkner and Rogers M. Smith, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 190.

the liberation of oppressed peoples and groups)."[78] In addition, Philip Klinkner and Rogers Smith argue, changes occurring in popular culture suggested that "civil rights was emerging as an important national issue."[79] Popular literature, non-fiction writing, and movies portrayed race in a new light.[80] This situation provided a unique opportunity for civil rights organizations. They took advantage of it and, in the process, laid the rhetorical, procedural, and institutional groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement. If the nation was in need of African American support for the war effort, it would come at the price of expanded rights. An editorial in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the nation's most widely circulated black newspaper, captured the sentiment: "What an opportunity this crisis has been and still is for one to persuade, embarrass, compel and shame our government and our nation…into a more enlightened attitude toward a tenth of its people!"[81] The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a new civil rights group, was formed in 1942.[82] Recognizing the opening the war provided, the group staged protests and sit-ins in an effort to integrate public facilities and also expanded its organizational capacity throughout the North and Midwest. Meanwhile the well-established National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) grew its membership list to 500,000 by 1945, ten times the numbers it had in 1939.[83]

This new war-engendered environment led immediately to new policy debates. Specifically, it raised the question of how blacks' service during the war would alter their status

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[78] Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 170. Klinkner and Smith, 186.
[79] Klinkner and Smith, 183-6.
[80] See, for instance, Lillian Smith, *Strange Fruit* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992). Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper, 1945). Movies: *Bataan* (1943), *Casablanca* (1943), *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943), *Sahara* (1943).
[81] "Voiceless in Congress," *Pittsburgh Courier* (10 Jan. 1942), 6. See also: Richard M. Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," *Journal of American History* 55 (June 1968), 96-7.
[82] For more on CORE, see: August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975). August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).
[83] For more on the NAACP, see: Gilbert Jonas, *Freedom's Sword: The NAACP and the Struggle Against Racism, 1909-1969* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

in America. As Klinkner and Smith argue, the societal trends rooted in World War II forced the federal government to make policy changes on behalf of blacks. "In this climate of shifting attitudes and domestic political pressures, the problems of racial violence, and especially the severe needs of the war, federal officials found it increasingly difficult to delay addressing racial inequalities."[84] During World War II new voting rights were extended to African Americans through the Soldier Voting Act of 1942 and *Smith v. Allwright*. Strong evidence suggests both were heavily influenced by the war.[85] In sum, World War II elevated race to a prime position on the national agenda.[86] The Democrats could not avoid it.

Similarly, the lack of a significant challenge from the left is likely a consequence of the economic factors addressed above. Before the war, there were plenty of left wing challengers including the Union Party, Huey Long, the American Labor Party, and the Communist Party. The strong postwar economy and developing middle class limited the constituency to which such leftists could easily appeal.

Another factor for the Democrat's ideological shift was Cold War anticommunism. As Kennedy asserts, "World War II led directly to the Cold War and ended a century and a half of

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[84] Klinkner and Smith, 186.

[85] On the Soldier Voting Act, see: Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1979). Steven F. Lawson, *Black Ballots: Voting Rights in the South, 1944-1969* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976). Klinkner and Smith, 174. Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 247.
As for *Smith*, the *New York Times* Washington bureau chief Arthur Krock pinned the decision directly on the altered intellectual environment emanating from the war. "The real reason for the overturn," Krock wrote, was "that the common sacrifices of wartime have turned public opinion and the court against previously sustained devices to exclude minorities from any privilege of citizenship the majority enjoys." Arthur Krock, "In the Nation: Self Reexamination Continues in the Supreme Court," *New York Times*, 4 April 1944, 20. See also, Keyssar, 248. Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 229-37. Ward E.Y. Elliott, *The Rise of Guardian Democracy: The Supreme Court's Role in Voting Rights Disputes, 1845-1969* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 78-80.

[86] For more on this, see: Daniel Kryder, *Divided Arsenal: Race and the American State During World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Kryder's careful study echoes the scholarly consensus that Franklin Roosevelt did little to help blacks. This view has recently been countered by Kevin J. McMahon who argues that FDR consciously pursued civil rights advances indirectly by appointing liberals to the Supreme Court. "Constitutional Vision and Supreme Court Decisions: Reconsidering Roosevelt and Race," *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (Spring 2000), 20-50. McMahon, *Reconsidering Roosevelt on Race: How the Presidency Paved the Road to Brown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

American isolationism."[87] Indeed, the war ended America's long history of isolationism (broken only on rare occasions) and initiated an on-going era of involvement in international relations. Much of the U.S. desire to stay engaged in world affairs emanated out of the war. Because it affected the United States so profoundly in so many ways, the country sought to do everything in its power to minimize the chances of a similar war in the future. It laid plans for a world deliberative body similar to Wilson's rejected League of Nations. In addition, the U.S. sought not only to rebuild benign versions of Germany and Japan, but also to export the ideology of democracy and capitalism. In other words, the war changed America's position in, and view of, the world. A widespread consensus developed that authoritarianism had to be confronted lest a Hitler-like figure be allowed to emerge again.[88]

