

# Party Versus Faction in the Reformed Presidential Nominating System

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## ABSTRACT

Political scientists have devoted vastly more attention to general presidential elections than to party nominations for president. This emphasis might be reasonable if parties could be counted on to nominate generic representatives of their traditions. But it is clear that they cannot. Since the party reforms of the 1970s, regulars like Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, and Al Gore have sometimes won fairly easy nominations, but outsider candidates like Jimmy Carter and Howard Dean have made strong runs or even won. 2016 has produced extremes of both types: ultimate regular Hillary Clinton on the Democratic side and far outsider Donald Trump on the Republican side. It seems, moreover, that party regulars are having more difficulty in recent cycles than they did in the 1980s and 1990s. There is therefore some urgency to the question: when and why do party regulars tend to win nominations?

We examine this question from the point of view of two well-known studies, Nelson Polsby's *Consequences of Party Reform* and our own, *The Party Decides*. The former explains why incentives built into the reformed system of presidential nominations make outsider and factional candidates like Trump likely. The latter argues that, following the factional nominations of the 1970s, party leaders learned to steer nominations to insider favorites. This article uses the logic of these studies to argue that major trends over the past two decades – the rise of new political media, the flood of early money into presidential nominations, and the conflict among party factions – have made it easier for factional candidates and outsiders to challenge elite control of nominations.

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Writing in 1983 about the recently reformed system of presidential nominations, the late Nelson Polsby argued in *Consequences of Party Reform* that the upshot would be factional politics and party disunity. He reasoned that competition in multicandidate fields would incentivize ambitious politicians to mobilize narrow followings, which would then make it difficult for consensus politicians to attract support. The nominations of George McGovern, who could not rally his party in the fall, and Jimmy Carter, who could not govern with it once elected, were exhibits A and B for his argument, and he expected the run to continue.

Surprisingly, it didn't. From Ronald Reagan in 1980 to George W. Bush and Al Gore in 2000, both parties staged contests that seem, at least in retrospect, rather tame. In the 2008 study *The Party Decides*, Cohen et al. documented the success of party leaders in steering nominations in these contests to consensus rather than factional candidates. The authors agreed with Polsby about the fissiparous tendencies of the new system, but maintained that party leaders had learned how to manage them to the benefit of consensus candidates.

But recent cycles, beginning with Howard Dean's noisy anti-war insurgency in 2004, have produced more of the factional politics that Polsby forecast, and the personalistic triumph of Donald Trump has gone beyond anything Polsby imagined.

How should political scientists understand this record of sometimes tame, sometimes wild nomination contests? Our answer, following Polsby's logic, is that presidential nominations present incentives for both party unity and factional division. Which is more important depends on such systematic factors as the current level of intra-party harmony or disharmony, opportunities

In the old system, state and local party officials chose most delegates to national party nominating conventions with little or no voter input. In the reformed system, ordinary voters choose most of convention delegates through primary and caucus elections, making voters the dominant force in nominations. The 1960s slogan of "power to the people" is an apt descriptor for reforms that made party leadership selection in the United States the most participatory in the world.

In Polsby's analysis, widespread participation has a downside. Parties are coalitions of diverse interests whose ability to cooperate is always more or less fragile. The old nominating system, by gathering party representatives under one roof to make a decision, strongly favored candidates with broad appeal in the party. Nominees, as Polsby emphasized, were unlikely to be any group's first choice, but nonetheless needed to be acceptable to most, if not all, in the convention hall. The threat of walkout from the convention by aggrieved losers increased pressure on the majority to nominate widely acceptable candidates.

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for insurgents to communicate with voters, and the availability of funding to insurgents. The issues and personalities that come to the fore in a given election can also make a difference.

These factors came together differently in the presidential nominations of the two parties in 2016, combining to hobble coordination in a Republican Party beleaguered by angry factional politics, but yielding a sullen but otherwise fairly normal united front on the Democratic side. But both kinds of outcomes have occurred through American history and will likely continue to do so. It would not be surprising if, in 2020 or after, the parties trade positions.

Our aim in this article is to sketch, both theoretically and empirically, how incentives to party unity and to factional division operate in the reformed nomination process. With only 18 contested nominations and limited space, we will produce no definitive answer. But in reviewing Polsby's logic in light of the full set of post-reform cases, we hope to shed useful light on a problem that is as poorly understood as it is important: How the parties choose presidential nominees.

