

Chapter Seven

Evolution of the Strategic Landscape

Chapter Six offered a comprehensive picture—a benchmark—for the relationship among social backgrounds, political values, and voting behavior, both as a national composite and in its group constitution. Nothing guarantees that this is anything more than a single (if already complex) *snapshot* of the ideological landscape for electoral politics. Indeed, it surely must be a picture that is shaped by elements—candidates, tactics, and events—that are idiosyncratic to 1984. On the other hand, rooting responses to these elements in relationships that involve long-recognized social characteristics, along with the policy preferences that are reliably tied to them, should provide limits to any such idiosyncrasy. This suggests that *evolution*, rather than stasis or change, is likely to be the more likely fate of these benchmark patterns across time.

Though note immediately that even if these comprehensive voting relationships were to prove essentially static, the overall stability of this composite structure would not, even viewed by itself and in isolation, promise a static character to the associated politics. To begin with, the structure (along with its strategic landscape) is impressively complex. Different groups do not just hold different values; they attach them to the vote in different ways. This means that a *national* composite of the ideological landscape for electoral politics may obscure as much as it clarifies about the behavior of the *group pieces* that constitute this picture. Even more conditionally, it means that there may be some elections where this national composite is critical, others where specific group combinations are more important. Or, of course, some mix of both.

Accordingly, Chapters Seven and Eight must attend to the temporal evolution of the benchmark patterns isolated in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven is concerned with the overall national picture—the comprehensive strategic landscape for American electoral politics. This is our version of the more usual focus on elections as singular events, though ours is much less singular than many. Chapter Eight is then concerned with specific social groups, in their contributions to the composite picture. This allows different groups to deviate from, to approximate, or to overstate national behavior. Only when the two are put back together will it be possible to address questions about the extent to which national patterns permeate most social groups, and the extent to which changes in particular social groups are what drive national patterns.

Such a focus inevitably captures some elements of what might be called the ephemera of electoral politicking, which is not thereby to label them inconsequential. Things like candidate personalities, campaign tactics, and, most especially, events of the day are included here. Each election after 1984 will provide some of these. Any given instance, in any given contest, might prove ultimately decisive. Yet the focus here is mainly concerned with capturing *fundamentals*, structural characteristics of politics that are temporally enduring, that in effect discipline the ephemera. For us, these include, front and center, enduring social backgrounds, lasting dimensions of public preference, and the recurrent translation of both into voting behavior, and ultimately into election outcomes. These provide the means for organizing an examination of each of the presidential contests between 1984 and 2008.

On the one hand, if social backgrounds and policy preferences as they relate to voting behavior are indeed the fundamentals of electoral politics, they should impose

patterns on candidate personalities, campaigns tactics, and even events of the day. This is not a matter of *preventing* these ephemeral elements from appearing in a partially idiosyncratic fashion. Rather, it is a matter of providing the continuing framework through which even they are expressed. On the other hand, please note: dubbing some relationships as ‘fundamental’ cannot mean that they themselves do not change—evolve—over time, especially if a long enough time-period is available. The elections from 1984 through 2008, at a quarter-century and counting, will prove sufficient to isolate some important changes in these fundamentals. Yet they can only be suggestive about others that appear to be too long-running to be captured in this time-period, having begun well before there were Pew Values Surveys. No doubt there are still others that are so long-running that we cannot recognize them through our data at all.

In any case, Chapter Seven begins with individual relationships to the vote for economic and cultural values, proceeding election by election and covering each presidential contest from 1988 through 2008. The chapter then switches to considering the relationship of economics and culture jointly to the vote. Much of this joint relationship is constrained, even prefigured, by the individual examinations. Nevertheless, there are major aspects of the evolution of the joint relationship between public values and voting behavior that can only be unpacked when both valuational dimensions are simultaneously in the analysis.

This analysis then moves from voting relationships to their density maps, and hence to the question of where Republican voters, Democratic voters, Non voters, and the occasional third-party or independent voting groups are actually located. This is the ideological landscape for electoral politics; it is the theoretical structure to which very

practical strategists must respond. As in Chapter Six, so in Chapter Seven: the policy landscape for electoral politics can look noticeably different when these actual densities re-enter the analysis. The chapter closes with a return to the scope of the evolution of all of the above, in their implications for major-party strategies but with a side-look at the independent and third-party world.

Economic Values, Cultural Values, and the Evolving Vote

The Presidential Contest of 1988

The presidential election of 1984 was in many ways a classic incarnation of partisan conflict in modern American politics. The two nominees were archetypal embodiments of contemporary ideology. Ronald Reagan was a conservative Republican, and Walter Mondale was a liberal Democrat. Both presented stereotypical positions on the great dimensions of policy combat. Ronald Reagan was a clear-cut economic conservative, while Walter Mondale was a clear-cut economic liberal. Just as Ronald Reagan was an obvious cultural traditionalist, while Walter Mondale was a conscious cultural progressive. As a result, the two candidates offered almost an archetypal incarnation of the ideological character of the partisan conflict of their time.

The presidential election of 1988, on its surface, blurred these distinctions. The candidates effectively denied them in their intended personas. George H.W. Bush promised to be a “kinder, gentler” extension of his predecessor, Ronald Reagan, while Michael Dukakis presented himself as a technocrat, not an ideologue like his predecessor, Walter Mondale. The policies that gave life to these presentations went on to pull both candidates toward the ideological center. George Bush spoke of his concern with education and the environment, while Michael Dukakis emphasized generic problem-

solving. Accordingly, they created the classic *centrist* contest, on its face, with both presidential nominees moving clearly and consciously toward the ideological middle in their general election campaigns.

What was not necessarily different from 1984 was the structure of policy preferences within which both pairs of candidates, Reagan and Mondale or Bush and Dukakis, had to pursue their electoral goals. Moreover, what makes it worth underlining the comprehensive surface distinctions between two pairs of candidates in two successor years is the further fact that, when the ballots were finally cast, the underlying structural relationships among social backgrounds, political values, and voting behavior were essentially identical, at least when examined for the nation as a whole. In presentational terms, this parallelism—a kind of structural recapitulation—means that little needs to be said about the associated patterns in 1988. For they do essentially recapitulate counterpart patterns from the benchmark contest of 1984. What needs to be presented instead is just sufficient evidence to confirm the parallel structures of these otherwise superficially distinctive contests.

Figure 1

To that end, Figure 1 offers the relationships between policy preferences on economics and culture among Republican, Democratic, and Non voters in both years. The parallels are overwhelming:

- When economic values are the focus, there remains, first, a strong negative relationship between economics and a Republican vote, in the person of George H.W. Bush this time, with conservatives preferring him strongly and liberals avoiding him.

- There remains, second, a weaker positive relationship between economic values and a Democratic vote, by way of Michael Dukakis this time, with liberals preferring him and conservatives avoiding him. (Figure 1.B) Again, the two lines are essentially overlaid across most of the ideological continuum, before the 1988 line for Dukakis falls below the 1984 line for Mondale—being less preferred—among strong economic liberals;
- And there remains, third, an even weaker positive relationship to non-voting, with economic liberals more inclined not to vote in both years. (Figure 1.C) Once more, the (non)voting lines are essentially overlaid across most of the ideological spectrum for both 1984 and 1988, before dropping in the latter year among strong economic liberals.

Note that it is not just that all three relationships between economic values and voting behavior are parallel as between these two presidential elections. They are also close to indistinguishable. Economic liberals were a trifle less likely to vote in 1988 than in 1984—they were apparently less enthused by Dukakis as opposed to Mondale—and the Democratic candidate got a slightly lower vote from this ideological faction as a result. But that was a small distinction, and it was truly all there was.

Much the same can be said for all three voting groups when the focus shifts to cultural values:

- Within this cultural focus, there remains, first, an essentially flat relationship to the Republican vote along most of the cultural continuum, for George H.W. Bush this

- There remains, second, an equally flat relationship between cultural values and the vote along most of the same continuum, by way of Michael Dukakis this time, before surging among strong cultural liberals. (Figure 1.E) Here, there really is nothing further to say. The two voting lines, for Dukakis and for Walter Mondale before him, are just uniformly overlaid;
- And there remains, third, an essentially flat relationship to non-voting along the entire cultural continuum, with the very slightest tendency for conservatives to vote less when approached through this dimension. (Figure 1.F) Non-voting in 1988 did increase marginally over 1984 for the nation as a whole, though this decline in voter turnout was actually concentrated at both ends of the continuum, among cultural conservatives and strong cultural liberals, with cultural moderates showing no change in their propensity to vote.

Again, all three relationships between cultural values and voting behavior are not just parallel, but close to indistinguishable. Apparently, where Michael Dukakis had enthused economic liberals less than Walter Mondale, causing them to reduce their turnout in 1988, George H.W. Bush enthused cultural liberals even less than Ronald Reagan, causing their turnout to decline as well. Though note that he secured no

compensating support among cultural conservatives, whose turnout also declined. Yet these were, once again, small twists on an essentially constant larger story.

The Presidential Contest of 1992

The same cannot be said of 1992. Just on its surface, the presidential contest of 1992 looked immediately and inescapably different from that of either 1984 or 1988, in two critical regards. In the first, it was the challenging Democrat, Arkansas Governor William J. “Bill” Clinton, not the incumbent Republican, President George H.W. Bush, who was to emerge victorious. That alone was a fundamental change from the two preceding elections, and it contained the inherent possibility that social backgrounds, political values, and voting behavior were related in a different fashion in years of Democratic rather than Republican victory.

Yet in the second critical difference from preceding elections, 1992 featured a serious *third* candidate for president, in the person of billionaire businessman H. Ross Perot. Perot was to achieve both the largest vote and the largest vote *share* of any independent candidate since former President Theodore Roosevelt in 1912. Because this vote had to come from somewhere, his success raised the prospect not just that his own patterns of support would be idiosyncratic, as they almost had to be, but that these would cause both Democratic and Republican voting patterns to look different as well.

Whether either of these developments would reflect additional changes in the strategic landscape for electoral politics, fundamental or otherwise, was an additionally open question in 1992. Though recall that 1988 could be argued to be different from 1984 in terms of its elite politics, but was overwhelmingly similar beneath that elite surface, that is, among rank and file voters. In pursuit of their behavior, Figure 2 sets up

the individual relationships between political values and the vote for 1984, 1988, and 1992 in the usual manner: first economics, then culture. Inevitably, the picture for 1992 includes a further voting *category*, to capture the voting behavior of those who went with independent candidate Perot, hence four voting categories arrayed in this order: Republican, Democratic, Independent, and Non voters.

Figure 2

The Republican vote was immediately different—clearly distinguishable—from the two preceding presidential elections. Part of this was simple aggregate decline, directly captured in Figure 2.A. The two previous elections were much happier Republican affairs than the election of 1992. Yet part of this change was also a clear if modest shift in the relationship of economic values to the vote, regardless of its aggregate level. There remained a clear and negative relationship between economic values and voting for the Republican, sitting President George H.W. Bush, who was seeking re-election. In that grand and gross sense, the relationship to economic values was parallel to that of prior years, with conservatives attracted and liberals repelled.

On the other hand, this relationship was distinguished by the fact that it declined most among strong economic conservatives, least among strong economic liberals. For the candidate himself, this contained an obvious irony. It was those who were normally least supportive, the economic liberals, who remained most loyal. It was those who were normally most supportive, the economic conservatives, who defected. Economic conservatives were still far more supportive than economic liberals, by a margin of roughly three to one. Yet in a normal year, this margin would be on towards four to one,

so that if the focus was on winning or losing the election in the aggregate, it was economic conservatives who had delivered the serious injury.

Their reason for doing so—as well as the vehicle by which they did—was also immediately clear. In achieving the largest vote for an independent candidate for President in eighty years, Ross Perot generated a strong negative relationship to economic values, too. (Figure 2.C) Described purely in terms of his own vote, then, Perot attracted economic conservatives far more than economic liberals. This pattern was, of course, parallel to the classic Republican relationship. As a result, it was clear that the weakness of the Republican candidate among economic conservatives in 1992 was a product of the strength of Perot among the same individuals.

By contrast, among the four voting categories, it was the Democratic vote that remained most like its baseline patterns. (Figure 2.B) As previously, there was a clear and positive relationship between economic values and voting for the Democrat, in this case Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, the Democratic challenger to sitting President Bush. Liberals were attracted, conservatives repelled, as ever. (Figure 2.C) Moreover, the economic voting line for Democrats in 1992 actually returned to the pattern of 1984, as Clinton picked up—re-secured—those strong economic liberals who had supported Walter Mondale but had been less enthusiastic about Michael Dukakis.

This does not guarantee that the same individuals, or even the same social groups, were doing in 1992 what they had done in 1984 and 1988 when they voted Democratic. That is a separate empirical question, addressed more systematically in Chapter Eight. At a minimum, what it does suggest instead is that the Perot candidacy was simply having no effect on the Democratic vote. Beyond that, what it confirms is the theoretical

possibility—now realized—that Clinton’s party could win the presidency (and not just lose it) with these *exact same* voting relationships. These relationships were obviously sufficient to deliver victory in a year with a serious three-way voting split. Whether they could deliver victory in a year without such a split remained an open question.