World War II also changed the Soviet Union. For starters, the war was felt much more deeply in the USSR than in the U.S. The Soviet Union was left in ruin with roughly 27 million fatalities—90 times the number of American dead. Joseph Stalin emerged from the war—like his counterparts in the U.S.—determined to avoid another conflict on that scale. He also felt the Soviet Union was entitled to compensation for its wartime losses but, due to these losses, the Soviets were in no position to unilaterally take what they wanted. There was, however, a silver lining from Stalin's perspective. Steeped in Marxist-Leninist ideology, he believed capitalism was bound to destroy itself. Once the war ended and Britain and the U.S. had no reason to cooperate, capitalism's inherent flaws would emerge and plunge its practitioners into another depression. At this point, Stalin theorized, the Soviets could take over Europe as Hitler had amidst squabbling capitalists in the aftermath of World War I.[89]

[87] Kennedy, 855.
[88] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 5-47.
[89] Gaddis, 10-4.

Thus, the postwar world sported the newly, but fully, engaged United States as the freest nation in the world and a devastated, but entitled, Soviet Union as the most authoritarian nation in the world biding its time for capitalism's natural fall at which time it would take its rightful place over all of Europe. In this sense, World War II was at the root of the Cold War world that developed in its aftermath. It is difficult to know if this ideological confrontation would have eventually emerged without World War II because those years so fundamentally shaped both countries in ways that made the Cold War more likely.

This new international climate—which reinforced domestic anticommunism in the U.S.—had reverberations on the Democrats' ideological repositioning. Gerring succinctly says: "it is difficult to overestimate the effects of the Cold War, which helped marginalize the left and legitimate the right; which seemed to vindicate the (Republican) perspective that statism, not individualism, was the primary enemy of the American public; and which granted foreign policy an ascendance over domestic policy that it had rarely enjoyed."[90] It was this powerful anticommunist sentiment in the wake of the war that created such a difficult environment for labor (and leftists in general) and provided yet another reason—in addition to the economic reasons discussed above—for its marginalization.

Gerring demonstrates that anticommunist rhetoric became an animating point for Democrats following the war. Preventing communism from taking hold on the homefront was of particular concern.[91] Typical of this new mindset was presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson's 1952 acceptance speech:

> I suggest that we would err, certainly, if we regarded communism as merely an external threat. Communism is a great international conspiracy and the United States has been for years a major target….Communist agents have sought to steal our scientific and military secrets, to mislead and corrupt our young men and women, to infiltrate positions of

[90] Gerring, 274.
[91] Gerring, 251-253.

> power in our schools and colleges, in business firms and in labor unions and in the Government itself. At every turn they have sought to serve the purposes of the Soviet Union….Along the way they have gained the help, witting or unwitting, of many Americans….I fear there are still people in our country under illusions about the nature of this conspiracy abroad and at home….Communism is committed to the destruction of every value which the genuine American liberal holds most dear. So I would say to any Americans who cling to illusions about communism and its fake utopia: Wake up to the fact that you are in an alliance with the devil.[92]

The key point here is that communism and socialism had become public enemy number one for the Democrats. And organized labor—perhaps unfairly, but nonetheless—paid a price. In stark contrast to their prewar stance, the private sector became a point of pride for Democrats and they distanced themselves from labor. As Stevenson said later in his campaign: "We are for private, and profitable, business. The Democratic party is against socialism in our life in any form—creeping, crawling or even the imaginary kind which shows up so often in the Republican oratory. I am opposed to socialized medicine, socialized farming, socialized banking, or socialized industry."[93] While he did not single out labor, the implication was unavoidable—much of the action labor sought was now going to be supported by the Democratic party. This development was a striking departure from the party's prewar position. Thus, this new anticommunist focus played a role in labor's demise along with Keynesianism, the strong economy, and the burgeoning middle class. Yet anticommunism, because it grew during the World War II-produced-Cold War is, like these other factors, uniquely tied to World War II.

In sum, this has been an effort to examine the international origins of domestic political change during and after World War II as seen through the Democratic party. The Democrats' ideology changed profoundly after the war. It focused less on the populist rhetoric associated with the first half of the century and took on what John Gerring calls an ideology of

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[92] "Speech by Governor Adlai E. Stevenson, Albuquerque, September 12, 1952," in *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968: Volume IV*, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), 3308-9.
[93] Gerring, 252.

Universalism. These postwar Democrats were more economically conservative. In addition, they focused on minority rights as a means of inclusion rather than William Jennings Bryan-style class warfare. What accounts for this change? Gerring suggests several things played a role including: economic growth, a developing middle-class, Keynesianism, organized labor's decline, emerging racial politics, absence of a leftist challenge, television, and the Cold War. Gerring is correct that some combination of these factors brought about the reconstituted Democratic ideology. However, in keeping with the time honored tradition of the American political science literature—including that of American Political Development (the obvious outlet for such historically geared analysis)—he overlooks the vital direct or indirect ways in which all but one of these factors (television) were rooted in World War II. The literature's omission of the war as a casual factor is curious. The timing is right, the dots logically connect, and it is difficult to assert that all these changes would have occurred without the war because they are all so intimately tied to it. While this chapter does not purport to provide the theoretical key to explain all instances of ideological evolution that Gerring searches for (and ultimately gives up on finding), it hopefully provides a persuasive account that World War II largely drove this particular instance of intra-party ideological change.