HISTORICALLY, ELECTION NIGHTS have been exciting affairs. But in 2020, election night turned into election week, as millions of voters, seeking to avoid the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, cast their ballots by mail. Those who turned out in person voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, creating what some analysts described as a “red mirage” as state after state reported these same-day votes immediately, giving the incumbent an early lead. Then, as predominantly Democratic mail-in ballots were tallied in the hours and days after the polls closed, the contours of the election came into focus. Joe Biden won the presidency by a resounding seven million popular votes, but his margins of victory in such swing states as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Arizona, Nevada, and Georgia were tantalizingly close. Donald Trump refused to accept the results, and the post-election chaos that resulted—including an insurrection at the US Capitol as the electoral votes were being certified—ignited a combustible political atmosphere. Two months after the election, two-thirds of Republicans believed that Biden’s election was not legitimate while 97 percent of Democrats said it was.

As the post-2020 election drama indicates, we are living through an especially charged partisan moment, when the two major parties consist of nonoverlapping coalitions of voters who would move the country in diametrically opposite directions. This has divided the nation into two camps and turned national elections into existential all-or-nothing events. We see the divide in historically low defection rates among Republican and Democratic voters, with few abandoning their party to support the opposition. In 2020, 94 percent of Democrats supported Joe Biden while 94 percent of Republicans backed Donald Trump. This high level of party unity has been consistent in twenty-first century presidential elections, and it is a sharp break from several post–World War II elections of the twentieth century when crossover party voting was much more widespread. In 2020, there were virtually no Joe Biden Republicans or Donald Trump Democrats when voters marked their ballots.
Although we may be living in a time of hyper-partisanship, it is hardly the first time Americans have been strongly divided by party identification. We have seen how the vociferous disagreements between Hamilton and Jefferson the dawn of the party age sharply divided Hamilton’s Federalist Party from Jefferson’s Democrats. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, voting was not a soul-searching exercise for Americans who maintained consistent political identities.

This chapter treats voters as political consumers and explores how they relate to partisanship and political parties. We will consider the process by which party brand loyalty develops and examine how scholars have sought to measure it. Then, we will examine how lasting, long-term individual changes in partisanship can lead to enduring shifts in party coalitions, or what we call partisan realignment. Finally, we will describe the electoral coalitions that have emerged to shape today’s politics. Throughout history, the sharp divides exhibited by Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson have generated passion and drama, as voters evaluate the positions of the parties and decide which to support.

The Importance of Party Identification

There is a rich intellectual history that endeavors to understand why people identify with a political party by examining their political attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Bernard R. Berelson and Paul F. Lazarsfeld pioneered the study of how people make voting decisions in the 1940s. They developed a sociological model in which socioeconomic standing (education, income, and class); religion (Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish); and place of residence (rural or urban) formed an “index of political predisposition” that often determined party identification, which, in turn, strongly influenced choices made at the ballot box. Thus, a well-educated, white, upper-class Protestant from upstate New York would most likely be a Republican, whereas a Black, blue-collar worker from Detroit would most likely be a Democrat. Their approach to voting behavior emphasized the importance of political predispositions over the persuasive elements of political campaigns. Identifying with a political party was regarded as a declaration about who you were and where you were born, making voters largely impervious to the campaign pleas of Democrats and Republicans.

The sociological model explained the partisan leanings that existed from the post–Civil War era until the New Deal. During this period, Republicans shouted at other like-minded Republicans to vote for their candidates, and Democrats did much the same—but few minds were changed. Although it may
have resonance in today’s deeply divided electorate, the sociological model fell out of favor with the weakening of party loyalties during the 1950s and into the 1960s and 1970s. In 1952, millions of Democrats voted for Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower, giving the World War II hero a landslide ten-point victory. What influenced so many Democrats to back Eisenhower were issues—especially the Korean War. The Gallup Organization found that 65 percent of voters felt Eisenhower was the best candidate able to break a vexing stalemate in Korea. Four years later, Eisenhower defied the existing Democratic majority to win again by fourteen points. Eisenhower’s landslide victories illustrated the deficiencies associated with the sociological model. While race, ethnicity, and location mattered in helping to form partisan inclinations, voter attitudes about candidates and issues could also be important factors in determining who would be victorious. This raised important substantive and methodological questions: what individual political attitudes mattered, and how could they be measured?