We begin by laying out Polsby's theoretical argument along with the amendments proposed in *The Party Decides*. In a set of short empirical sections, we next describe three possible causes of factional nominations as just mentioned: (1) intra-party harmony or lack thereof, (2) communication opportunities, and (3) funding for insurgents. Along the way we show how these and other factors affected the nominations of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. We conclude with a brief post-mortem on *Party Decides* and an analysis of prospects for further reform of the system.

#### THE REFORMS AND POLSBY'S CRITIQUE

The reforms that created the current nominating system took effect in the Democratic Party in 1972 and spread quickly to the GOP.<sup>1</sup>

A system based on widespread mass participation lacks these consensus-inducing mechanisms. A candidate may do best, as Polsby argued, by appealing to a minority faction or even a merely personal following, exciting them to high turnout for primaries and especially caucuses, winning with a possibly modest plurality of the vote, and hoping to outlast other factional candidates. Political journalists, unable to resist over-covering surprise factional winners, give an advantage to these candidates. The result can be media-driven momentum strong enough to propel a factional candidate to nomination (Bartels 1988). Meanwhile, consensus candidates, less exciting to voters and reporters alike, fall by the wayside.

Yet even in the reformed system, incentives for party unity remain. One is that, from statehouse to White House, a party's nominees are likely to run better if its factions are united behind their presidential nominee. Another is that a president nominated by all of a party's factions rather than just one is likely to govern on behalf of the whole party rather than part of it.

*The Party Decides* offered an amendment to Polsby's argument. Written in the mid-2000s, it emphasized more than did Polsby the continued importance to parties of nominating broadly acceptable candidates for president, and sought to show that party insiders had figured out how to do so in the reformed system. The key to their success was "the invisible primary" (Hadley 1976), which occurred in the year or so prior to the Iowa Caucuses. In the invisible primary candidates sought to gain the support of party leaders and interest groups in an intense series of public and private meetings, while for their parts, party and interest group leaders tried to figure out who could best unify the party and win the November election.

As they decided, leaders and groups made endorsements of their preferred candidates, offered money and labor, and prepared

to fight for their champion in the voter primaries and caucuses. In the view of *The Party Decides*, the invisible primary replaced the national nominating convention as the locus of party decision. The book noted, however, that nearly all party nominations since the late 1920s had been decided by internal discussion before the nominating conventions formally convened—which is why nominations were nearly always made on the first ballot—and argued that the pattern of consensus building ahead of the voter primaries continued this long-standing practice of early informal decision making.

Hillary Clinton's tough win over Bernie Sanders is largely consistent with the record of party insiders in controlling party nominations from 1980 to 2000. Clinton may not have been the most charismatic or the most in tune with every voter's aspirations, but the support of regular party players was, as the Sanders faction loudly complained, critical to her ability to notch a win anyway.

Yet the force of Polsby's "mobilize your faction" argument looks stronger today than at any time since he published it. Insider favorites have not usually prevailed in nominations since 2000, and even when they have, their victories over factional and outsider candidates have been less decisive than in the preceding 20 years. The difficult question, then, is when, in a system that incentivizes both faction and unity, one rather than the other predominates.

#### WHAT MAKES FOR CONSENSUAL NOMINATIONS?

Even within a system that advantages factional candidates, contextual factors may make the nomination of such candidates more or less likely. In this section we consider three.

##### The State of Factional Harmony within Parties

Polsby's basic position, and our own, is that parties are best understood as coalitions of policy-demanding groups (Bawn et al. 2012). The group and factional basis of party politics is nowhere more clearly on display than in today's Republican Party. Its so-called establishment wing—a mostly congenial association of Wall Street, Main Street, and large-scale manufacturers—was dominant through the administration of George H. W. Bush. Gun rights activists joined the coalition in the early 1980s

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and social conservatives entered in large numbers in the 1990s (Cohen 2015; Karol 2009). The coalition seemed solid as all groups claimed the mantle of conservatism and the party won unified control of government in 2000 for the first time since 1954. But the rise of the so-called Tea Party movement in 2009—often as angry at its own party leadership as with the Democrats—signaled differences too great for conservative ideology to contain.<sup>2</sup> The result has been a "Republican Civil War"<sup>3</sup> involving numerous bitterly contested congressional primaries, a rocky road to nomination for establishment favorite Mitt Romney in 2012, and most recently, the resignation of Republican House Speaker John Boehner. In this context, no presidential candidate of the establishment faction was able to garner widespread support in 2016.