The movement of strong economic liberals back into the Democratic column should simultaneously have reduced non-voting within this ideological faction in 1992, as indeed it did. (Figure 2.D) The propensity of strong economic conservatives to back Perot, in a year when this faction possessed an additional voting option, simultaneously prevented any decline in voting at the conservative end of the economic spectrum. As a result, aggregate non-voting fell by comparison to both preceding elections, while the relationship between non-voting and economic values strengthened, returning to the levels of 1984 and making 1988 look like the year that was slightly deviant. In short, non-voting remained related in a positive way to economic values, with economic liberals least likely to vote, economic conservatives most likely. That did not change. Yet this relationship returned to the levels of 1984 (not 1988) in 1992.

The Republican vote in 1992 was, if anything, even more clearly distinguishable the Republican vote of previous years when the focus shifts to cultural values. Whether stratified by economics or culture, this vote, of course, fell in 1992 by comparison to both previous years, and Figure 2.E again captures this fall. Yet its *form* was also clearly different. What had previously been an essentially flat relationship along most of the cultural continuum, before falling sharply among strong cultural liberals, was now a relationship that reached across most of the cultural continuum. The fall was still

sharpest among strong liberals, yet it began in 1992 among moderate cultural conservatives and proceeded downward from there.

What could not be judged in 1992 was the degree to which this change, too, was primarily a response to the presence of Ross Perot. For the Democratic vote was also up most in this same terrain as the Perot vote, that of the moderate cultural liberals, suggesting that there might be something more under way than just a 'Perot interruption'. On the one hand, the Democratic vote, stratified by culture, was still the one most like the previous two elections among the four voting groups: Republican voters, Democratic voters, Perot voters, and non-voters. On the other hand, this vote, too, was more related to cultural values in 1992 than it had been in 1984 or 1988.

Perot constituted, of course, the reason that this was a three-way, not a two-way, contest. And voter turnout in the three-way contest of 1992 was up in the aggregate over both 1984 and 1988. (Figure 2.H) Yet once more, there was a shift in the nature of this relationship as well. In the preceding two elections, cultural liberals had been slightly more likely to vote than cultural conservatives, with voter upticks at both the liberal and the conservative extremes. This overall relationship looked considerably stronger in 1992, courtesy of a clear uptick in *non-voting* among strong cultural conservatives. Apparently, in the absence of an ideological champion for this faction, its members departed from the electorate in what would previously have been a very uncharacteristic fashion.

In such a comparison, the Perot vote was inherently distinctive, that is, unprecedented by definition. There had been nothing with which to compare it in 1984 or 1988; there would be nothing with which to compare it until Perot himself stood for

election again in 1996. Yet it was always possible that voting relationships among those who chose Ross Perot for president would mimic their Democratic counterparts, their Republican counterparts, or even their non-voting fellow citizens, previous or current. As it turned out, none of these possibilities were to be realized. The Perot vote was to be idiosyncratically distinctive in this larger sense, by representing a combination of economic and cultural relationships all its own.

Voting for Perot was clearly related to economic conservatism. (Figure 2.C) In that sense, it looked like a weaker version of Republican voting relationships. (Figure 2.A) Yet voting for Perot was also clearly if more modestly related to cultural liberalism. (Figure 2.G) Here, it looked like a weaker version of Democratic voting relationships. (Figure 2.F) In other words, where the generic Republican vote was related strongly to economic conservatism while declining sharply among cultural liberals, and where the generic Democratic vote was related clearly though less strongly to economic liberalism while rising sharply among cultural liberals, the Perot vote had some of each. It was clearly related to economic *conservatism* and clearly if more modestly related to cultural liberalism. No partisan candidate had offered that combination of relationships to the two basic political values in either of the two preceding elections. None would do so in any election to follow, at least as this is written.¹

Looked at the other way around, by way of ideological factions rather than voting groups, this was the picture of a world in which economic conservatives produced the most dissident and unfamiliar responses to the ballot in 1992. From one side, these

¹ Just to complete the story, the Non vote, while less ideologically distinctive than the Bush, the Clinton, or the Perot vote, was disproportionately found in the remaining ideological locale. That is, non-voters were disproportionately economic liberals and social conservatives, the polar opposite combination of the Perot vote but also different from the consistent conservatism of Republican voters or the consistent liberalism of Democrats.

strong economic conservatives contributed the most of any ideological faction to the Perot vote. (Figure 2.C) More or less inevitably as a consequence of that fact—being the most likely ideological faction to turn out and vote, their new-found attraction to Perot almost had to remove them from some previous voting category—they became the faction that underperformed the most, showing the sharpest decline, in support for the Republican nominee. (Figure 2.A) Strong economic liberals than offered a weakly distinctive effect of their own, when they *returned* to their level of Democratic support in 1984, reducing the non-voting rate for 1992 within their faction in the process. (Figures 2.B & 2.D)

The other ideological faction that showed a distinct (if modest) difference in 1992 was the moderate cultural liberals. They were the other faction that was disproportionately attracted to Ross Perot, whose vote rose from strong cultural conservatives through *moderate* cultural liberals, before falling at the far cultural left. (Figure 2.G) The counterpart effect—in moving to Perot, they too had to move *from* somewhere—was a decrease in non-voting among all voters on the liberal side of the cultural continuum, a decrease that was the other side of this greater attraction for moderate cultural liberals on the part of Perot. (Figure 2.H)

The Presidential Contest of 1996

The presidential contest of 1984 had ended in the re-election of a sitting Republican. The presidential contest of 1988 had produced the initial election of a Republican successor. The presidential contest of 1992 had brought the initial election of a Democratic counterpart. And the presidential contest of 1996 in some sense completed the cycle by ending in the re-election of that sitting Democrat. These four elections thus

covered the apparent range of partisan outcomes. The 1992 election had been additionally different in providing a serious independent candidate, unattached to any political party, in the person of Ross Perot. In continuing this Perot difference, the 1996 election made it possible to look not just at continuity or change in the Perot vote, but at continuity or change in the way it interacted with Republican and Democratic voting.

In pursuit of these partisan and independent stories, and of their interaction, Figure 3 offers the standard set-up. Four voting populations are again isolated, for Republican, Democratic, Independent, and Non voters. Each is examined for the relationship between voting behavior and economic or cultural values. Comparison is with the benchmark election of 1984, to which the election of 1988 had proved quite similar, and with the most recent election of 1992, rattled distinctively by the initial appearance of Perot. For most commentators, the Perot effect in 1992 that had drawn most attention was his impressive aggregate showing. For the analysis here, that showing is trumped by the interaction of this Perot effect with the Republican vote on economics and with the Non vote on culture, thereby helping to produce a Democratic victory in a badly split field.

Figure 3

To cut directly to the chase, then: for most commentators, the Perot effect in 1996 that drew the most attention was the aggregate *collapse* of the Perot vote, from 19% of the total to just 8%. Yet for this analysis, the critical fact about the 'Perot effect' in 1996 was instead *that there was close to none*, while what there was, was noticeably different from that of 1992. The most impressive relationship between public values and a Perot vote in that prior year had been the negative one with economic values: conservatives had

been clearly attracted, while liberals had not. This relationship simply disappeared in 1996, with, if anything, a small Perot increment among strong economic *liberals*. (Figure 3.C)

While the Perot vote in 1992 had been best characterized by its clear *negative* relationship to economic values, it had also featured a more modest, still clear, but more complex, positive relationship to cultural values. In this, the Perot vote rose gradually from strong cultural conservatives through moderate cultural liberals, before falling off among strong liberals. All that needed to be said about 1996 was that this long gradual rise, too, essentially disappeared, to be replaced by an essentially flat relationship except at the ideological extremes—where there was a further drop among strong cultural conservatives and an actual uptick among *strong* cultural liberals this time. (Figure 3.G)

This collapse suggested that the Perot vote would *not* be having much effect on traditional relationships to economic or cultural values among Republican or Democratic voters. What it did not suggest was that they would thereby revert to earlier patterns. That was, instead, an empirical question. Among Republican voters, the relationship between economic values did indeed assume its earlier form, as in 1984 or 1988, with a huge gap between supportive conservatives and unsupportive liberals. (Figure 3.A) Putting the three years of 1984, 1992, and 1996 together on the same figure underlines the extent to which economic conservatives had deserted the Republican candidate in 1992—and returned in 1996.

Yet among Democratic voters, the relationship between economic values and voting behavior actually stood out as distinctive in 1996. The preceding election of 1992 and the benchmark election of 1984 had been largely indistinguishable among these

Democratic voters. (Figure 3.B) By contrast, economics was more weakly associated with a Democratic vote in 1996, the year of a solid re-election for Bill Clinton, the sitting Democratic President, than it had been in either of those preceding years. What was a ‘reversion to type’ among Republican voters, then, was a deviation from type among their Democratic counterparts, courtesy of gains everywhere *except* among strong economic liberals.

Lastly, the Non vote, as stratified by economic values, contributed yet a different story. The Perot vote lost almost all relationship to economics. The Republican vote reverted to an earlier relationship. The Democratic vote offered a deviant vote. And the Non vote completed the story by *retaining* its form from 1992. (Figure 3.D) For the nation as a whole, when economic values are the focus, the gains in aggregate turnout that had come with the contest of 1992, when Perot the independent surged, were given back in the contest of 1996, when he collapsed. Otherwise, the Non vote of 1996 was more or less directly parallel to the Non vote of 1992.

The cultural story of 1996 was different, and different in each voter category. The Perot vote of 1992 had been strongest among moderate cultural liberals. That effect had been important to replacing the older Republican pattern—no cultural relationship among most Republican voters, with a steep drop among strong cultural liberals—with one in which a relationship reached most of the way across the cultural continuum, albeit in the same direction as previously. What was distinctive about 1996 was that in the absence of a strong Perot vote, and with his residual vote close to flat, the *voting pattern* of 1992 was retained. (Figure 3.E) In other words, the Republican story of 1996, in the absence of a

strong Perot effect, was nevertheless more like the story of 1992 than like that of 1984 (or 1988).

At the same time, the relationship to cultural values within the Democratic vote could be said to be considerably more *gradual* than in previous years, featuring a less dramatic rise among strong cultural liberals when compared to the rest of the Democratic electorate. (Figure 3.F) What could not, in principle, be deduced from this apparent shift was whether it reflected some underlying change, now that Ross Perot was a less significant ‘unsettling factor’, or whether it, too, was more a reflection of a solid Clinton re-election, necessarily reaching more into populations which he had not previously attracted.

What could be asserted with more surety was that the relationship between cultural values and non-voting in 1996 had reverted to its more traditional form. (Figure 3.H) In 1996 as in 1984, voter turnout rose at both the liberal and conservative extremes on the cultural continuum, while falling toward the ideological center. By contrast, voter turnout in 1992 had risen as one moved across that continuum, being lowest among strong cultural conservatives and highest among strong cultural liberals. This deviant effect for 1992 appeared to owe its form to the special attraction of moderate cultural liberals to Perot. That attraction was gone in 1996, and so was the effect.

In the aggregate, the Perot vote did fall sharply between 1992 and 1996, inevitably reducing his potential for overall impact on the latter election. Yet the crucial point here is that the *structure* of that vote changed in the process. In 1992, Perot had been the classic ‘off-diagonal’ candidate, drawing disproportionately from economic conservatives and cultural liberals. This was in contrast to Bush, the Republican, who

was supported by economic conservatives generally while being abandoned by strong cultural liberals, and to Clinton, the Democrat, who was supported by economic liberals generally while being boosted by strong cultural liberals. In 1996, the same could be said for the Republican, Bob Dole, and for the Democrat, Bill Clinton. But for Perot, both relationships were gone.

To say the same thing differently, it had always been abstractly possible for an independent candidate for President to draw a substantial vote that was effectively unrelated to either economic or cultural values within the general public. This might occur, for example, because this vote represented a true and deliberate non-partisanship, a kind of ‘plague on both your houses’ mentality, or it might occur because the public passed a negative judgment on (what it found to be) two unattractive, individual, major-party candidates. The Perot vote of 1992 had most definitely not had this character. The Perot vote of 1996, in its precipitous decline, essentially did. In 1992, the Perot vote had a differentiated ideological profile, involving both economics and culture. In 1996, it had neither.

All that said, Ross Perot, in his decline, did manage to confirm something else about modern American politics. As a result, the contest of 1996 became a useful next step in an evolutionary analysis of the ideological landscape for electoral politics:

- The voting relationships to economics and culture for 1984 and 1988 had confirmed that very similar relationships could accompany partisan candidates who were themselves very different as between one election and the other. Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale had been stereotypical conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats respectively. George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis had been

- The valuational relationships characterizing the Democratic vote had likewise changed nearly not at all in 1992, despite the appearance of Perot as a serious third candidate and despite some consequential impacts by Perot on the valuational relationships characterizing the Republican vote. Yet unlike 1984 and 1988, the Democratic candidate had been victorious. Accordingly, similar relationships characterizing the Democratic vote in losing years (like 1984 and 1988) could also characterize it in winning years (like 1992), as long as victory was not merely due to the fact that the Perot effect took place largely among previously Republican voters.
- What became clear in 1996, lastly, was that Democratic victories were indeed not dependent on an independent third candidate who largely wreaked havoc among Republicans. Perot was now drawing equally (if more marginally) from every locale along the economic and cultural continuums. Yet when both major parties continued to feature the same general relationships to economics and culture in their vote as they had in 1992, and even when this independent third candidate was still on the scene, the Democratic candidate could again be elected, indeed more solidly than before.