Some answers were contained in The American Voter, a seminal work published in 1960. Authors Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes presented a sociological-psychological model of voting behavior. They agreed with Berenson and Lazarsfeld that demographics factor into voting behavior, but they also believed that partisanship had a strong psychological dimension. Thus, children of parents with strong partisanship tended to identify with their parents’ political party, whereas the children of parents without a clear partisan preference tended to be ambivalent about politics. Once established, party identification (or what is often referred to as party ID) frequently persisted throughout a person’s adult life. Using data gathered in the 1950s, Campbell and his colleagues found that nearly 85 percent of respondents stuck with the same party throughout their lives, and a majority never voted for a candidate of the other party.

The American Voter is considered an important work because it introduced a new way of understanding how people vote. Ethnicity, race, region, religion, different economic structures (including education, occupation, and class), and historical patterns (including parental partisanship and social class) converge in an individual’s durable identification with a party. Once partisanship is formed, it serves as a filter to screen information about politics through the lens of one’s preferred party. These partisan lenses are evident to students of twenty-first century politics. The Gallup Organization, which has measured the partisan approval gap dating back to Dwight D. Eisenhower, reported that Donald Trump posted a then-record 77 percentage-point gap in approval ratings between Democrats and Republicans during his presidential term. In the early months of the
Biden presidency, 96 percent of Democrats approved of Joe Biden’s performance while just 10 percent of Republicans did so—a record partisan gap of 86 points. From its inception, *The American Voter* provided a baseline to measure how a person’s party identification influenced individual voting choices. But like Berelson and Lazarsfeld before them, Campbell et al. were influenced by the prevailing political conditions of the time, which in their case was the relatively placid late 1950s. Subsequent research would challenge and refine their conclusions. In 1971, Gerald Pomper found a significant increase in the correlation between individual policy preferences and party identification. Pomper examined seven issues (federal aid to education, government provision of medical care, government guarantees of full employment, federal enforcement of fair employment, housing policy, school integration, and foreign aid) and found a linear relationship between issue preferences and party identification existed on every issue except foreign aid, whereas in the 1950s only one issue was correlated with party ID. Additionally, the proportion of voters viewing Democrats as the more liberal party increased since 1956, which Pomper took to mean that between the 1950s and 1960s “considerable political learning” had taken place.

But voters don’t always have the time or inclination to ferret out a candidate’s position on the issues. Anthony Downs, in his 1957 book *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, offered a rational choice theory of voting behavior, arguing that the benefits of arriving at a “correct” voting decision that aligns with a voter’s preferences may not be worth the costs of compiling extensive information on the candidates. Most voters want to cast an informed vote, but often lack the time or energy to sift through the complex details of each candidate’s policy stands and personal character. Party identification gives the busy voter a quick and easy solution. Voters can take an information shortcut by understanding the basic contours of what each party stands for, match that information with their own values (thereby developing a party identification), and then vote for the candidate that aligns with their party ID. Thus, an Election Day decision can be made in a few quick seconds because the voter need only know each candidate’s party to cast an “informed” vote.

**Measuring Party Identification**

While questions of how party identification is acquired and how it influences vote choice have long dominated the study of political behavior, scholars have also engaged in a closely related debate over how to measure party identification. The most common technique employs a seven-point ordinal scale developed by...
public opinion pollsters. Voters are classified by their answers to two questions. First, respondents are asked if they consider themselves Republicans, Democrats, or independents. Those who answer that they are either Republicans or Democrats are asked a follow-up question about how strongly they identify with their chosen party. Those who classify themselves as “independent” are subsequently asked whether they are closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. Respondents are then grouped into one of seven categories: (1) strong Democrat, (2) weak Democrat, (3) independent-leaning Democrat, (4) true independent, (5) independent-leaning Republican, (6) weak Republican, and (7) strong Republican.

The advantage of this approach is that it suggests degrees of partisanship. It is reasonable to assume that some Democrats and Republicans are more closely connected to their parties than others, and that many so-called independents lean more toward one of the parties. According to one poll taken during the 2020 presidential campaign, 42 percent of Americans identified as Democrats and 38 percent identified as Republicans. But when we break down these figures by strength of partisanship, we find that 25 percent said they were “strong Democrats;” 6 percent said they were “not very strong Democrats;” 11 percent were “independents who leaned toward Democrats;” 23 percent said they were “strong Republicans;” 5 percent identified as “not very strong Republicans;” and 10 percent said they were “independents who leaned toward Republicans.” Just 13 percent identified as true “independents.”