As revealed by the success of the Sanders campaign, the Democratic Party has its own divisions, but few would claim they are as deep as those of the Republicans. The largely unchallenged leadership of the party's two legislative captains, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, is one testament to this greater intraparty harmony. Meanwhile, well ahead of the Iowa Caucuses, Hillary Clinton rolled up the endorsements of most of her party's top elected officials and interest groups. According to our calculations, 81% of the party's sitting governors, Senators and House members made pre-Iowa endorsements and 94% of those endorsements went to Clinton. Organized labor, civil rights groups, environmental organizations, sexual rights groups, and feminists—the full range of the Democrats' "policy demanders"—got on the Hillary bandwagon early and stayed with her throughout the contest with Sanders. This was not because Clinton was especially well-liked, either by party players or ordinary voters, but because most party insiders viewed her as broadly acceptable and hence well-suited to lead the party's presidential ticket.

The normal state of political parties is for groups to work together in reasonable harmony, but it should be unsurprising that coalitions sometimes come apart in the course of making high stakes presidential nominations. Indeed, party meltdowns have occurred repeatedly in American politics: Northern and Southern Democrats in 1860, gold and silver Democrats in 1896, Progressives and the Old Guard in the Republican Party in 1912, Catholics and Southerners in the Democratic Party in 1924, and racial liberals and Southerners among Democrats in 1948. Even before the McGovern-Fraser reforms, candidates who could not unite their parties sometimes won nominations, with Bryan and Goldwater being prominent examples. Why this sort of factional division became intense in the Republican Party in the late 2000s is not our purpose here, but it clearly did, and we take this as an important part of the explanation for why the GOP nomination process in 2016 ended so badly for the party. If, in particular, Republican players had coalesced behind one of their more conventional candidates—Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, or Scott Walker—their favorite might have commanded pluralities in polls and primaries, thereby keeping Trump at bay.

##### The Explosion of Political Communication

A central claim of *Party Decides* is that party insiders learned to control nominations through coordinating on a preferred nominee during an "invisible primary." Invisibility was important because it gave a relatively small group of party officials and group leaders a near monopoly over the early politics of presidential nominations, a monopoly they exercised to the benefit of party unity.

That invisibility is all but gone today. Journalists who once either ignored the invisible primary or placed stories about it on inside pages now give it much more prominent attention. Evidence for this development may be found in figure 1, which shows the number of front-page campaign stories in the *New York Times* in the invisible primary, here operationalized as January through September of the year

prior to the election year.<sup>4</sup> The candidates are the insider favorite when there is one and a selected strong competitor. The data indicate that coverage of the invisible primary has risen markedly over the 44-year period of the reformed nomination process, with perhaps an acceleration around 2000.

The large change evident in *Times* coverage is, moreover, only the tip of the iceberg.

New forms of communication—cable news, blogs, and digital mainstream websites—have dramatically increased the amount of “inside baseball” political news available to those who want it. Editors track clicks and page-views in these new media, giving more coverage and hence more importance to more popular candidates (Karpf 2016). In this way ordinary citizens become real-time players in nominee selection.

Whether the number of people wanting coverage of the invisible primary in general has grown is hard to say, but their opportunities to follow the game certainly have. It is not too strong to speak of a revolution in political communication.

Another important trend is evident in the number of public debates among presidential contenders. Through the late 1980s, debates were more common in the period of voter primaries and caucuses; after 1990, and especially after 2000, they became more common in the pre-Iowa period (figure 2).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, a large majority (75%) of pre-Iowa debates have been carried on national television, contributing to a mass political story that previously consisted mainly of the invisible primary.