The Presidential Contest of 2000

In the abstract, the presidential contests of 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996 appear to cover the gamut of partisan outcomes: Republican re-election, initial Republican election, initial Democratic election, and Democratic re-election, respectively. If those outcomes

contribute no patterned variation of their own to the links among social backgrounds, political values, and voting behavior—no variation that goes specifically with Republican versus Democratic victories, no variation that goes with initial winners versus the re-elected—then the search for such variation needs naturally to go elsewhere. Here, this would mean turning to simultaneous relationships with economics and culture, to density maps for the ideological locations associated with those relationships, or, of course, to differences between sub-group behaviors and the nation as a whole.

Yet the presidential contest of 2000 was to remind everyone that, in practice, there is another possible outcome, even when partisanship and incumbency define the available possibilities. For 2000 was to provide, in effect, a practical ‘dead heat’. The nationwide vote in this year was to be so close that the actual outcome became dependent on the application of rules-of-the-game by a nested set of *courts*. Either Texas Governor George W. Bush, the Republican, or Vice-President Albert “Al” Gore, the Democrat, would ultimately have to qualify as the winner, but the vote by itself would not determine the choice between them. On the other hand, in analytic terms, the 2000 outcome allowed investigation of the possibility that an effective ‘dead heat’ might do something notably different either to the benchmark relationships derived from the Pew Surveys of 1984 and 1988 or to the evolution of those benchmarks in 1992 and 1996.

In the abstract, a result as close as that in 2000 might have produced any number of distinct but presumably moderate deviations from benchmarked norms. At the very least, such an outcome promised to squeeze out any potentially distorting effects from large wins by either party, while 2000 was also a return to electoral ‘normalcy’ in the sense that there was no independent candidate with a substantial vote, not even as

substantial as that created by Ross Perot in the year (1996) of his precipitous decline.² In practice, what 2000 largely did—in these individual relationships between economic or cultural values and the vote, though less, as we shall see late in this chapter, in their joint relationship—was to confirm the alignment of voting relationships, in this first presidential election after the Perot interlude, with their benchmarked counterparts from 1984 and 1988. The main exception to this, at the level of individual relationships, was the place of cultural values among Republican voters, where some further evolution was potentially in evidence.

Figure 4

In pursuit of those results, Figure 4 offers the relationship between our two great policy dimensions and the vote, first as tapped through economic and then through cultural values. It returns to embedding these relationships in three voting populations: those who chose Bush the Republican, those who chose Gore the Democrat, and those for whom non-voting was their preferred course. And it compares the result in three diagnostic years: 1984 as our starting point and ongoing benchmark, 1996 as the most immediately preceding election, and, of course, 2000 itself.

Among Republican voters, what emerges from such a picture is a powerful repeat of the relationship between economic values and Republican support from the predecessor election of 1996 and from the benchmark contest of 1984 (or indeed, its effect clone, 1988) as well. (Figure 4.A) George Bush in 2000 ran noticeably better than Bob Dole in 1996, so the line for this relationship is pitched at a higher (and happier)

² Because his vote was consequential in 2000 in the decisive state of Florida, though trivial overall, we shall pay some attention to Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate for President, in a later section of this chapter. His vote was so small nationwide, however, that it had little potential impact on the relationships considered in this section.

place for Republicans. But the line itself is minimally different. Clearly, it was the first Perot election of 1992 that had been the deviant case for Republican voting and economic values, promptly restored in 1996 and simply extended in 2000.

The Democratic electorate, in its relationship between economic values and voting behavior, then recapitulated its own voting patterns from earlier years in an even more automatic way, with, as ever, one opposite twist from the Republican story. (Figure 4.B) Among Democratic voters, the line of relationship between economic values and the vote in 2000 was effectively identical to that of the benchmark year of 1984. The extent to which nothing had changed was impressive indeed: 2000 and 1984 came very close to being overlaid across their entire distribution. For the Democrats, it was 1996 that had apparently represented the greater deviance.

What this meant, by extension, was that the two-party vote, approached through economic preferences alone, showed powerful continuity, not change, in 2000. The Republican vote still showed a strong negative relationship to economic ideology, with economic conservatives attracted far more than economic liberals. The Democratic vote showed a somewhat weaker but still impressive positive relationship to economic ideology, with economic liberals attracted much more than economic conservatives. And the third voting category, the non-voters, which had the potential to shift one or the other of these two major-party results if it had done something different in 2000 from *its* predecessors, instead converged almost exactly on the non-voting patterns not just of 1996 but also of 1984. (Figure 4.C)

The story of cultural values and the presidential vote in 2000 could be told in roughly the same way, as a story of reversion to much earlier patterns, with parallel

relationships pitched in a slightly different place from their most recent incarnation. Yet this cultural story had a minor twist in each voting group, one that had the potential to grow into something prospectively different, depending not on the contest of 2000, but of course, on where these twists went in the subsequent contests of 2004 and 2008. The largest of these differences from the story of economic patterns involved the Republican vote. A smaller twist involved the Democratic vote. And the third difference involved non-voters, though it was so small that it risked being sampling error: a subsequent election would be essential to comment on this latter risk.

The Republican story of cultural values and voting behavior in 2000 had to be characterized, first of all, as a reversion toward the benchmark pattern of 1984. (Figure 4.D) This original, and still diagnostic, voting relationship showed Republican support as largely invariant from strong cultural conservatives through moderate cultural liberals, before dropping sharply among strong cultural liberals. The contest of 1996 had suggested that this cultural conflict had extended farther along the full continuum while becoming less severe at the liberal extreme. The contest of 2000 belied any such change. Instead, it suggested—the one twist on a story of continuing stability—that any extended drop in Republican support along the cultural continuum now began among moderate and not just strong liberals, while actually falling a bit *farther* among the latter.

The Democratic story of cultural values in 2000 could be characterized as an even stronger reversion toward the benchmark pattern of 1984, and hence a move away from the relationship between cultural values and Democratic voting in 1996, which, like its Republican counterpart, looked like a modest anomaly from this perspective. (Figure 4.E) Recall that the original benchmark relationships between cultural values and voting

behavior among Democrats, from 1984, had been the obverse of the Republican relationship in that year: largely invariant from strong cultural conservatives through moderate cultural liberals, before jumping up sharply among strong cultural liberals. Yet where the Republican story for the predecessor election, of 1996, had shown an extension of cultural relationships to the vote, its Democratic counterpart had shown a moderation of these relationships, including a clearly weaker Democratic increment among strong cultural liberals. In suggesting a reversion toward the benchmark pattern, then, what 2000 did for the Democrats was to restore the scope of this increment: the cultural voting line for 2000 was nearly an exact overlay to the cultural voting line for 1984 (one that had, as ever, been replicated precisely in 1988).

The relationship between cultural values and the non-vote then told its version of the same story: reversion toward earlier years, with a tiny distinction that might be nothing more than survey noise or might instead foreshadow a different evolutionary path. (Figure 4.F) Both the predecessor election of 1996 and the benchmark election of 1984 had shown non-voting in decline at the liberal and conservative extremes of the cultural continuum, while being comparatively elevated across the broad middle. A picture of non-voting in 2000 erased most of the turnout gain among strong cultural liberals, while more sharply increasing the non-vote among their conservative opposite numbers. Yet these tendencies were modest indeed, making any further prediction from them a very high risk.

On the one hand, then, the largest single story of voting relationships in the contest of 2000 was their reversion toward the (increasingly far-off) benchmark pattern of 1984, as replicated in 1988. The two contests involving Ross Perot as a third voting

possibility stood out as aberrant in this perspective. Yet the true aberration had been 1992. The contest of 1996 actually generated voting relationships that differed from the benchmark (and hence from 2000) mainly in the degree to which the Republican had done worse and the Democrat had done better, locating a parallel relationship at a different level of partisan support but otherwise introducing only modest twists upon it.

On the other hand, if this was uniformly true of relationships between economic values and voting behavior in 2000, cultural values had introduced just enough further differences, both from its immediate predecessor and from the more-distant benchmark, to make a simple story of voter reversion appear less inescapably adequate. Moreover, the nature of these differences itself varied as among Republicans, Democrats, and non-voters. In this, Republicans exaggerated an older pattern; Democrats merely confirmed it; while non-voters substituted something potentially new. So the concluding point about the contest of 2000 is merely that these incipient twists were enough to gainsay the presence of a uniform *and lasting* voter reversion, at least without consideration of one or two successor elections.

The Presidential Contest of 2004

Most commentators were to say of the election of 2000, at least in its aftermath, that it had featured no dominating issue, or even issue dimension. As a result, candidates were free to try gambits in both domains, the economic and the cultural, and both did. George W. Bush, in particular, attempted to stake out new Republican territory not just in education but also in prescription drugs, and he ultimately travelled all the way to the Democratic policy heartland with new proposals on Social Security. Al Gore was always more reactive, letting his environmental credentials largely speak for themselves, mostly

counterpunching against the main Bush initiatives, while seeking to extend credit for a booming economy, though he did need to innovate a bit in order to separate himself from outgoing President Bill Clinton on personal character.

Few if any commentators were to say the same sorts of things about the election of 2004. As much as any presidential contest in American history, it had an apparent surface theme that both candidates had to address. In response, both candidates consciously and repeatedly did so. The theme was national security, as embodied in the threat of domestic terrorism. The terrorist attacks in September of 2001 had recast the Bush Presidency itself, soon after its creation. Yet their effect extended, easily, to the *referendum* on that presidency in November of 2004. Republican strategists knew that a judgment on the war on terror was central to judgments about the success of the Bush Presidency. Democratic strategists recognized that they could not unseat the President without projecting complete reliability in continued pursuit of that war. And commentators touted what was probably the great foreign policy election of the survey era, certainly of the era covered by the Pew Values Surveys.

Yet even in the campaign, there were reminders of two, not one, great dimensions to public preferences. George W. Bush, the sitting Republican President, sought a second term affirming his trusteeship in office, and affirming most especially his efforts to fight the war on terror. Yet he did not fail to tout alleged domestic successes, too, in educational reform, for example, and in the new prescription drug program for seniors. Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, the Democratic challenger, sought to replace Bush, of course, so that the argument that pursuit of the war on terror would not flag on his watch was inescapably central to his quest. On the other hand, his campaign also

consistently argued that most other issues, largely economic in nature, would be better served by the Democratic rather than the Republican response.

In that sense, 2004 offered yet another impressively different context for the interplay of social backgrounds, policy preferences, and presidential votes, a context distinguished not so much by partisanship or incumbency this time as by the apparent dominance of one policy dimension. To repeat: the elite narrative for the presidential contest of 2004 emphasized cultural values—national security, civil liberties, the projection of American power—rather than economic values, and we shall begin our investigation of this distinctive year on the cultural rather than the economic dimension. It would be surprising indeed if these values did not have a major role to play. From the other side, however, the public had never previously denied a major place in voting relationships to its economic values. In that light, the presidential contest of 2004 presented the most extreme test in the Pew survey era of the continuing place of these values, too.

Yet for us, 2004 created a methodological challenge different from every other year. For this was the one presidential election in all the years from 1984 through 2008 when the Pew Values Surveys did not ask about a *vote* in the preceding presidential contest. As a result, we have had to move to a different survey in this one year, with all the difficulties of continuity and comparison that this move implies. We have chosen to use the General Social Survey (GSS), because it offers a rich array of policy items on both of our major policy domains. Many of these are easily categorized as ‘economic’ or

‘cultural’. We have limited ourselves to those which are indeed easily categorized while still having some apparent relationship to the ongoing items from the Pew surveys.³

Figure 5

Accordingly, Figure 5 is the familiar set-up for the relationship between economic or cultural values and the vote, among Republican, Democratic, and Non voters, for the benchmark year of 1984, the preceding year of 2000, and the succeeding year of 2004—where the latter is pictured through the GSS and not through any Pew survey. Interpretation of the result is simple enough in a textual sense, though the reader must consider that this result is not built on the same items as all of the other years. On the other hand, readers who are comfortable with this way of proceeding do get a major implicit test of the result in all those other years, in the sense that the two key latent variables continue to show a powerful overall continuity with the (Pew-based) elections before and after, while allowing some further twists that appear to follow logically from the events, and campaigns, of 2004.

The dominant elite narrative is an argument for beginning the analysis in 2004 with culture rather than economics. In turn, the Republican vote of 2004, as stratified by cultural values, presented a strong argument for *continued evolution*. (Figure 5.D) What was once, in our benchmark year of 1984, an essentially flat relationship across most of the cultural continuum, before plunging among strong cultural liberals, had by 2000 begun to fall among moderate liberals, too. For 2004, the change was additionally striking. Now, in this ‘year of the war on terror’, the relationship with cultural values among Republican voters reached all the way from the strongest cultural *conservatives* to the strongest cultural liberals. This was a result consistent with the elite argument that

³ For economics, these were: A, B, C, D, & E. For culture, they were: F, G, H, I, & J.

cultural values should have been diagnostically to the fore in this distinctive year. Yet it was also consistent with the notion of an ongoing evolution in voting relationships with cultural values. Only another election (or two) could distinguish those two possibilities. What was already clear by 2004 was that one, the other, or both had to be true. This particular portrait of Republican voting certainly did not gainsay either.