The Making of an Idea: Party Realignment

We have discussed how individuals form partisan attachments, but what about the electorate as a whole? Taken together, the party affiliations of the entire body politic—collectively, the party in the electorate—form an underlying structure of voting behavior. This structure can endure over long periods of time, but it is fluid enough to change in response to shifting conditions. The structure of voting behavior can determine which party has the advantage in electoral competition, the policies that are favored to emerge from government, and even whether voters prefer Hamiltonian nationalism or Jeffersonian localism when it comes to what they believe the federal government ought to do or not do. Sometimes these changes are momentary, but other times they reflect deep seated shifts in voter preferences and can be enduring. How can we tell the difference? It may require the passage of time to know. After Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1936 landslide reelection victory, one analyst declared that he could “see no interpretation of the
returns which does not suggest that the people of America want the president to proceed along progressive or liberal lines.” In fact, voters had concluded they wanted the federal government to act aggressively to combat the Great Depression, and they rewarded Roosevelt by returning him to office two more times.

In 1980, Republican pollster Richard Wirthlin interpreted Ronald Reagan’s stunning victory as “a mandate for change . . . [that meant] . . . a rejection of the New Deal agenda that had dominated American politics since the 1930s.” This assessment came to pass when Republicans won landslide presidential victories in the next two elections over liberal Democrats. In both cases, political scientists ultimately concluded that the structure of the American party system had undergone a significant and lasting transformation. The 1936 and 1980 contests gave way to historic changes in party identification that reshaped the party coalitions.

It is possible that the 2020 election represents another such juncture, with the public turning away from the less-government Jeffersonianism of the Reagan era in favor of Hamiltonian activism to address long-neglected issues in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, mounting economic inequalities, and a reckoning on racial inequality. We will consider this possibility in the book’s conclusion.

V. O. Key and the Concept of Party Realignment

Political scientist V. O. Key Jr. was the first to argue that some elections were more important than others. Few may remember that Franklin Pierce won the presidency in 1852, or James Buchanan in 1856, or James Garfield in 1880, but history notes Abraham Lincoln’s realigning election victory in 1860. From Key’s perspective realigning elections stand out for their lasting significance in the arc of political history, where crisis and catastrophe play a significant role in shuffling the electoral deck for generations.

Lincoln’s victory in 1860 under the banner of the new Republican Party was one such election. Lincoln’s successful prosecution of the Civil War and his proclamation of a “new birth of freedom” in the Gettysburg Address convinced a majority of voters that Republicans could be trusted to steer the ship of state into the future. For decades thereafter, Republicans dominated their opponents in federal elections, relegating the once-majority Democrats to second-tier status.

Franklin Roosevelt’s election in 1932 produced the same result for Democrats. Previously a party devoted to a Jeffersonian “states’ rights” platform, FDR’s Hamiltonian New Deal agenda to combat the Great Depression convinced a majority of voters that the Democratic Party could best handle the nation’s
economy and look after the interests of the average American, ending decades of Republican dominance.

Key explained the process of realignment through a concept he described as critical elections. His initial understanding was that critical elections are characterized by sharp reorganizations of party loyalties over short periods of time in response to traumatic national events that the previous alignment of political parties was unable to successfully manage. In these contests, voter turnout is high, and new, long-lasting party coalitions are formed. Subsequently, Key modified his original idea to allow for the possibility that lasting changes in partisanship are sometimes not so dramatic. Rather, party loyalties can erode among some groups and regions over many years. Key termed these changes secular realignments, defining them as “a movement of the members of a population category from party to party that extends over several presidential elections and appears to be independent of the peculiar factors influencing the vote at individual elections.” Key placed no time limit on the pace of this change, noting that it could take as long as fifty years.