These changes in political communication—much more news coverage, more debates—have created a massively visible dimension to pre-Iowa presidential nomination contest, a new political space with low barriers to entry. Candidates who couldn’t get to first base with most regulars of their party—Howard Dean, Ted Cruz, and Bernie Sanders—have been able to use this new “media primary” to mobilize voters, impress donors, and build campaign organization. To be sure, no factional candidate has yet been nominated as a result of success in the pre-Iowa media primary. But Barack Obama, even though not exactly an insurgent in 2008, used the media primary to gain public and donor support that helped him overcome Hillary Clinton’s success with insiders. And, of course, Trump did launch a successful personalistic nomination bid in the media-rich environment of the pre-Iowa presidential competition.

**The Availability of Early Money**

Another feature of the invisible primary, at least as it played out through about 2000, was that public campaigning did not begin much before the Iowa Caucuses. Candidates who lacked national reputations therefore had little chance to demonstrate the public support that many donors wish to see before making big contributions. Underdogs could hope to develop momentum from wins in the early contests, but jumpstarting a national campaign from money raised in the midst of the campaign itself was a daunting task. In contrast, winners of the invisible primary, precisely because they were its winners, were likely to have solid campaign funding and well-developed campaign organization as the voter caucuses and primaries got underway.

But fundraising, like media coverage, now begins much earlier in the nomination process than it did in the early reform period. Evidence on this point is presented in figure 3 in inflation-adjusted dollars. Candidates who led endorsements in the invisible primary are shown in capital letters and others in regular type.

Two features of figure 3 stand out. One is the extremely high level of fundraising by the top candidates in the period after 2004. These data, moreover, do not even include the Super PAC contributions that have gone mainly to the top candidates. The other and perhaps more important trend in figure 3 is the increase in number of candidates who raised between \$10 million and \$40 million. The top fundraisers are candidates who would probably have run strongly in any funding regime; those in the \$10 to \$40 million range are those who may have most benefitted by loosening of donor wallets over time. A *New York Times* headline noted the trend in 1999: “From High to Low, Hopefuls Are Awash in Funds.”<sup>6</sup> And, as figure 3 shows, the flow of cash continued to grow.

The role of money in presidential nominations is easy to overstate. Big dollar candidates from John Connolly in 1980 to

Figure 1  
Front Page NYT Stories in Invisible Primary

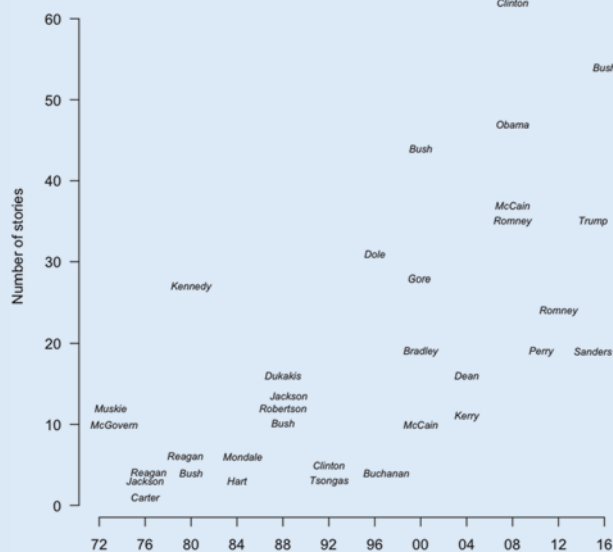
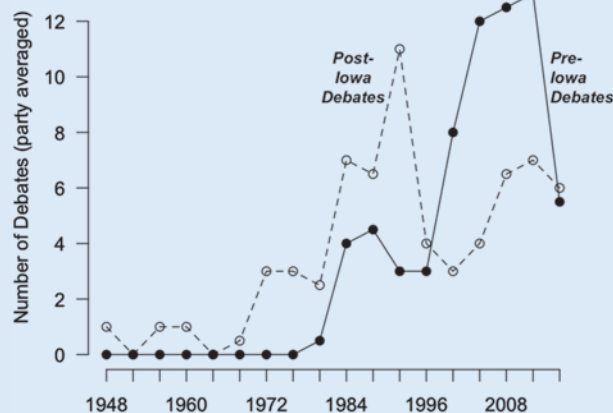


Figure 2  
Number of Presidential Candidate Debates, 1948–2016



Source: <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/eight-decades-of-debate/> and Lexis-Nexis.