Less striking in the degree of change, but roughly parallel in direction of effect, was the Democratic vote of 2004, again as stratified by cultural values. (Figure 5.E) The Democratic votes of the predecessor year of 2000 and the benchmark year of 1984 had been more noteworthy than their Republican counterparts for an essential continuity. The Democratic vote of 2004 was likewise less different from these years than its Republican counterpart. Yet it moved in essentially the same way, albeit in the opposite ideological direction, by reaching all the way from strong cultural liberals to strong cultural *conservatives*, declining as it went. Again, this violated no expectations about the fundamentally cultural character of the 2004 election. Again, it had the prospect of reflecting evolution rather than idiosyncrasy, once other elections were added to the story.

Lastly, the situation among non-voters was different from that among both the Republicans and the Democrats. (Figure 5.F) Here, the relationship between cultural values and the Non vote for 2004 had actually reverted to the original story, that of 1984. Which is to say: in 2004 as in 1984, both strong cultural conservatives and strong cultural liberals were more likely to turn out and vote. Which implies, accurately, that it was cultural *moderates* who were marginally more likely to be Non voters. This relationship was not strong. But it was clearly *not* a straightforward evolution from the situation in

2000, where strong cultural conservatives had been least likely to vote, strong cultural liberals most likely to do so.⁴

On the one hand and in light of those cultural findings, it would not be surprising to discover that relationships between the Republican, the Democratic, or the Non vote and *economic* values in 2004 did not change as strongly, and Figure 5 suggests that this was in fact the case. Yet Figure 5 goes on to suggest two other things. In the first, economics remained a major concern in all voter groups. In other words, economic values most definitely did not decline in their overall relationship to voting behavior in 2004, even as the relationship to cultural values increased. But second, *changes* in these economic relationships worked differently in *each* of the three voter categories. They were not a simple picture of addition and subtraction for economics, as in fact they were for culture.

Thus the Republican vote of 2004, as stratified by economic preferences, showed a clear and distinctive change not just from 1984, but even from 2000. (Figure 5.A) The form of this relationship was familiar, with Republican support falling with the move from strong economic conservatism to strong economic liberalism. But the relationship was stronger in 2004 than in its most distant or its most immediate predecessors: Republican support fell *additionally* in this later year with the move from strong economic conservatism to strong economic liberalism.

This augmented effect was all the more striking because there was no counterpart shift—none—among Democratic voters. (Figure 5.B) The result here was remarkably

⁴ There is some evidence, from descriptions provided for the Pew and GSS surveys, that the GSS is more concerned with sampling these non-voters. Because of this evidence, we are not comfortable asserting that the other obvious difference among election years in Figure 5.F, an increase in non-voting all across the cultural continuum, is an accurate portrayal. Indeed, actual aggregate voting results from the three years would suggest that it is not.

familiar, with Democratic support rising from strong economic conservatives through strong economic liberals. Yet both the form and the location of the line expressing this relationship were essentially identical not just to that of 2000 but also to that of 1984.

In such a situation, declining Republican support among economic liberals had to be expressed somewhere. And the non-voting group had to provide the answer, once it was clear that relationships were unchanged among Democratic voters. (Figure 5.C) Thus non-voting in 2004 increased sharply from strong economic conservatism through strong economic liberalism, more sharply than in either 2000 or 1984. In both those prior years, this relationship was evident but weak. In 2004, it was increasingly evident, being stronger than either of those predecessors. At a minimum, this suggested that, in a year when cultural concerns received especial attention from strategists and analysts, it was the strong economic liberals who were least attracted by the campaign.

Economic and Cultural Values Jointly with the Evolving Vote

As in the benchmark year of 1984, so in all the years to follow: these individual relationships to the vote, for economic or cultural values, remained central to their joint relationships. At a minimum, they set limits on how different any joint picture could be. On the other hand, individual relationships, again for either economics or culture, never required proportionate associations with the alternative dimension. So it remains essential to go on and examine actual *joint* relationships to the vote, since they are the crucial intermediary step on the way to understanding the strategic landscape for electoral politics. What these relationships do, too, is to set clear limits on the potential contours of the ideological landscape for American politics. When they are unpacked, some electoral strategies are evidently encouraged, while others look increasingly implausible.

Yet once more, what these joint relationships really do is to *limit the options*, both for the actual ideological contours and for associated strategic responses to them. They do not determine the actual distribution of voters on the resulting ideological landscape, the real distribution of voters within those joint relationships. And it is ultimately this resulting ideological landscape, not those joint voting relationships, to which electoral strategists must respond. In other words, it is these valuational contours, *as captured by the density maps that represent them*, that determine whether any given strategic adjustment—any given alteration of policy promises—does or does not make sense.

Year-on-year comparisons will show pairs of successor presidential contests that varied only modestly for these joint relationships and their valuational contours, as with 1984 and 1988 or 2000, 2004, and 2008. Just as year-on-year comparisons can feature noteworthy but one-time deviations, as with 1992 and, to a lesser extent, 1996. Though in the end, what these year-on-year comparisons will wind up confirming is a substantial and lasting *evolution* of the American electoral landscape. It is this evolution, for the nation as a whole, which remains the central focus of Chapter Seven.

The Presidential Contest of 1988

Accordingly, Figure 6 moves on from individual relationships to the vote for economic versus cultural values among Republican, Democratic, and Non voting groups to their joint relationships, in 1988 as the opening point of comparison with the benchmark year of 1984. Individual analyses for 1984 and 1988 (at Figure 1) testified to remarkable continuity. The two years came close to being a simple overlay. Joint analyses make the same central point: a powerful—in most ways remarkable—continuity between these two years.

Figure 6

Recall that the Republican vote in 1984, for Ronald Reagan the incumbent president, was as pure an economic vote as has been registered for any candidate in any election from 1984 through 2008. Nevertheless, what stands out immediately here is the degree to which this voting pattern was merely recapitulated in 1988, with George H.W. Bush, Vice President under Reagan, as the Republican candidate instead. (Figure 6.A; compare with Figure 2.A of Chapter Six) In both years, this vote moves up regularly and relentlessly from liberal to conservative. In both years, it moves up in such a dominating fashion as to be unaffected by cultural preferences across most of the economic continuum. The decline in Republican voting among strong cultural liberals may begin a bit earlier in 1988 than it did in 1984, and the drop itself is larger in 1988 than it was in 1984 where it does occur. But that is all there is to add.

Much work on elite politics emphasizes Ronald Reagan's role in expanding the partisan gap on *cultural* issues within the two active political parties, and analyses of major-party platforms would confirm the widening of this gap during his administration. But at the polls, among voters in the general public, the Reagan vote was the purest picture the Pew Surveys can provide of an *economic* vote. Most work on the Reagan and Bush campaigns, and indeed on the Reagan and Bush Presidencies, would likewise agree that they came out of very different wings—not to mention career paths—within the Republican Party. Yet at the mass public level, their votes were nearly interchangeable. Moreover, to the degree that they could be distinguished at all, the Bush vote was an intensification, not a moderation, of the patterns characterizing the Reagan vote.

In turn, recall that the Democratic vote in 1984, for Walter Mondale the former Vice President, was also related predominantly to economic values, albeit inversely, rising with economic liberalism and falling with economic conservatism. On the one hand, this too is quite literally the closest to a pure economic ballot among Democratic voters for any election in the Pew Values era. On the other hand, it is already showing more of a role for cultural values among Democratic as opposed to Republican voters. Nevertheless, what stands out here is the degree to which this voting pattern was merely recapitulated in 1988, with Michael Dukakis, Governor of Massachusetts, as the Democratic candidate instead. (Figure 6.B; compare with Figure 2.B of Chapter Six) Dukakis actually suffers a bit more decline among strong cultural conservatives and garners a bit more support among strong cultural liberals than would have been the case even for Walter Mondale. But again, the similarities within the Democratic vote across these successor years overwhelm these marginal differences.

Across the broad middle of the cultural continuum, economic preferences still tell most of the story in 1988 as they did in 1984, for Democrats as they do for Republicans. Where there is a difference between the two parties is in the more advanced role for cultural values within the Democratic vote, a pattern that will continue for a generation, before converging at last in the 2000s. In truth, much work on elite politics traces the origins of an expanding cultural gap between the two parties, not to the Reagan nomination of 1980 but to the McGovern nomination of 1972. Analyses of party platforms would affirm this impression, too, at the level of the active Democratic Party, and this certainly leaves room for the voting public to have picked up some of this difference during the succeeding dozen years. While the Pew data cannot reach back to

1972, they can confirm, in a parallel with the situation inside the Republican Party, that while Michael Dukakis was more moderate than Walter Mondale culturally, the Dukakis vote was an intensification, not a moderation, of the Mondale pattern on culture.

Perhaps surprisingly, the greatest change in joint voting relationships between 1984 and 1998, albeit not very great even then, arrives with the Non voters, those who fell outside the active electorate. Recall that in 1984, non-voting was a powerfully economic phenomenon, rising regularly with economic liberalism, while this dominant economic relationship was then tweaked by culture in two places. Among strong economic liberals, strong cultural conservatism augmented the propensity not to vote, while strong cultural liberals voted so overwhelmingly that economics had little further relationship to their electoral behavior. In 1988, non-voting was still a powerfully economic phenomenon. (Figure 6.C; compare with Figure 2.C of Chapter Six) Yet in this successor year, it was cultural moderates who were additionally disinclined to vote. Strong cultural liberals still voted overwhelmingly, but strong cultural conservatives had improved their voting performance over 1988, so that it was the moderates who lagged both cultural extremes.

Figure 7

The presidential contests of 1984 and 1988 remain impressively similar when the focus moves on from joint relationships with the vote to the actual distribution of individuals whose vote operationalizes those relationships. These distributions are best captured through the density maps for these two elections, in figures that feature not the likelihood of voting one way or another at any given point of economic and cultural preference, but rather the share of voters who are actually concentrated there. While

these density maps, too, are similar for both elections, for 1984 and 1988, they do immediately remind the analyst of how different the implications of a picture of *voting relationships* can look when transformed this way. One more time, recall the story of these relationships in 1984 (as captured in Figure 3 of Chapter Six):

- The modal Republican voter was strongly conservative on economics, moderately liberal on culture. As a result, in combination, the ‘high ground’ of Republicanism—the area on the ideological landscape that was more than 50% more likely than the nation as a whole to vote Republican—was largely contained within the terrain of strong economic conservatives (<0.2), but otherwise extended from moderate cultural conservatives to moderate cultural liberals. Only strong cultural liberals were entirely missing.
- The modal Democratic voter was, by contrast, strongly liberal on culture and moderately liberal on economics, albeit ranging in roughly equal proportion from strong economic liberals through true economic centrists, before dropping off entirely. Yet what made the Democratic density map additionally distinctive was that there was a secondary concentration of Democrats—a second Democratic ‘high ground’—that was unconnected to, indeed distant from, this primary concentration. These individuals were strongly liberal on economics but strongly conservative on culture.
- This latter was a distribution that gained additional curiosity value from the fact that the modal Non voter was likewise strongly liberal on economics and strongly conservative on culture, thereby overlapping this secondary concentration among

Figure 7, a density map with the same construction for 1988, can be even more concisely summarized, because it is so powerfully similar to the density map for 1984. The modal Republican continued to be a strong economic conservative and a moderate cultural liberal, with a bit more extension into the territory of moderate economic conservatives and a bit *less* extension into the territory of strong cultural conservatives. (Figure 7.A) In moving ever so slightly left on both economics and culture, this modal Republican might reasonably have been reflecting the shift from Ronald Reagan to George H.W. Bush.

The modal Democrat then continued to be found in two separate places.⁵ (Figure 7.B) The primary concentration remained strong cultural liberals who extended all the way from strong economic liberals to moderate economic conservatives this time. In moving modestly to the right on economics, this modal Democrat might have been reflecting the shift from Walter Mondale to Michael Dukakis, but note that a similar cultural shift was not reflected at all: the modal Democrat remained on the far left on culture. At the same time, the main secondary concentration among Democrats—their other ‘high ground’—remained strong economic liberals who were strong cultural conservatives. These individuals truly did not move at all. Moreover, this population continued to overlap the modal Non voter, who was likewise a strong economic liberal

⁵ Figure 2.A might suggest that the Republicans, too, had a small secondary high-ground on the electoral landscape. Subsequent figures will suggest, however, that this appearance in 1988 is merely one of a number of very tiny shares of the American public that pop up occasionally on density maps. If they are real at all, they are very small indeed—hardly the stuff of serious strategic adjustment. But because this analytic framework is also least reliable at the far margins of economic or cultural values, these intermittent occurrences (of tiny valuational extremes) may be completely artifactual. We ignore them in the analysis that follows.

and a strong cultural conservative. (Figure 7.C) Indeed, this secondary Democratic concentration continued to be found entirely *within* the primary concentration of Non voters.