Key’s ideas about critical elections and secular realignments gained widespread notice among political scientists. Enhancing its appeal was the pro-party argument that underpinned realignment theory. Parties were credited with being important agents in maintaining the stability of the constitutional order. Instead of resorting to arms or tearing up the US Constitution whenever catastrophe struck, political scientists believed that voters used political parties to engineer significant policy changes. The US Constitution works because political parties work, or so went the argument.

As analysis of electoral change expanded to include polling data that could pinpoint changes within narrowly defined population groups (e.g., white non-college educated vs. white college educated voters), party realignment took on added significance. Walter Dean Burnham, a major proponent of the realignment concept, published *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (1970), in which he transformed Key’s simple idea of critical elections into a generalized theory of party realignment. Burnham outlined five conditions that characterized the “ideal-typical” partisan realignment:

- There are short, sharp reorganizations of the major party voter coalitions that occur at periodic intervals.
- Third-party revolts often precede party realignments and reveal the incapacity of “politics-as-usual.”
• There is abnormal stress in the socioeconomic system that is strongly associated with fundamental partisan change.
• Ideological polarizations and issue distances between the major parties become exceptionally large by normal standards.
• Realignments have durable consequences and determine the general outlines of important public policies in the decades that follow.\textsuperscript{14}

Using this classification scheme, Burnham cited the elections of Andrew Jackson in 1828, Abraham Lincoln in 1860, William McKinley in 1896, and Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 as having met the conditions of party realignment. In each case, voter interest and turnout were high, there were significant third-party revolts either in the actual election or in the contests leading up to it, and the differences between the parties were exceptionally large, even considering the Hamiltonian-Jeffersonian divide. In making his calculations, Burnham discovered a rhythm to US politics—namely, that realigning elections occur once every twenty-eight to thirty-six years. Thus, if a realigning election happened in 1932 as Burnham suggests, one could expect another realignment to occur circa 1968.

Indeed, an argument can be made that Republican Richard M. Nixon’s close victory over Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968 met the conditions of a classic party realignment. The differences between the two parties on issues such as civil rights, the Vietnam War, and what became known as the “social issues” (crime, abortion, pornography, etc.) were significant. Moreover, there was a major third-party revolt by supporters of Alabama governor George C. Wallace, whose presidential candidacy garnered 14 percent of the popular vote (a feat not surpassed until 1992 when Ross Perot captured 19 percent of the ballots cast). As Republican political analyst Kevin Phillips perceptively wrote in his 1969 book \textit{The Emerging Republican Majority}, “Far from being the tenuous and unmeaningful victory suggested by [some] critical observers, the election of Richard M. Nixon as president of the United States in November 1968 bespoke the end of the New Deal Democratic hegemony and the beginning of a new era in American politics.”\textsuperscript{15}

But if 1968 was a realigning election it had a quite different feel from those that preceded it. Although Republicans began a string of presidential victories, Democrats retained comfortable majorities in both houses of Congress for many years afterwards. Democrats controlled the Senate from 1968 to 1980, narrowly losing control in the 1980 Reagan landslide but reclaiming majority status in 1986, and they held the House majority until 1994. Reagan won reelection in a landslide in
1984, but Democrats maintained a seventy-one-seat margin in the House—the largest edge for a party that did not control the White House since 1895. Thus, while the party system created by Franklin D. Roosevelt had died, the “ideal-type” of partisan realignment forecast by Burnham failed to materialize. Scholars tried to resolve this inconsistency. Some attributed the Republican failure to produce a classic realignment to the aftereffects of Watergate. In 1974, Democrats added forty-nine seats in the House—enough to ensure control for twenty years until Newt Gingrich and his Republican allies took over. Others attributed the failure of either party to achieve a classic realignment to presidents who were all too willing to eschew their party affiliations to win more votes. This begs the question of why they would do this if they felt they could assemble winning coalitions with the support of their fellow partisans in the electorate—a question that speaks to changes in the strength of partisan preferences that we will address shortly.

If Nixon’s 1968 election marked the beginning of a realignment, and if Burnham is correct that realignments occur once every twenty-eight to thirty-six years, then we might have expected another realigning election to have occurred by 2004 (the outside limit of the thirty-six-year period). However, the evidence is mixed. Democrats did win the presidency in 2008, 2012, and 2020, and Republicans have not won a popular vote presidential majority since 2004. In 2016, Donald Trump prevailed in the Electoral College, but lost the popular vote by 2.9 million—a margin almost six times greater than George W. Bush’s popular vote loss to Al Gore. In 2020, Biden accrued more popular votes than any presidential candidate in history. At the same time, control of Congress has toggled back and forth between the parties, making divided government the norm.