Steve Forbes in 1996 to Jeb Bush in 2016 have demonstrated that money cannot buy nomination. But *enough money* to mount an early campaign—travel the country, run a press operation, build local organization, show up for New York interview opportunities—probably does have value, and that condition is met for many more candidates than in the past. Even candidates who lack access to wealthy donors, such as Howard Dean in 2004 and Bernie Sanders in 2016, can now, with the help of the Internet and social media, make themselves competitive with their more privileged brethren.

### Effects of Early Campaigning

The pre-Iowa media primary and the early money primary have by no means stopped candidates from vying behind closed doors for insider support. Hillary Clinton's huge success in this venue demonstrates that it continues to offer a viable path to nomination. But this could change. Politicians

We certainly saw an abundance of caution in the potential Republican endorsers of 2016. Fewer governors made pre-Iowa endorsements than in any contest since 1980. The three candidates viewed as most able to attract wide support in the party—Jeb Bush, Scott Walker, and Marco Rubio—collectively garnered a total of zero pre-Iowa gubernatorial backers. Thirty-nine percent of sitting GOP Senators and House members did make pre-Iowa endorsements, but they distributed them widely in a large field. Even as need to raise a champion against Trump became acute, Republican politicians and group leaders—the kinds of individuals identified in *The Party Decides* as able to sway nominations—mainly just watched as events took their course. At least from our perspective, one of the most important lessons of 2016 was the failure of party leaders to join in any sort of coordinated effort. Whether their attitude will change in the aftermath of Trump's nomination is a big question for future contests.

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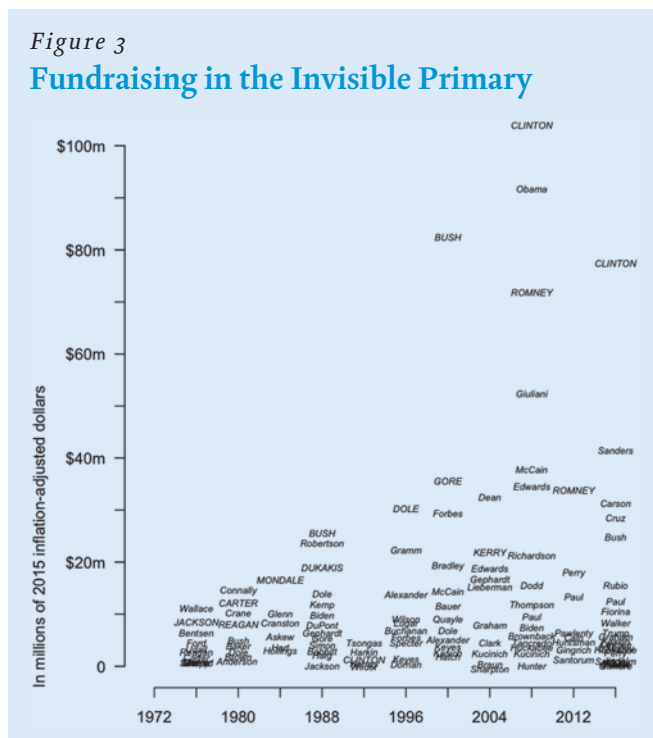
and group leaders need to be careful in making commitments. They can help themselves and their causes when they back winners, but suffer harm when their choices turn out to lose. The downside risk may now be greater, when the favorite must still compete with candidates in the increasingly important media and money primaries, than in the past, when anointment could raise a candidate above a largely invisible and underfunded field. If so, insiders may be more reluctant to make early endorsements.

### TRUMP PLAYS THE SYSTEM

The Trump nomination is one of the most remarkable developments in the history of American politics. No politician has come as close to the presidency with as little elite support as Trump had. But this does not mean he was in any simple sense the choice of voters. Trump began the primaries as one of 17 candidates in a wide-open contest. An outsider who was expected by insiders to fade, he made strong showings in the early primaries, attracted heavy and surprised press coverage, grew his factional following, and gradually forced everyone else from the field. At the point his last opponent quit, Trump had won 40% of votes cast and 53% of delegates awarded.<sup>8</sup> Trump is, thus, a prime example of what Polsby foresaw—a candidate able to parlay an intense but narrow following into a delegate majority by playing on the penchants of journalists and the dynamics of a sequence of contests. So while nearly everyone has been surprised by Trump's success, his nomination is not, in Polsby's theoretical terms, a surprise.

