

## THE VITAL SOUTH: HOW PRESIDENTS ARE ELECTED

Earl Black and Merle Black

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reviewed by FRED BARNES

Bad as the blows were, the worst thing that happened to Bill Clinton in the Democratic presidential primaries was not being hit with allegations of cheating on Hillary and dodging the draft. Nope, the worst thing was the consequence of those allegations, both of which Clinton denies, both of which everyone else believes to be true. But don't jump to the wrong conclusion. The consequence I'm referring to isn't the spate of polls showing that a huge chunk of Democrats and a solid majority of overall voters think Clinton lacks the honesty and integrity to be President. I'm referring to something more specific: the South. The allegations all but wiped out Clinton's chance to win a Southern state outside Arkansas—and made Arkansas iffy. And since a Democrat has to win some Southern states to capture the presidency, Clinton is practically a goner.

There's an irony here. The genius of Clinton's candidacy was supposed to be his ability, normally nonexistent among national Democrats, to steal some Southern states from the Republican incumbent. He could appeal to conservative white Democrats and other swing voters in a way that liberal stiffies like Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis never could. Why? He's likable, he's moderate on some social issues, he's not opposed to the use of U.S. military force around the globe, and he's a Southerner. As it turns out, all that isn't enough, given that womanizing and draft evasion strike at the heart of the Southern white vote. There are millions of Baptists and almost as many Pentecostals, all folks with a rigid moral code. You can imagine their

view of infidelity. And if there's a region of America more military-oriented than the South, I haven't heard of it. Draft-dodging is not a venial sin in the South. It's a capital crime.

My premise ought to be pretty clear: it's that the South is now the pivotal region in presidential elections. In fact, it has been since at least 1932. For five straight elections up to 1948, it was the critical ingredient in Democratic victories. Then Southern states started going Republican, first for Eisenhower, then for Nixon, and finally in landslide fashion for Reagan. In 1980, Reagan won ten



of the eleven states of the Confederacy (Georgia stuck with Carter). In 1984, he took all eleven. And Bush did the same in 1988 (drawing 60 percent of the vote in Georgia). Today there's a built-in GOP advantage in the South that aids any Republican presidential nominee, including a vulnerable Bush.

Though largely ignored by academics and the media, the switch of the South from Democratic to Republican is the most significant politi-

cal event of post-World War II America. Political scientists Earl Black of the University of South Carolina and his brother Merle of Emory University are among the few serious chroniclers of this transformation, and they're a lot better than Kevin Phillips. Their 1988 book, *Politics and Society in the South*, argued persuasively that the South had fundamentally changed in political character (but not ideology). *The Vital South* is an even more impressive work, detailing vividly how Republicans took control of presidential politics in the South and how that gives them almost a lock on winning the White House. (By the way, I've run my theory of Clinton's fall from grace with Southern voters by the Blacks and they generally agree.)

Democratic hegemony in the South lasted as long as the party winked at white supremacy there. Democrats, Franklin Roosevelt especially, made a Faustian pact with Southern segregationists: you support us and we'll let you handle race relations however you want. But the pact was abrogated in 1948, when the Democratic convention adopted a civil rights plank. And the Democratic coalition slowly began to unravel. In 1968, following a decade of civil rights legislation and racial unrest, it shattered completely.

Republicans realized they didn't need black votes to win the South. So why pander to blacks and drive away white Southerners? But race wasn't the main ingredient in the South's transformation. The appeal of Republicans "goes far beyond concerns about race," the Blacks insist. "The perennial issue of fostering prosperity has usually worked in favor of the GOP." Republican presidential candidates have also benefited from being interventionist and hawkish in foreign affairs. And they've been shrewd enough to emphasize "the importance of symbolic conservative values, including the preservation of traditional family values, the importance of religion, support for capital punishment, and opposition to gun control." In short, Republicans have been conservative. That produced huge majorities. They need 57 or 58 percent of the white vote to win Southern states. In the last five presidential elections, the median white Republican vote in the South was 67 percent.

Republicans don't have an automatic majority in presidential races, but they're

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close. In examining the elections from 1972 to 1988, the Blacks calculated that 44 percent of the Southern presidential electorate consists of core Republicans. Another 18 percent are swing voters who also vote Republican regularly. Core white Democrats are only 24 percent, and blacks, also overwhelmingly Democratic, are 14 percent. "In presidential elections after the Great Society," the Blacks write, "for the first time in American history, the South led the North as a source of dependable Republican electoral votes."