The Presidential Contest of 1992

The comparable story, for joint relationships and density maps, almost had to be different for the presidential contest of 1992. This was the contest, of course, in which an independent candidate, Ross Perot, gained almost one in five of the votes cast. That alone suggests that 1992 would be different from 1984 and 1988: it was very unlikely that Perot could draw a vote of that size equally from each of the two major parties. In any case, we already know from the analysis of individual relationships to the vote for economic and cultural values that both valuational domains produced patterned relationships to this vote, so that they had to be taking votes disproportionately from different policy preferences, preferences that related differentially to one or the other major party.

Figure 8

In a search for change, then, it makes sense to begin, not with the major-party vote, but with the substantial vote that was different by definition, the independent vote for third-candidate Perot. Individual voting relationships with economics and culture have already testified to a distinctive pattern of ideological support within this vote. (Figures 2.C and 2.G) Thus support for Ross Perot in 1992 was strongly related to economic conservatism, while it increased modestly from strong cultural conservatism through moderate cultural *liberalism*, before falling again among strong cultural liberals. The joint relationship for economic and cultural values with this Perot voter adjusts this

picture, though only modestly. Seen this way, the Perot vote rose toward the conservative end of the economic continuum, while rising sharply from moderate cultural conservatives to true cultural *moderates*, then tailing away more gradually through moderate cultural liberals and finally strong cultural liberals. (Figure 8.C)

Because strong economic conservatives and moderate cultural liberals were ordinarily a bedrock of *Republican* support, as they had been in both 1984 and 1988, their attraction to Perot in 1992 caused joint relationships to the Republican vote to look quite different. (Figure 8.A) It was not that economic values did not continue to shape this Republican vote across their entire range; they certainly did. But now, culture shaped this vote across much of its range as well, so that the Republican vote appeared to rise with both economic *and* cultural conservatism, and fall with their opposite states. Because this pattern looked much like the one that would ultimately come to characterize Republican voting generally, it raises the question of whether 1992 was a harbinger of later results, a question that cannot be answered until those later years come into the analysis.

In the meantime, it is clear that the economic but especially the cultural side of the Perot vote was also reshaping joint relationships to the *Democratic* vote in 1992. (Figure 8.B) As ever, a relationship to economic values remained clearly in evidence across most of the ideological terrain, disappearing only among strong cultural liberals, for whom cultural values completely trumped economics. Yet now, the Democratic vote outside of strong cultural liberalism also assumed the opposite pattern to the Republican vote, rising with both economic and cultural *liberalism*, and falling with their opposite states. The only voting group apparently unshaped by the Perot performance, then, was the Non

voters, who continued to offer their customary joint relationship. (Figure 8.D) The Non vote rose with economic liberalism and cultural *conservatism* and fell away, as ever, in the opposite directions.

Figure 9

Density maps, however, tell a somewhat different story for 1992. The Perot vote remains distinctive, almost by definition. But where the Republican vote also looks quite different from previous years in response, the Democratic and Non-voting high grounds look very much the same. Seen this way, the modal Perot voter was a strong to moderate conservative on economics, but one who was concentrated among true centrists and moderate liberals on culture, while declining clearly among strong liberals and precipitously among strong conservatives. (Figure 9.C) When the total picture is then put back together, comparing this high ground with counterpart areas for Republicans, Democrats, and Non-voters, their density maps make the story clearer still.

Seen comparatively, the Bush vote was likewise concentrated among moderate to strong economic conservatives, whose modal member was a moderate cultural *conservative*. (Figure 9.A) This represents a clear shift toward the cultural right among Republican voters, though the explanation is simple enough: the previously modal Republican voter, a moderate cultural liberal, had been strongly attracted by an alternative candidate for 1992, in Ross Perot. Again, the question arises of whether this was a harbinger or an idiosyncrasy. Again, the answer can only come from subsequent election analyses.

In the meantime, note that both the Democratic and the Non votes looked very similar to the preceding two elections, when their density maps are the focus. The Demo-

cratic vote continued to offer its curious, bipartite terrain. (Figure 9.B) The primary concentration of Clinton voters was, as ever, among strong cultural liberals, who ranged from being strong economic liberals through true economic centrists—with the latter actually the modal Democrat for 1992. The main secondary concentration of Clinton voters was even more familiar, finding its high ground among strong economic liberals who were strong cultural *conservatives*. And this remained even truer for Non voters, who rose even more strikingly than usual in 1992 to their diagnostic high ground in the same territory. (Figure 9.D) As a result, the secondary Democratic concentration was even more thoroughly overlapped than usual by its non-voting counterpart.

To say the same thing differently, it was the Republican vote that contrasted most directly with the Perot vote in 1992. The two were similarly concentrated among moderate to strong economic conservatives, but distinguished by the fact that the Bush landscape had a modal member who was a moderate cultural conservative, while the Perot landscape featured a modal member who was a moderate cultural liberal. The Democratic and Non votes, while distinguishable in important regards as between themselves—differing profoundly on cultural values—nevertheless showed no overlap of their concentrated territory with either the Bush or the Perot vote. The suggestion thus remains strong that Perot mainly damaged Bush as between the major-party candidates, despite altering joint relationships to the vote for both.

The Presidential Contest of 1996

The leading major-party story of the presidential contest of 1996 was the solid—indeed, easy—re-election of Bill Clinton. Unsympathetic analysts in 1992 had attributed his previous victory to the vote-splitting capabilities of Ross Perot. Perot was still around

in 1996, but no one would attribute a thumping re-election for Bill Clinton to his influence this time. In fact, as we shall see, Perot may have done more harm to the Democrat than to the Republican in this successor run. On the other hand, the leading third-candidate story of the presidential contest of 1996 was the *collapse* of the Perot vote, and this in two senses. First, his vote fell by more than half, from 19% to 8%. Second, we already know that the vote which remained showed little individual relationship to either economic or cultural values. (Figures 3.C and 3.G) The story of their joint relationship to the vote in 1996, however, was to feature a strikingly different combined profile for the Perot vote, along with a partial return to established patterns for both the Republican and the Democratic tally, as well as a return to one of two previous patterns among non-voters.

Figure 10

As before, despite the comparative collapse of the Perot vote, it makes sense to begin the 1996 analysis with that tally, especially since it was so different from 1992. In 1992, the Perot vote had risen toward strong economic conservatives and moderate cultural liberals, while tailing off among moderate cultural conservatives and strong cultural liberals. (Figure 8.C) In 1996, by contrast, it rose toward strong economic *liberals* and strong cultural liberals as well. There was some substantive justification for the economic shift. The leading economic issue for Perot in 1992 had been the deficit, more of a concern for fiscal conservatives than fiscal liberals, while the leading economic issue for Perot in 1996 was protectionism, more of a concern for fiscal liberals than fiscal conservatives. On the other hand, there was no obvious leading cultural issue for Perot in *either* year, suggesting that his cultural vote was more *reactive* in both contests, against

rising cultural conservatism in the Republican Party in 1992 and against a repositioned cultural conservatism by Bill Clinton in the Democratic Party of 1996. Regardless, while the joint relationship to the vote was weaker in 1996 than it had been in 1992, it also led in *very* different directions.

By comparison, the Republican vote, for Bob Dole as the standard-bearer this time, showed a joint relationship in 1996 more like that of 1984 and 1988. (Figure 10.A) In this, it was back to featuring a strong relationship to economic conservatism across the broad middle of the ideological distribution, with a clear increment to the Republican among strong cultural conservatives and a clear decrement to him among moderate and strong cultural liberals. This relationship followed the form of the same associations in 1984 and 1988, though the three contests likewise showed an ongoing evolution, in which the increment among strong cultural conservatives got larger with each passing year, while the decrement not only got larger as well but reached farther in from the liberal extremes with each succeeding contest.

This partial reversion to form among Republican voters in 1996 effectively undid the pattern of 1992, which had featured an influence for both economic and cultural issues across their full spectrums. And the same could be said about the Democrats in 1996. For 1992, they, too, had offered this joint full-spectrum effect. (Figure 8.B) For 1996, it was gone. Instead, the Democratic vote appeared to feature no less than *three* distinct relationships. Among strong cultural conservatives (<0.2), both valuational dimensions were in play. Among moderate cultural conservatives and true cultural centrists (0.2-0.6), the key voting relationship was almost entirely economic. And among moderate to strong cultural liberals (>0.6), the story was almost entirely *cultural*: Bill

Clinton managed to outperform his national percentage among every economic faction among these cultural liberals.

With an augmented association to cultural values among both extreme conservatives and extreme liberals within Republican *and* Democratic ranks, it should probably not be surprising that the joint relationship to non-voting in 1996 reverted to its 1988 pattern. In 1984, the Non vote had risen toward economic liberals who were cultural conservatives. (Figure 2.D in Chapter Six) In 1988, it had instead risen toward economic liberals who were cultural *moderates*. (Figure 6.D) In 1992, the Non vote was again rising toward economic liberals who were strong cultural conservatives. (Figure 8.D) For 1996, lastly, it was again rising toward economic liberals who were cultural *moderates*. (Figure 10.D)

Economic liberalism was thus the constant associated with non-voting. So was the inclination of cultural liberals to vote, regardless of their economics. What varied was the propensity of non-voting economic liberals to be cultural conservatives in some years, cultural moderates in others. And this appeared to result largely from what was attracting Republicans and Democrats on the cultural dimension in the year in question.

Figure 11

Density maps then interpreted these joint relationships in a fashion that varied dramatically by voting category. Most strikingly, the Perot high ground, such as it was—those individuals who were more than half again as likely to vote for Perot than was the nation as a whole—moved to an entirely new place on the ideological landscape. Conversely, the Republican high ground remained essentially where it was in 1992, an apparently deviant year by comparison to its predecessors, *despite* the collapse of the

Perot vote. The Democratic high ground—really high ‘grounds’, given its disconnected character—stayed where it had been since 1984. And the Non-voting high ground stayed put as well, remaining coterminous with the secondary part of the Democratic high ground.

The joint relationship for economic and cultural values with the Perot vote showed it rising with economic and cultural liberalism in 1996. (Figure 10.C) On the one hand, when the distribution of Perot voters underlying this joint relationship instead became the focus instead, the analyst is instantly reminded of how little ideological attachment remained for this vote: there was little ‘high ground’ anywhere. On the other hand, the largest residual Perot terrain had a new—and newly striking—character. (Figure 11.C) In 1992, the modal Perot voter had been a strong to moderate *economic conservative*, who was a moderate to strong cultural liberal. (Figure 9.C) For 1996, the modal Perot voter was instead a strong cultural liberal who was a moderate to strong *economic liberal*. As terrain on the ideological landscape, the main Perot concentrations from these two years did not overlap at any point, having become more liberal on culture and much more liberal on economics.⁶

In a sense, it was stability, rather than change, that made the Republican high ground in 1996 so noteworthy. In 1988, these Republican voters had overrepresented strong economic conservatives who were simultaneously moderate cultural liberals. (Figure 7.A) In 1992, Ross Perot had pushed this Republican coalition to the cultural right, by way of *his* attraction for cultural moderates. (Figure 9.A) By 1996, this Perot attraction was gone, yet the Republican coalition stayed essentially where it was in 1992.

⁶ There was the tiniest bit of overlap between the two years with a small secondary concentration of Perot voters in 1996, among strong economic conservatives who were moderate cultural conservatives as well.

(Figure 11.A) Which is to say: those moderate cultural liberals, the previous bedrock of Republican voting, did not return as an overrepresented faction once Perot was in decline as a potential resting place—and they would never do so again, at least as this is written.

The overrepresented faction among Republican voters thus remained conservative on economics. That did not change, and indeed, this part of the overrepresented Republican terrain actually expanded, to include *moderate* economic conservatives as well. The party had thus managed to secure clear numerical gains on the economically conservative part of the ideological landscape. Yet by 1996, this same terrain simultaneously confirmed the place of strong *cultural* conservatives within the disproportionately Republican population, as a substitute for—and in the process shedding—those previous moderate cultural liberals. As a result, the overrepresented ideological terrain among Republican voters now comprised moderate to strong economic conservatives who were centrist to strongly conservative on culture.

By contrast, the Democratic coalition looked roughly as it had in every election since 1984, with only one modest tweak, even considering the fact that the overrepresented elements in this coalition occupied two very different places on the ideological landscape. Once again, the Democratic coalition had its primary concentration among strong cultural liberals, who were otherwise located anywhere from strong economic liberalism to moderate economic *conservatism*, with the modal member a true economic centrist. (Figure 11.B) This economic tweak was thus a further expansion in the range of economic values for the primary Democratic concentration; as such, it testified to the growing power of culture and its ability to *neutralize* economic preferences. Only the strongest economic conservatives were now truly missing. Other-

wise, the main secondary concentration of Democratic voters remained exactly where it had been since the Pew Values Surveys began. These particular over-represented individuals were still strong economic liberals and strong cultural conservatives.

Moreover, they continued to overlap the single greatest concentration of non-voters, who were likewise strong economic liberals and strong cultural conservatives. (Figure 11.D) The joint *relationship* between economic plus cultural values and non-voting had suggested a rise for cultural moderates and a decline for cultural conservatives for 1996 among the strong economic liberals who were most often non-voters. (Figure 10.D) Figure 11.D reminds us that the *distribution* of strong economic liberals among the non-voters was still sufficiently skewed in ideological terms to maintain the numerical dominance of those who were strong economic liberals but strong (not moderate) cultural conservatives. In consequence, these individuals constituted the voting category least changed since 1984, a dozen years previous. In the process, they sustained the competition in this part of the ideological landscape for Democratic versus Non voting. Once more, non-voting won this competition. Once more, Republican voting was largely irrelevant.