Because Polsby's analysis predated the factionalism of today's Republican Party and the rise of media and money primaries, we need not place much weight on these factors in explaining Trump's success. A Bernie Sanders campaign without the Internet, a Ben Carson campaign without Fox News, a Newt Gingrich boomlet without debates, are all hard to imagine. Obama probably would not have defeated Clinton and Dean probably would not have picked up as much steam in a pre-web world. Trump's success, however, is better understood as a low-probability event made possible by the reforms opening up the process after 1968. In principle, it could have happened anytime in the post-reform period.

Indeed, a prominent outsider much like Trump—Alabama Governor George Wallace—performed well in the 1972 primaries. In the two weeks before an assassination attempt forced him from the race, Wallace won 37% of the delegates in eight states and was picking up steam. In this same stretch, he far outperformed a



large field, including eventual nominee George McGovern, who won only 19% of the delegates at stake in the eight contests.<sup>9</sup> Like Trump, Wallace rose in a party riven by faction, appealed to the racial fears of many of his party's voters, and was almost unanimously abhorred by his party's leaders. Like Trump, he lacked "ground game" and fared poorly in caucuses. Also like Trump, Wallace offered a populist mix of economic liberalism and social conservatism.

Of course, Wallace had no pre-Iowa debates in which to compete for early public favor. He waited to wage his first campaign until the Florida primary, which came fourth in order and more than seven weeks after the Iowa caucuses. One can only wonder how Wallace would have fared if he had the opportunities for pre-primary campaigning that Trump did.

The many similarities between the Trump and Wallace campaigns, along with their fit with Polsby's theoretical analysis, suggest that openness to outsider candidates is a permanent feature of the current nominating system. This openness, in combination with the discontents of many Republican voters in 2016, is the deep reason for Trump's success in 2016.

The particular reasons Trump became the agent of voter discontent in 2016 are, in our view, often misconstrued. His vast and oft-cited Twitter following is more a reflection of his fame than a cause of it. His campaign was not importantly fueled by either the small donations that social media and the web facilitate or the widely discussed Super PACs. Nor did the rise of Super PACs prevent the usual winnowing of less successful candidates, most notably early favorites Jeb Bush and Scott Walker. Trump's

a likely winner. The fact that few leading Republicans backed Trump even as he marched to victory suggests—consistent with our thesis—that endorsements are not mere bandwagoning. Yet it is no accident that almost all of the elite favorites nominated in the post-reform period were well-known and, in a sense, obvious "focal points" of the kind that help elites overcome coordination and collective action problems. (The key exception is Bill Clinton in 1992, who was not an obvious focal point and yet a clear choice of the party elites.) Absent such a candidate, many GOP elites were at a loss—resistant to Trump, but unable to form a united front behind anyone else.

Because parties invariably channel discontent, the GOP divisions that Trump's campaign brought to light—on foreign trade and terrorism as well as immigration—would probably have engendered strife even in a pre-reform nominating convention. The divisions might even have led to a transformation of the party, as the GOP may possibly be transformed in the aftermath of Trump. What would have been different is that a pre-reform convention would have been likely to nominate an experienced politician with ties to party leaders and groups and a record of working on the party's troubling issues. Even in the early reform period, a dominant coalition of party insiders might have used the quiet space of a truly invisible primary to stand up a champion able to address Trump's issues thereby thwarting him. But in 2016, facing the double whammy of deep factional division and an engaging media primary, the Republican coalition was unable to control its most important business, the choice of party leader.

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relationship with Fox News was a factor, but it had its ups and downs. While Cain in 2012 and Carson in 2016 were made famous by Murdoch's network and talk radio, Trump has been a celebrity since before the right-wing mass media even existed. If Fox gave him much coverage when he promoted the "birther" issue in 2011, they hardly created his celebrity status. The growth in debates that was helpful to Gingrich in 2012 also is hard to connect to Trump's success. The New York mogul shot to the lead in the polls well before the first debate in 2015 and his showings did little to solidify his position.