Challenges to Party Realignment Theory

Despite the attempts of Key and Burnham to develop a predictive theory of party realignment, one problem persisted: voters refused to cooperate. This was partly the result of waning voter attachment to either party. From the late 1960s through the early 1980s, there was a dramatic decline in the percentage of voters who identified as Democrats or Republicans, choosing instead to identify as independents. This was a period of dealignment—meaning that voters were moving away from both political parties. One 1983 poll found most respondents said there was “no difference” between Democrats and Republicans when it came to reducing crime, stopping the spread of communism, dealing effectively
with the Soviet Union, providing quality education, reducing the risk of nuclear war, providing health care, reducing waste and inefficiency in government, or protecting the environment. During this period, many voters either stopped regarding themselves as Democrats or Republicans or they adopted neutral attitudes toward the parties.

The failure of party realignment to live up to expectations caused many political scientists to question the concept. In a major critique of party realignment theory entitled “Like Waiting for Godot,” political scientist Everett C. Ladd maintained that Key and Burnham’s emphasis on party realignment modeled after the New Deal period had been “mostly unfortunate.” In Ladd’s view, the New Deal was a unique period when parties mattered, and Franklin D. Roosevelt loomed large over the political horizon. Ladd contended that by applying the party realignment model to more recent elections, political scientists had been asking the wrong question. Rather than wonder whether a party realignment had occurred, Ladd suggested that it would be better to ask the following:

- What are the major issues and policy differences between the two major parties, and how do these separate political elites and the voting public?
- What is the social and ideological makeup of each major party at both the mass and elite levels?
- What are the principal features of party organization, nomination procedures, and campaign structure?
- In each of the previous three areas, are major shifts currently taking place? What kind? What are their sources?
- Overall, how well is the party system performing?

Political scientist David R. Mayhew echoed Ladd’s criticism of party realignment theory, arguing that narrowly studying these critical elections missed important contextual elements—such as the midterm elections of 1874, which resulted in a Democratic takeover of the House of Representatives during a period of Republican dominance, and the surprising victory of Harry S. Truman in 1948 thanks to a shift within the Democratic Party favoring civil rights. Mayhew tested the assumptions made by realignment advocates and concluded that they do not apply broadly across American political history. Only the New Deal realignment of the 1930s came close, and that, Mayhew argued, was a unique moment.

Ladd and Mayhew’s critiques notwithstanding, political scientists persist in their efforts to find elections that conform to the traditional understanding of partisan realignment or to revise and update the concept. During the Reagan
era, John Kenneth White and Richard B. Wirthlin coined the phrase “rolling realignment” to describe the electoral changes taking place. Building on Key’s concept of secular realignment, they described a rolling party realignment as a process involving four distinct stages:

1. **A change in the political agenda.** During the 1930s, Americans embraced the idea that government works. By 1981, most Americans agreed with Ronald Reagan when he declared in his inaugural address, “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem.” The Reagan Revolution consisted of limiting the expansion of federal responsibilities and a Jeffersonian return of power to state and local governments or the individual.

2. **A change in partisan self-identification as expressed in public opinion polls.** The question, “In politics do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, independent, or something else?” is a subjective query. When the political agenda changes, partisan identification will inevitably change with it as one party becomes identified with the new political thinking.

3. **Changes in party registration.** Frequently, party registration is a lagging indicator of partisan change. For example, although Ronald Reagan had been campaigning for Republicans since 1952, it took him ten years to formally switch his California party registration from Democrat to Republican. Similarly, many southern Democrats supported the Reagan agenda years before formally changing their party registrations.

4. **Changes at the bottom of the ballot.** Every state ballot lists offices that are virtually invisible. New Yorkers elect their local county coroners; Texans vote for railroad commissioners; in Illinois, state university trustees are elected posts. In such races, party identification means everything. Thus, when voters place an X next to the names of these obscure candidates, they often are expressing a partisan preference. Long-lasting changes in these races suggest that a party realignment is underway.