The Presidential Contest of 2000

The presidential contest of 2000 featured a sitting Vice President, Al Gore, attempting to succeed his President. Distinguishing himself from his predecessor, Bill Clinton, was an obvious task for such a campaign, but so was a simultaneous emphasis on continuity and stability. The presidential contest of 2000 likewise featured a sitting Governor of Texas, George W. Bush, attempting to derail the succession. Bush was even more concerned than Gore with sketching a moderate, problem-solving persona, gathered

under his theme of “compassionate conservatism”. Beyond Gore and Bush, the presidential contest of 2000 was distinguished by the absence, not just of Ross Perot, but of a substantial independent vote. Ralph Nader would run as the Green Party candidate for president, and his vote would have a huge *impact* on the ultimate outcome. But the vote itself would be tiny.

Under those conditions, it was more than a little surprising that voting patterns in 2000 reverted not to the established template that characterized presidential politics in 1984 and 1988, before the Perot intrusion. Instead, these patterns looked much more like those for the major-party candidates in 1992, the great year of the Perot ascendancy. Perot had been in decline by 1996. He was missing in 2000. So voting patterns that looked more like 1992 than any other preceding year inevitably raised the question of change versus idiosyncrasy. With Perot out of the way as an intrusion, was the pattern of major-party support indeed undergoing change? Or was 2000 merely one more ‘wobble’ in a system whose fundamentals continued? Only a subsequent election or two could answers these questions, but 2000 certainly raised them.

Figure 12

Thus the Republican vote for President in 2000, for George W. Bush, testified to a powerful joint relationship to both economic and cultural values. (Figure 12.A) Economics was still present, and in the classical fashion. Economic conservatives were more inclined to vote for Bush and economic liberals less inclined at every level of cultural values. Yet *cultural* conservatives were now likewise more inclined to vote for Bush and cultural liberals less so at almost every level of *economic* values. Strong economic conservatives were unlikely to vote for Gore. Strong cultural liberals were

even more unlikely to vote for Bush. But otherwise, both economics and culture were in play across much of the ideological continuum. As a result, the Bush vote of 2000 looked more like the Bush vote of 1992, for George H.W. Bush that time, than it did like the Dole vote of 1996. (Figures 8.A and 10.A)

In the same fashion, the Democratic vote for President in 2000, for Al Gore, testified to a powerful joint relationship with both economic and cultural values. (Figure 12.B) As ever, economics was more neatly related to the Republican than to the Democratic vote. Yet that said, economic liberals were more inclined to vote for Gore and economic conservatives less inclined at every level of cultural values. Likewise, cultural liberals were more inclined to vote for Gore and cultural conservatives less inclined at most levels of economic values. Strong economic conservatives almost uniformly demurred. Strong cultural liberals had to be quite conservative on economic values before they defected. But joint relationships were more regular and far-reaching in the Democratic vote of 2000 than they had been even in the presidential contest of 1992, where strong cultural liberals were nearly untouched by economics. (Figure 8.B) And these relationships were vastly more regular and far-reaching than they had been in the Democratic vote of 1996, the one divided into three distinct pieces by culture. (Figure 10.B)

As ever, this left the non-vote to attest to stability rather than change for the longer run, as indeed it did, though even this Non vote looked much more like 1992 in 2000 than like 1996. (Figure 12.C) The presidential contest of 1996 had featured one of those non-voting patterns (1988 had been another) where strong economic liberals who were true cultural *moderates* had been least likely to turn out. (Figure 10.D) The

presidential contest of 2000, by contrast, looked more like the non-voting patterns of 1992 (or indeed, of 1984), where non-voting rose regularly with both economic liberalism and cultural *conservatism*. (Figure 8.C) This was testimony to the powerful regular relationships between economic liberalism and non-voting, but it also suggested that culture could shift with the individual contest in its relationship to the non-vote.

Figure 13

Once again, density maps then interpreted these joint relationships in a fashion that varied by voting category. The Republican story remained more like its counterpart in 1992 than in 1996. The Democratic story, which had never varied as much as the Republican picture, showed more modest changes from either year, but especially from 1996. And the Non vote showed the least change of all: if its joint voting relationships could vary between two recurring patterns, the actual distribution of non-voters—their density map—showed much less year-on-year variation.

The modal Republican voter of 2000 was a moderate to strong economic conservative who was a moderate cultural conservative as well. (Figure 13.A) The same could be said of the modal Republican voter of 1992, while the modal Republican in 1996 had been a strong, not a moderate, cultural conservative. (Figures 9.A and 11.A) If the total ‘high ground’ of Republicanism was considered instead—the overall area that was at least one and a half times more likely to vote Republican than the nation as a whole—then 2000 looked even more like 1992 than like 1996. Moreover, to the degree that there was any difference with 1992, it suggested that George W. Bush had managed to raise his vote among moderate cultural liberals just a bit, while paying a price among strong cultural conservatives, though these were small adjustments.

The modal Democratic voter of 2000 was, as ever, found in one primary and one secondary place. (Figure 13.B) The primary place was among strong *cultural* liberals, of highly varied economic preference. The secondary place was among strong *economic* liberals, who were simultaneously strong cultural conservatives. As generalizations, both would have been true in 1992 and 1996. (Figures 9.B and 11.B) In their specifics, the Democratic high ground of 1996 had been most distinctive in extending its reach among the strong cultural liberals all the way to moderate economic conservatives. These individuals were again missing in 2000, as they had been in 1992. In their stead, the Democratic high ground of 2000 had expanded to reach more moderate economic liberals than in either predecessor year. The secondary high ground, on the other hand, remained powerfully similar across all three years. It had been tickled a bit by moderate liberalism on economics in 1996, and now by moderate conservatism on culture in 2000, but those were tiny tickles.

The Presidential Contest of 2004

The re-election contest for Republican President George W. Bush in 2004, with Massachusetts Senator John Kerry as the Democratic challenger, had featured a dominant elite narrative: this was the great foreign policy election—the great contest over national security—in all the years of the Pew Values Surveys. Yet the campaign itself showed strong secondary attention by the candidates to domestic welfare concerns, which suggested that electoral strategists, at least, believed that economic values had not ceded their major place on the ideological landscape for electoral politics. Individual relationships between economic or cultural values and the vote ultimately confirmed that

judgment. Cultural values strengthened as a voting relationship in 2004, judged on their own terms, but economic values did not decline.

Figure 14

Considered simultaneously, with both economics and culture in the analysis at the same time, these joint voting relationships suggested:

- That the mutual power of economic and cultural values, as registered jointly in 2000, had actually retreated a bit in 2004. Seen graphically, the lines representing the vote were less ‘diagonal’ for both Republicans and Democrats across Figure 14 than they had been across Figure 12.
- Yet this decline still made 2004 look much more like 2000 than like 1984 (or 1988). Cultural values, in particular, were much more strongly related to the vote in the two more recent as opposed to the two more distant elections. (Figures 14.A & 14.B versus 12.A & 12.B)
- On the other hand, this overall historical comparison was additionally nuanced in 2004 by party. The Republican vote showed an increase in the relationship to economics by comparison to 2000. (Figure 14.A) While the Democratic vote showed an increase in the relationship to culture by comparison to 2000. (Figure 14.B)
- Lastly, the Non vote remained characteristically itself, rising with economic liberalism and cultural conservatism. (Figure 14.D)

In other words, the joint relationship to the vote for economic and cultural values among Republican voters still manifested a clear and regular relationship to both economics and culture. (Figure 14.A) The Republican vote rose regularly with both

economic and cultural conservatism, and fell regularly with their opposite (liberal) states. On the one hand, economics dominated culture within these joint relationships, being more strongly related to the vote. On the other hand, this was still much more like the situation in 2000 than the situation in 1984. In that sense, it made the presidential contest of 2008 even more prospectively consequential, as a potential arbiter of the direction of overall evolution.

By contrast, the joint relationship to the vote for economic and cultural values among Democratic voters likewise still manifested a clear and regular relationship to both economics and culture. (Figure 14.B) The Democratic vote rose regularly with both economic and cultural liberalism, and fell regularly with their opposite (conservative) states. Yet here, culture dominated economics within these joint relationships, being more strongly related to the vote. On the other hand, even this was still more like the situation in 2000 than the situation in 1984. As a result, once again, the presidential contest of 2008 gained prospective consequence as a potential arbiter of the overall drift of these joint relationships.

Which could not be said, finally, of the joint relationship to the non-vote for economic and cultural values in 2004. (Figure 14.C) Rising, as ever, toward the combination of economic *liberalism* and cultural *conservatism*, this Non vote looked more or less like its counterparts in both 2000 and 1984. The occasional tendency of non-voters to cluster additionally among cultural moderates was not in evidence in 2004, as it had not been in the most recent election, 2000, or the distant benchmark, 1984. So the presidential contest of 2004 had nothing further to say about the evolution of voting

relationships to economic and/or cultural values. Or rather, what it said was that there was still nearly nothing in the way of any such evolution in this non-voting population.

Figure 15

Density maps then interpret these joint voting relationships in a fashion emphasizing differences, rather than similarities, among the three main voting categories. The basic and well-established differences were very much in evidence in 2004. Thus Republican voters continued to be concentrated among economic conservatives, while varying more by cultural preference. (Figure 15.A) Democratic voters continued to be concentrated among cultural liberals, while varying more by economic preference. (Figure 15.B) And Non voters continued to be concentrated among strong economic liberals who were strong cultural conservatives. (Figure 15.D)

Within that strong, overall, continuing picture of the over-represented ideological factions within each voting category—the electoral high-ground for each—there were some small further nuances. The Republican high ground was more culturally conservative in 2004 than in 2000, perhaps simply reflecting the change in issue emphasis from compassionate conservatism to the war on terror, perhaps instead reflecting a more general evolution, which could only become evident in 2008. The Democratic high ground reached into more strongly liberal and more strongly conservative areas on economics in 2004 as opposed to 2000, again perhaps reflecting a simple upweighting of concerns with the war on terror, though perhaps instead reflecting a more general evolution. And the non-voting high ground just stood much where it always had.

The Evolution of the Strategic Landscape

Major-Party Politics: Economic Values, Cultural Values, and the Evolving Vote

On its surface, there were two great story-lines to the presidential contest of 2008, one involving major-party *nominations* and one involving the general election. For the first, involving the nominations, commentators emphasized that this would be the first election since 1952 (and hence the only one for which there is Pew survey data) with neither a sitting President seeking re-election nor a sitting Vice-President trying to succeed his president. The argument from this fact was that it maximized possible variety in the nature of the individuals who might end up as presidential nominees, and hence, for us, possible influences on the ongoing relationship among social background, political values, and voting behavior.

The successor story-line, involving the general election, was very different. The nation was already in recession when nominating politics began in earnest. As the months passed, the economy only declined further. When a comprehensive bank meltdown threatened in mid-September, the central theme of the general election campaigns, and the apparent priority of economics as an issue domain, seemed established. Commentators dubbed the presidential contest of 2008 as the greatest economic election since the Great Depression and hence, for this analysis, as *the* great economic election of the survey-research era.

On their face, both story-lines seem inherently plausible. What they did not offer in general, even on their own terms, was any systematic link between this elite narrative and mass political behavior. The former was usually just allowed to imply the latter. What they did not offer more specifically, in our terms, was the interaction between these story-lines and the ongoing ideological landscape for electoral conflict in American

politics. To that end, Figure 16 sets up the now-standard arrangement: voting relationships with first economic and then cultural values; for Republican, Democratic, and Non voting groups; comparing the resulting picture in 2008 with the preceding election of 2004 as well as the benchmark contest of 1984.

Figure 16

Two dominating impressions result from those pictures collectively. In the first, 2008 overwhelmingly confirms the apparent picture of the modern ideological landscape for electoral politics sketched out by the presidential contests of 2000 and 2004. In the associated second such impression, 2008 underlines the extent of the change in this modern landscape from the opening pictures drawn from 1984 and 1988. Together, the two tell a substantial story:

- The biggest single change *from 2004*⁷ was among Democratic voters stratified by economic values. (Figure 16.B) Economic preferences in 2008 were considerably more related to the ultimate choice among these Democratic voters than they had been in 2004, and the increase was due to rising Democratic support in consort with economic liberalism. This was a result very much in line with the dominant elite narrative about the coming of an archetypal economic election.
- By contrast, the biggest single change *from the old world of 1984* involved both Republican and Democratic voters stratified by cultural values. (Figures 14.D & 14.E) What was once (in 1984 and 1988) essentially a non-relationship for the vast bulk of the American public, before jumping up for the Democrats and plunging for

⁷ Again apart from an apparent change in the level of voting and non-voting, which does appear to result from sampling differences in the Pew Values Surveys versus the General Social Surveys. We continue to be much more comfortably with comparisons of *relationships* within the non-voting population rather than with the *specific location* of these relationships,.

the Republicans among strong cultural liberals, was now a strong relationship stretching across the entire cultural continuum.