And the GOP base in the South is growing in importance. "Beginning in 1992 the South alone will contain 54 percent of the electoral votes needed to elect a President," the authors say. Obviously that's too big a bloc for Democrats to write off. There's also a historical fact to contend with. "There is no example in American history of the Democrats losing the entire South but winning the presidency by securing almost seven-tenths of the northern electoral vote." To the contrary. The only Democrat to win the presidency since 1964, Carter, swept every Southern state but Virginia.

The Blacks maintain that the barriers to a Democratic breakthrough are not insurmountable. The trouble is, a Democratic candidate has to thread the eye of a needle. The nominee must cleverly appeal to conservative and moderate swing voters and to blacks. Carter managed this, and Clinton is trying. Carter got 47 percent of the white Southern vote, compared to 28 percent for Mondale and 32 percent for Dukakis. Also needed for Democrats to win is a Republican catastrophe, "some combination of Republican policy failures, disappointing economic performance, and the nomination of a conspicuously flawed GOP candidate."

These conditions don't quite prevail at the moment, but think about it: policy failures, a weak economy, a less-than-mesmerizing Republican nominee—that sounds like the Bush era to me. And Clinton is Jimmy Carter reborn in his ideological muddiness and appeal to moderates. What's missing is Carter's moral probity. Without the infidelity and draft-dodging, Clinton would be a formidable threat in the South. Tarred with those, he's not. Once again, George Bush is a lucky man. □

## THE CHAIRMAN JOHN J. McCLOY: THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN ESTABLISHMENT

Kai Bird

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*reviewed by ADAM PLATT*

Among the men endlessly credited with shaping this American Century, John J. McCloy is a muted figure. During nearly five decades in and out of public life, he never attained cabinet rank. He lacked Dean Acheson's panache. He didn't have Bob Lovett's wit, or George Kennan's mystic intellect. He described himself as a "legman": an expediter, a steady hand at the wheel. But McCloy, as Kai Bird's diligent, colorless biography makes clear, was everywhere. As a banker (Chase), proconsul (Germany), and foundation chief (Ford), he moved quietly through the gray, convergent worlds of high policy and high finance.

Bird means to set McCloy up as an archetype for this country's vanished postwar "Establishment," and I suppose this is fair. The son of a Philadelphia hairdresser, McCloy attended Amherst and Harvard Law. In New York, he found his way to the white-shoe firm of Cravath, Henderson, and de Gersdorff. He made his legal name extracting reparations from the German government on behalf of claimants for the Black Tom shipyard, sabotaged during the First World War. A devout clubman and ace tennis player, McCloy caught the eye of Colonel Henry Stimson, who brought him to the War Department as a consultant and trouble-shooter.

In Washington, McCloy, who, like many straight men, had a furtive, adventurous side, busied himself with counterespionage work. After Pearl Harbor, Stimson asked him to oversee the internment of all American Japanese citizens.

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McCloy performed this distasteful task without batting an eye. Stimson instilled in his men a rabid sense of decency and disinterest, but McCloy was not above expediency. He tabled plans to bomb Auschwitz because the planes couldn't be spared. As High Commissioner for Occupied Germany, McCloy buckled under local pressure and pardoned a number of Nazis, including the arms merchant Alfred Krupp.

In many ways, this tour of Germany was the closest Jack McCloy ever came to the history of his time. Unlike the other so-called Wise Men, he played no central policy role in the Truman Administration. Eisenhower wanted him as secretary of state, but thought Dulles would appease the Republican right. When Dulles went down with cancer, McCloy was left in the wings again. Kennedy offered him Treasury or Defense, both of which McCloy turned down. He became Kennedy's disarmament chief instead, but left the job before his major achievement, the Test Ban Treaty, was ever signed.

McCloy had a lawyer's ability to break down problems and find common ground. He exuded what Kennedy called "cheerful wisdom and steady effectiveness." No great brooder or policy man, he nonetheless got things done. He negotiated for Kennedy the actual withdrawal of the missiles from Cuba. Within months of assuming the chairmanship of Chase bank, he presided over what was then the largest bank merger in the country's history. The Rockefellers, like countless corporate clients, used his ancient inside connections to endless effect. Past 80, he helped them spring the Shah from exile in Mexico. →