The stages White and Wirthlin described are not linear, that is, voters could move back-and-forth amongst them. But the combined result can indicate a party realignment—however slowly and imperfectly it may be taking place. Yet the rolling Republican realignment they envisioned failed to materialize. By the time Reagan left office in 1989, Republicans held fewer seats in the House and Senate than they did after he won the presidency in 1980. George H. W. Bush suffered a massive rejection at the polls in 1992, winning just 38 percent of the ballots. Even after Republicans seized Congress in 1994, GOP identifiers failed
to increase measurably. In 2000, George W. Bush lost the popular vote to Al Gore. And in 2004, Bush was able to muster a bare majority of the popular vote (51 percent). Although White and Wirthlin were right to suggest that successive realignments to the New Deal were not going to be the short, sharp reorganizations of party loyalties akin to those of the 1930s, something went awry in the inevitable steps toward a Republican realignment that they believed would follow, however slowly, in Reagan’s wake.

Today, the debates about whether a party realignment is occurring still persist. Is a partisan realignment, as originally conceived by Burnham and Key, still possible? Do the Democratic victories in the presidential contests of 2008, 2012, and 2020, and their sizable popular vote majorities in 2016 and 2020, herald a long-term change in electoral preferences? Or are they particular to the candidates rather than a reflection of the standing of the parties? And does any of this mean that a new realignment is imminent?

Beginning with Barack Obama’s election in 2008, more scholars began to pay attention to a sharpening electoral divide based on demographic differences and who turns out to vote. Factors like race, religious preferences, lifestyle (e.g., whether you were married or not, or whether you owned a gun or not), regional differences, age, and gender have been strong predictors of electoral choices since 2008, when Barack Obama won overwhelming support from Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. He was the preferred candidate of those who either seldom or never attended church services; dominated among voters who were not married (especially single women) and among young voters; was preferred by those who did not own guns; ran strongly in the Northeast, upper Midwest, and along the Pacific coast; and did far better among women than men. With several of these demographic entities on the rise, their strong support for Obama suggested that the makings of a new Democratic era could be underway. But the 2020 election was inconclusive and subsequent elections will be necessary to determine whether the rising American electorate of minorities, single voters, women, and young people is enough to power the Democrats to sustained victories.

Given these trends, the question of who votes has become increasingly important. Can Democrats turn out high numbers among the groups of voters that favor them? Can Republicans find increased numbers of rural, non-college educated white voters and blue-collar workers to counterbalance demographic trends favoring Democrats? The answer to these questions will help future political scientists understand the shifting plates of contemporary partisan politics.
The Rise of Hamiltonian Nationalism in A Polarized Age

Barack Obama entered the presidency in 2009 determined to rise above the partisanship of the George W. Bush years. But his call for an end to excessive partisanship fell on deaf ears. Democrats strongly supported Obama (including the rank and file and members of Congress), while Republicans unified in their opposition (both inside Washington and in the country at large). Journalist Robert Draper writes that on inauguration night 2009 Republican leaders gathered for a dinner on Capitol Hill. Lamenting their fate, these party leaders agreed that Republicans would stick together to unanimously oppose Obama on all his policy initiatives with the goal of making him a one-term president. As future House Speaker Paul Ryan put it: “The only way we’ll succeed is if we’re united. If we tear ourselves apart, we’re finished.”

Like Obama, Joe Biden issued a call for an end to partisanship, saying in his 2020 victory speech that while he was a “proud Democrat,” he would govern as an “American President.” While Biden has called for an end to “a grim era of polarization,” Senate Republican minority leader Mitch McConnell says he is “100 percent” focused on “stopping” any Biden administration legislative initiatives—a promise that, as of this writing, McConnell and his fellow Republicans have largely kept.

What is certain is that the last two decades have witnessed the emergence of a polarized electorate and strong national parties, especially when it comes to party organization. The twenty-first century has seen the creation of an enhanced Hamiltonian-like party system where partisan activities are directed from the top down. The national parties have become mobilization machines with the Internet becoming an ever more important tool in mobilizing base voters. Debates about party realignment theory may continue, but there is little debate about the intensity of voter preferences or the depth of the partisan divide. Partisanship matters, and the parties’ abilities to use the tools of the Internet and mobilize supporters (both inside and outside of Washington, DC), are the subjects of the next three chapters.