The combination also gave a certain ironic shading to the main journalistic lines of commentary on the presidential contest of 2008. The actual course of nominating politics had certainly affirmed the prospect that the specific nominees of the two major parties might be ‘different’ in this non-incumbent year. The result was indeed a maverick Republican nominee in the person of Arizona Senator John McCain and the first-ever black nominee in the person of Illinois Democratic Senator Barack Obama. Yet the maverick McCain showed no signs of drawing a significantly different Republican electorate. While the undeniable increment to the Obama vote was hard to assign to his specific persona in a year when economics was the main campaign focus for *both* major-party candidates. Moreover, the other great story of this most recent contest, the one that was more long-running, had been nearly invisible in the elite narrative of the contest. This was the confirmation, not of economics but of culture, in the strength of its association with a partisan vote.

All that still left the non-voters as a bastion of continuity in 2008. Indeed, individual relationships in the non-voting population with both economics and culture were hardly different from their incarnations in the original benchmark year of 1984, a quarter-century before. Non-voting was still modestly associated with economic liberalism, thereby making it a weak echo of Democratic relationships with economics. (Figure 16.C) And non-voting was still modestly associated with cultural conservatism, thereby making it a weak echo of Republican relationships with culture instead. (Figure

16.F) Such impressive continuity was thus a reminder of the difficulty in increasing turnout by way of major-party policy positions.

To say the same thing differently, the quarter-century between 1984 and 2008 saw continuity in some aspects of the ideological landscape, change in others. By bulk, *continuity* was the dominant theme. Yet within this continuity, it was just as clearly *change* that was of most evolutionary consequence. The individual relationships between economics and the vote have been characterized more by continuity:

- The Republican vote has, throughout, been strongly related to economic values, with economic conservatives attracted far more than economic liberals. (Figure 16.A) This was already true in 1984. It was still true in 2008.
- The Democratic vote has likewise been clearly related to economic values, less strongly than with the Republican vote and of course in the opposite direction, but still clearly related. (Figure 16.B)
- Even the Non vote has been related to economic values, more weakly than either the Republican or the Democratic vote but parallel to the latter, rising with economic liberalism and declining with economic conservatism. (Figure 16.C)

By contrast, the individual relationships between culture and the vote have been characterized more by change:

- Among Republican voters in 1984, there had been essentially no relationship across most of the cultural continuum, before plunging among strong cultural liberals. (Figure 16.D) By 2008, there was a relationship across the entire continuum, with conservatives attracted far more than liberals and with Republican support among strong cultural liberals having fallen additionally.

- Among Democratic voters in 1984, there had likewise been essentially no relationship across most of the cultural continuum, before jumping up among strong cultural liberals. (Figure 16.E) By 2008, this relationship reached more indisputably across the full continuum, with liberals proportionately attracted and conservatives proportionately repelled.
- Once more, even the Non vote has been related to cultural values, too, albeit much more weakly than either the Republican or the Democratic vote while rising with cultural *conservatism* this time and falling with cultural liberalism. (Figure 16.F) Even this relationship was ever so modestly stronger in 2008 than in 1984.

Two additional things need to be said about this evolutionary story, before it is immersed in joint relationships to the vote for the two valuational dimensions and well before considering the distribution of voters on the ideological landscape which those joint relationships implied. The main thing to be acknowledged here is just the increasing relationship of political values to voting behavior. Both economics and culture acquired a stronger relationship between 1984 and 2008 to the two main voting categories, that is, to Republican and Democratic voters. The lesser thing that needs to be acknowledged is that culture ‘caught up’ to economics across this same quarter-century. In other words, culture was on the rise in both main voting categories, not only by comparison to itself but also by comparison to economics.

Major-Party Politics: Economic and Cultural Values Jointly with the Evolving Vote

When these voting relationships are then considered jointly rather than singly, as they do in fact appear in the actual world of practical politics, change over time only grows in impressiveness. The Republican vote of 1984, for sitting President Ronald

Reagan, had been the archetypal economic vote for any candidate in any year of this voting series. (Figure 17.A) Beyond it, there was only that drop-off among strong cultural liberals at every level of economic values, along with a modest uptick among strong cultural conservatives, though this was as much prospective hint as established reality. As a result, this Reagan vote had moved more or less regularly up and down the ideological scale in sync with economic values. As presented here, lines of Republican voting were thus essentially horizontal.

Figure 17

By contrast, the Republican vote of 2008, for Arizona Senator John McCain, was neatly related to both economics and culture across the full range of both. (Figure 17.B) Symmetry across the board made both dimensions impressive. Economics was still clearly in evidence. Yet it had been joined on an equal footing by culture. And the overall distance from the Reagan vote of 1984 was striking indeed. In a parallel display a quarter-century later, the McCain vote actually carved out one of *the diagonals* on these joint relationships, rising toward economic and cultural conservatism, falling toward economic and cultural liberalism. Indeed, the support lines that most closely approximated his overall vote (0.2-0.4) were nearly perfect diagonals between those two end-points.

McCain's best performance remained among strong economic conservatives (0.6-0.7), where there was only a lesser role for culture. His worst performance remained among strong cultural liberals (<0.1), where there was hardly any role for economics. But these best and worst performances were all that was left of the earliest joint

relationships. What characterized those relationships instead was now the parallel mutual behavior of both economics and culture.

The Democratic vote of 1984, for former Vice President Walter Mondale, had likewise been archetypically economic among Democratic tallies, though it already showed more cultural links on the far right but especially the far left than did its Republican counterpart. (Figure 17.C) Nevertheless, in a display of joint relationships to economics and culture, the Mondale vote had still clearly favored economic values, moving more or less regularly up and down the ideological scale with them. In that sense, it too, like the Reagan vote, was fundamentally ‘horizontal’.

By contrast, the Democratic vote of 2008, for Illinois Senator Barack Obama, was neatly related to both economics and culture across the full range of values on both. (Figure 17.D) Symmetry across the board again made both dimensions impressive. Economics had hardly disappeared, or even retreated. But it had again been joined on an equal footing by culture. As a result, it was almost as hard to recognize the Mondale vote within the Obama vote as it was to see the Reagan vote inside the McCain tally. Indeed, the Obama vote was more like the McCain vote, in hewing closely to one of the diagonals on these joint relationships, albeit rising toward economic and cultural liberalism while falling toward economic and cultural conservatism.

Once more, the support lines that most closely approximated Obama’s total vote (0.3-0.5) were nearly perfect diagonals between those two end-points. His did retain a clear reflection of the old and ongoing Democratic advantage among strong cultural liberals: for those with cultural values greater than 0.8, economics was effectively irrelevant, and this remained a significant population. Yet this was also the *only*

population not characterized by the parallel mutual behavior of economics and culture among Democratic voters.

It was the Non vote that showed the smallest change between 1984 and 2008, featuring clearly parallel joint relationships with economics and culture, tickled ever so modestly to acknowledge that same increase in the role of cultural values. In 1984, non-voting had been concentrated among strong economic liberals who were strong or moderate cultural conservatives. (Figure 17.E) For 2008, non-voters were still concentrated in this same small corner of the ideological landscape, again featuring strong economic liberals who were also strong cultural conservatives. (Figure 17.F) The difference, a modest one, was that economics played a slightly smaller role in isolating non-voting in 2008 than in 1984, while culture played a slightly larger role.

In both years, the most extreme cultural liberals voted overwhelmingly, regardless of their economic values. In both years, the most extreme economic conservatives voted overwhelmingly, regardless of their cultural values. But elsewhere, non-voting rose with economic liberalism and cultural conservatism, while falling with their joint opposite condition. Note finally, however, how different this relationship is from the one characterizing *both* Republican and Democratic voters. Both of these groups rose or fell in their supportive prospects from the two liberal to the two conservative polls. By contrast, non-voters rose and fell on the 'off-diagonal', from one liberal/conservative combination to the other.

Major-Party Politics: Over-represented Factions and the Evolving Vote

Yet that is not the end of the evolutionary story, not nearly, since joint relationships to voting behavior, whether changing jointly or differentially, do not imply

even a roughly uniform *distribution* of voters within those relationships. And the location of these voters on the ideological landscape can be as important for electoral strategy as the relationships that put them there. Yet here, there are three different stories. There is a story of *change* among Republican voters. There is a story of *adjustment* among Democratic voters. And there is a story of *stasis* among Non voters. Though in the end, these stories collectively make the strategic dilemmas explored in the benchmark year of 1984 look more intense, not more easy, by 2008

Figure 18

In 1984, with Ronald Reagan as the candidate, the Republican vote was disproportionately found among strong economic conservatives. (Figure 15.A) Yet among them, the Republican vote was also disproportionately found among moderate cultural *liberals*. These were not strong liberals, a sector where the Republican vote plunged. But neither were they cultural conservatives. They were, to repeat, moderate liberals on culture. This fact does not reflect some hidden tendency for cultural liberalism in its own right to foster Republican voting. Figure 6.A has already dismissed that possibility. Rather, Figure 18.A reflects the simple fact that Republican voters, in the opening Pew survey in our benchmark year, were disproportionately located at this point on the cultural landscape.

In 2008, with John McCain as the candidate, this Republican picture had changed strikingly. The lesser part of this change was an expansion of overrepresented sectors of the Republican electorate from strongly conservative into moderately conservative territory on economics. Whether this was a moderation of the Republican coalition or evidence of increasing polarization between the two parties is a question that we shall

address below. In the meantime, the larger part of the change was clearly a continuation of the rise of culture, and of the simultaneous shift from liberal to conservative along this dimension. Accordingly, where once the modal Republican voter had been a strong economic conservative who was a moderate cultural liberal, this same modal Republican was now a strong to moderate economic conservative who was a strong to moderate *cultural conservative* as well.

There was a certain irony in this evolution, in that its register for 2008, John McCain, had represented the old faction of moderate cultural *liberals* as recently as 2000, in his first run for a presidential nomination. Yet their support had been insufficient to nominate him even in that earlier year, and by 2008, the peak of Republican over-representation on the cultural dimension stood unequivocally among cultural conservatives—who, even if they remembered McCain as an erstwhile apostate, supported him disproportionately against Barack Obama.

In 1984, with Walter Mondale as the candidate, the Democratic vote was different from its Republican opposition not just in its ideological direction, being liberal rather than conservative where economics was the focus. (Figure 18.C) It was different, more strikingly, in being found disproportionately on *the opposite valuational dimension*, on culture rather than on economics. Or at least, the larger concentration of those who were over-represented within the Democratic coalition were strong *cultural* liberals who otherwise varied substantially in their economic preferences, from strong economic liberals through true economic centrists—with an actual plurality of the latter. It was not that culture organized the bulk of the ideological landscape among Democratic voters; Figures 6.B has confirmed that this was still done by economics. But it was already the

case that cultural values created the largest ideological *faction* within the Democratic coalition.

By 2008, with Barack Obama as the Democratic candidate instead, this main area of disproportionately Democratic terrain had expanded to include moderate as well as strong cultural liberals. (Figure 18.D) Unlike the Republicans story, where the rise of cultural extremism was more recent, this had been true of the Democratic story since the beginning, or at least, the beginning as captured by the Pew Values Surveys. Yet 2008 managed to register an onward march for this development even then. Like the Republican story, this Democratic story represented an augmentation of the main basis of partisan support—economic conservatives for the Republicans, cultural liberals for the Democrats. Also like the Republicans, then, this expansion of Democratic high ground raised the question of whether it was a moderation of the dominant coalition within the party or an exacerbation of the ideological polarization between the two major parties.

Yet what made a Democratic density map look additionally different from its Republican counterpart was that the over-represented factions within the Democratic coalition—two of them, not just one—were located in discontinuous parts of the ideological terrain, not in one continuous part. For there was a secondary concentration on the ideological landscape among Democratic voters, one that was non-overlapping with the first, being found instead among strong economic liberals who were also strong cultural *conservatives*. This had been true in 1984, under Walter Mondale. (Figure 15.C) It remained true in 2008, under Barack Obama. (Figure 15.D) For this part of the Democratic high ground, precious little had changed in a quarter-century. As a result, the leading party faction, the one organized principally by culture, remained an awfully long

way from its secondary faction, one organized more by economics than by culture—while featuring a huge cultural distance from this other main Democratic faction.

Moreover, again in 1984 as in 2008, this secondary core of over-represented Democrats was not just similar to, but fully overlapping with, that part of the ideological landscape that most over-represented Non voters. (Figures 18.E and 18.F) They too were strong economic liberals and strong cultural conservatives. These *two* over-represented factions, the secondary Democrats and the primary non-voters, were thus most noteworthy for their remarkable constancy across this quarter-century. Figures 15.E and 15.F have traced a modest shift in the joint voting relationships that led toward this high ground among non-voters. Yet judged by the actual numbers—by these density maps—the true competition for the support of these individuals remained between a Democratic and a Non vote, not between a Democratic and Republican vote, with Non-vote the winner in both 1984 and 2008.

Strategic Dilemmas for Major-Party Nominees

In the end, this evolution of the electoral landscape between 1984 and 2008 may sharpen, rather than resolve, the strategic dilemmas inherent in the picture of this landscape provided in Chapter Six. There, it was clear enough that the landscape had certain inherent incentives for presidential candidates from the major parties. For Republicans, this was an especial anchoring in the realm of economic conservatism. For Democrats, it was a counterpart anchoring in the realm of cultural liberalism. It was not just that the two party coalitions were disproportionately present in those two locations. It was more that those residing in these disproportionate policy realms could be expected to *want* to see their respective parties situated there.

This constituted an inherent dilemma only—but again, especially—because conventional strategic advice was that major-party candidates ought to move off from those positions toward the ideological center in order to maximize their votes. The formal logic behind such advice is straightforward. A party moving toward the center could pick up additional adherents without losing any of its own, since it would still be closer to the latter than would the other party. Yet the picture provided in Chapter Six, of the nation as a whole but even more of specific subgroups within it, converted this advice instead into a strategic choice, not an obvious outcome.

Even formally, such advice was accurate only so long as it was true that more votes would be gained at the center than would be lost at the periphery if this counsel was followed. This was an empirical, not a theoretical, question. Yet once this strategic choice was embedded in an actual ideological landscape, more questions followed. Assuming that existing density maps were also pictures of a disproportionate presence at the nominating stage, the alternative strategy—move to the center—might be effectively unavailable in both parties by the time of the general election: candidates committed to these overrepresented terrains would be the ones who were actually nominated.

Yet there was more. For this advice also assumes that those who are located closer to the center are equally likely to turn out at the general election, or would be if candidates catered more to them. There is some indirect evidence that this is so, in the disproportionate location of *non-voters* at the extreme of economic liberalism plus cultural conservatism rather than at the overall center. Yet there is also direct countervailing evidence in the disproportionate location of *actual* voters, those economically conservative Republicans and culturally liberal Democrats.

Said the other way around, there is lurking behind these initial alternatives the question of whether those who sit at the ideological center are at least equally concerned with policy preferences as those who sit farther away. At one extreme, moderation could simply equate to a lack of interest. But well before that, the conventional strategic advice relies upon centrists being *at least* as intense in their moderate preferences as those farther from the center. Otherwise, the trade-off should be practically disadvantageous to candidates who aspire to move.

Real-world strategists do not tend to consult joint relationships or density maps. Instead, they tend to consult *campaign lore*, as reinforced especially by their own experiences. Yet the preceding analysis nevertheless has strategic implications for them, whether they abstract these implications or not, since even individual voting relationships to economic or cultural values reliably show a connection to the strategic gambits of particular candidates. A Michael Dukakis attempts to pull the Democratic Party in from the economic extremes, and the ratio of economic liberals to economic moderates declines accordingly. A Ross Perot has a special attraction to economic conservatives, and George H.W. Bush sees the ratio of economic liberals to economic conservatives increase in return.

On the other hand, the underlying density maps are much less reliably moved by these individual gambits, evolving, at a minimum, in ways which do not suggest that movements toward the center are carrying the day. Thus the modal Republican voter has moved *away from* the center on cultural values and away from the Democrats as well, during the period under study here. Once, this was a world where the modal Republican was a moderate cultural liberal who faced off against a modal Democrat who was a

strong cultural liberal. Now, this is instead a world where the modal Republican is a moderate-to-strong cultural conservative who faces off against a modal Democrat who is a moderate-to-strong cultural liberal. This is not obviously the product of any move toward the center by real-world strategists. Indeed, it rather clearly puts the two parties farther apart on cultural values.

More ambiguous in their implications, though no less troubling by their very ambiguity, are two other evolutionary changes in the political landscape. The first of these is the expansion of over-represented factions within the Republican coalition, from strong economic conservatives to include moderate economic conservatives as well. The second is the expansion of over-represented factions within the Democratic coalition from strong cultural liberals to include moderate cultural liberals as well. One view would be that this is moderating each coalition where it was most extreme. A contrary view would be that this is in fact *piling up* each coalition where it was already most extreme, thereby institutionalizing—indeed, extending—policy polarization. The latter view would be anathema to the argument that conventional (centrist) advice is based on accurate strategic judgments.

There were indications in Chapter Six that were even less consistent with this conventional advice, in the form of social categories which, once the nation was stratified according to their defining characteristics, featured subgroups *all of which* resided at one or another ideological extreme. These will be pursued through the evolutionary lens in Chapter Eight. But one other indication, available here through the national picture, concerns those independent or third-party candidates for president who succeeded in securing a serious presidential vote. Among the many questions that can be asked about

them is whether they prospered by seizing this hypothetically attractive middle ground, ground which the existing parties could not or would not woo. Or whether, instead, these non-major-party candidates found new support by pitching their programs even farther away from the center, thereby augmenting the risks of—and reducing the incentives for—major-party candidates to make that centrist move.

An Electoral Landscape for Challengers to Major-Party Nominees?

The major-party landscape for electoral politics as it evolved from 1984 through 2008, the time-period of the Pew Values Surveys, possessed a certain internal logic—and an evident ideological trajectory. In this, the role of economic values did not decline, and that was an important point about the ideological landscape for major-party politics. Reports of a displacement of economics by culture were obviously misplaced. Yet the role of cultural values expanded enormously, and this was the other consequential two-party point. What was once an influence at the margins of economics had become a counterpart influence across the full ideological spectrum. In the process, the over-represented sections of both major-party coalitions shifted, perhaps more so for the Republican than the Democrats, though perhaps only because the Democratic shift had begun earlier, before its inception could be captured by the Pew Surveys.

Regardless, this period also encompassed three presidential candidacies, with evident electoral consequences, that did not emerge from either of the two major parties. First was the independent candidacy of Ross Perot, with its electoral surge in 1992. Second was a return of the Perot candidacy, with an electoral collapse in 1996. And last was the third-party candidacy of Ralph Nader, based in the Green Party in 2000. We have attended to the Perot surge both for its overall scale, at 19% of the total electorate,

and for its distinctive ideological mix. We have attended to the Perot collapse both for *its* overall scale, shedding more than half of the Perot total in one electoral cycle, but even more for the *disappearance* of any ideological attachments. The two votes need to be brought back here with a different focus. And we attend to the third-party vote of 2000, even though the Nader vote was comparatively modest at under 3% of the national total, because it was so central to the ultimate outcome. By moving Florida from Al Gore to George Bush, Nader voters effectively made the latter President—and thereby justify a quick look at a small-N sample.

Figure 19

The biggest of these votes—and big by any standard—was the Perot vote of 1992. Individual voting relationships with economics (Figure 2.C) and culture (Figure 2.G) testified to a distinctive ideological pattern. Support for Ross Perot in 1992 was strongly related to economic conservatism. It also increased modestly from strong cultural conservatism through moderate cultural *liberalism*, before falling again among strong cultural liberals. Consideration of the joint relationship for economic and cultural values then clarified its portrait.

Seen this way, the Perot vote rose with strong economic conservatism, rising sharply as well with cultural centrism and moderate liberalism, while declining clearly among strong liberals and precipitously among strong conservatives. (Figure 19.A) The ideological terrain over-represented within this vote, as captured by its density map, tells essentially the same story, just locating the Perot vote a trifle more concisely on the ideological landscape. (Figure 19.B) Seen this way, the high ground of Perot voting

remained strong economic conservatism, coupled with either true cultural centrism or moderate cultural liberalism—and with precious little else.

Which makes the disjunction between the character of the Perot vote in 1992 and the character of the Perot vote in 1996 even more striking. Considered only through individual relationships between either economics (Figure 3.C) or culture (Figure 3.G) and the 1996 vote, what was striking was the complete collapse of any ideological connection. A vote that was strongly connected to economics and moderately if conditionally connected to culture in 1992 was simply *unconnected* to either valuational dimension in 1996.

Not surprisingly, then, the Perot vote of 1996 was a hodgepodge of unsystematic rises and dips across most of the ideological landscape, when the two dimensions are considered jointly. The main exception was a clear rise toward the extremes of economic and cultural *liberalism*, two realms that had represented decline, not rise, in 1992. (Figure 19.C)

Figure 19.D then underlines this development. For 1996, the modal Perot voter had not just deserted the ideological high-ground of 1992. This voter had actually trekked dramatically across the ideological landscape. Then, the modal Perot voter had been a strong conservative on economics and a moderate liberal on culture. Now, with the total Perot tally collapsing, the modal Perot voter had become a moderate *liberal* on economics and a *strong* liberal on culture, such that there was simply no overlap between the two modal Perot populations.⁸ Four larger implications follow:

⁸ Indeed, the other small secondary Perot concentration in 1996 had also moved away from the 1992 concentration, remaining as a strong economic conservative but becoming a moderate cultural conservative, too.

- First, Perot was now (in 1996) drawing disproportionate support from the Democratic, not the Republican, ideological heartland. In decline, however, his vote was small enough as to pose no threat to the re-election of Democrat Bill Clinton.
- Second, even in the process of shifting his electoral high-ground sharply, Perot had not moved to the ideological center. Instead, he had managed to swap strong economic conservatism for strong *cultural liberalism*.
- Third, the comparison between 1992 and 1996 now makes Perot himself look more like a ‘parking place’ in both years—a choice for the disaffected, whoever they might be and whatever they might want—rather than a clearly drawn ideological influence.
- Fourth and last, this also suggests that those who constitute the greatest threat to abandon the major parties—those with the greatest potential to vote for third-party candidates—reside at the ideological extremes.

The Pew Values Survey for 2000 has two drawbacks for addressing valuational relationships (and their associated density maps) in connection with the Nader vote. In the first, that vote was just very small, so that third-party Ns are small as well. Worse yet, the Pew survey asks *not* for the Nader vote, but only for Democratic, Republican, or “Other”, thus lumping a small Nader tally with a tiny Buchanan vote as well, where Patrick Buchanan was the presidential candidate of the Reform Party, the presidential vehicle for Ross Perot in 1996.

On the other hand, when the focus is not the composite specifics of the Nader (much less the Buchanan) vote, but only the role of third parties on the electoral landscape, there is much that can still be said. Figure 19.E makes the primary driver

clear for both the Nader and the Buchanan votes: rising cultural liberalism for Nader, rising economic conservatism for Buchanan. In its narrowest specifics, this is an obvious irony for both men:

- While Nader did run as the presidential candidate of the Green Party, whose central concern was certainly culture, the candidate himself spoke overwhelmingly about economics, styling himself as the enemy of big companies and corporate America. At a minimum, it can be said that the cultural side of this presentation registered, while the economic side did not. Indeed, the Nader supporters of 2000 were tightly concentrated, in their density map, among strong cultural liberals. (Figure 19.F)

- Conversely but with equal irony, Buchanan, as the presidential candidate of the Reform Party, identified himself mainly as a soldier in ‘the culture war’ that he saw engulfing America, though he did also style himself as an economic protectionist. Again at a minimum, it can be said that the cultural side of this presentation failed to register, while the economic side made him the champion, not of “peasants with pitchforks”—one of his favorite phrases—but of extreme economic conservatives. (Figure 19.F)

Strategic Dilemmas Revisited

These concentrations have two further implications. The first is direct and concrete, involving votes lost by the major-party nominees. In this, Buchanan represented a marginal numerical injury to George W. Bush, the Republican nominee for President. By contrast, Nader represented a larger but still limited numerical injury to Al Gore, the Democratic nominee—but a fatal wound, courtesy of his impact on the

Electoral Vote of Florida. The second of these further implications is indirect and abstract, involving the incentives for electoral strategy both among third-party challengers and among major-party nominees. Once more, these challengers found their high ground—the terrain where they could achieve disproportionate support—at the extremes and not in the center. Ross Perot, Mark I, had found this high ground among strong economic conservatives. Ross Perot, Mark II, had found it among strong cultural liberals instead. And the year 2000 featured both terrains occupied by challengers outside the major ongoing parties: Patrick Buchanan among strong economic conservatives, Ralph Nader among strong cultural liberals.

To say the same thing differently: a look at the ideological landscape for major-party politics, and at the overrepresented factions within it, might suggest abstractly that the ideological center was the obvious home for independent candidates and third parties. The Republican, the Democratic, and the Non voters were concentrated respectively among strong economic conservatives, strong cultural liberals, and strong economic liberals who were also strong cultural conservatives. The obvious available territory was ‘the center’. Yet what all three of these elections and all four of these non-major-party candidacies suggest is that this ostensible advice to autonomous candidates looking for ‘spare’ voters—move to the ideological center—had little attraction.

Or perhaps it should be said the other way around: that those voters looking for someone outside the two-party framework, like those voters disproportionately supporting one or the other of the two major parties, were to be found at the ideological extremes, if they were to be found at all. In passing, this result for presidential 2000 underlined the nature of the two Perot candidacies as ‘parking places’ for disaffected

voters, rather than as ideological homes for new electoral alignments. For it was the Perot vote of 1992 and the *Buchanan* vote of 2000 that occupied common ground, just as it was the Perot vote of 1996 and the *Nader* vote of 2000 that likewise shared a common over-represented terrain.

Which should not deny candidate Perot one further, substantial, historical footnote. For the two ‘Perot elections’ of 1992 and 1996 did occur during—and in their time, did effectively mask—the transition between an older electoral world of apparently stable patterns, those characterizing 1984 and 1988, and a newer electoral world of apparently stable patterns, those characterizing 2000, 2004, and 2008. That older world featured economic preferences as the key to voting behavior, with cultural preferences as fillips around the edges. The newer world featured both policy domains, and their interaction, as the key to voting behavior across almost the full ideological spectrum. Ross Perot does not appear to have directly shaped either. But he certainly obscured—and served as a partial parking place for—the transition between them.