Most important to Trump's success was that he began the race as a figure who was known to all and respected by many GOP voters, and who was willing to make statements about Mexican and Muslim immigrants that other Republican politicians were not. The needs of business and especially agribusiness for a reliable labor force, and the sensibilities of the party's core middle and upper class clientele, likely explain their reticence. But a large faction of Republican voters are frustrated by the reluctance of party leaders to urge strong action against immigrants. Trump skillfully exploited these important party divisions.

It is notable that party elites have not been required to "stop" a successful candidate before. Their rallying to a candidate has always been motivated in part by the desire to side with

#### THE PARTY DECIDES?

Much of this essay can be read as an assessment of how the arguments of *Party Decides* have fared in the nominations since the book was written. And the assessment might seem to be: "not so well."

Certainly more recent cases have exposed problems in its argument. Perhaps most embarrassing is its under-appreciation of the disruptive force of party factions. Though factions are central to the book's conception of parties, we paid more attention to the incentives of factions to pull together than to their impulses to fly apart. In retrospect, we should have paid more attention to the full historical record, which has several instances of factional disruption to presidential nominations, than to the 24-year slice of history that was our focus.

The book also under appreciated the revolution in political communication. The problem was not unawareness of the issue. In an essay written when the book was in press and the messiness of the 2008 cycle was already evident, we tentatively suggested that "an increase in political communication over the past 10 to 15 years" might be making it more difficult for parties to control nominations. (Cohen et al. 2008a, p. 14). But our conclusion was, as with the problem of factions, that party leaders would rise to the challenge.

Many readers of *Party Decides* have seen Trump's unexpected success as the book's biggest problem, but we see an even bigger one: the failure of Republican political and group leaders to work together against him. Near the heart of the book is the idea that party players grasp the situations they are in and will figure out how to deal with them. Their failure even to try to stop Trump proved that idea wrong.

Yet we do not wish to be too hard on *Party Decides*. Its account of nominations in the period 1980 to 2004 remains, in our view, sound. That later nominations have gone differently doesn't invalidate the analysis of earlier ones. Moreover, the book's most important argument—that parties should be understood as coalitions of diverse policy demanders—has lost none of its aptness since *Party Decides* was published. The argument was intended as a corrective to the dominant view among political scientists that electoral politics is candidate-centered, and we stand by the correction. Trump is, of course, the epitome of candidate-centered politics, a candidate with strong personal ties to voters and able to say whatever he needs to say to please them. But even in 2016, Trump is an exceptional candidate and likely to remain so. Much more typical are candidates with ties to at least one—and often many—organized interests that are in turn members of party coalitions. How effectively interest groups function in party coalitions is, as we have been seeing, always an open question. But *The Party Decides* was right in bringing it to the heart of its study of presidential nominations.

#### THE VALUE OF ORDERLY NOMINATIONS

The epochs of party history in the United States can come and go quickly. The Federalist Party lasted little longer than the administration of George Washington and the Whig Party only about

coalitions in having such a process. Here Donald Trump is making a great object lesson. With him as 2016 nominee, the Republican Party may delay its turn in the semi-regular alternation of control of the White House. Yet winning with Trump could be worse, a four-year melee in which the party accomplishes little with its turn in power except loss of reputation for competence, with a possible withering or corrupting of party institutions. Democrats have been gleeful over the GOP's distress, but leaders of both parties must by now appreciate the dangers of an out-of-control nomination process.

Some of the danger to the Republican Party may abate as its factions recover the capacity of party groups to pull together in presidential nominations. The Trump debacle may, in addition, foster willingness within both parties to actively seek broadly acceptable nominees. But a stronger commitment to intraparty cooperation may not, by itself, restore orderly nominations. The frontloading of the public campaign for nomination, with the great opportunities it affords to factional candidates, may prove a long-term detriment to party unity.

In their heart of hearts, many party leaders must wish they could roll back the reforms that created the current nominating system, but this seems unlikely to happen. Even though party factions have a collective interest in orderly nominations, the ambitious candidates of these factions will likely fight for retention of the faction-friendly system that gives them their best chance at nomination. Still more will voters insist on keeping the power that primaries and caucuses appear to have handed them. The journalistic community, which has made itself a player in the current process, will also likely throw its weight behind the arrangements that have given it a taste of power. However imperfect in practice, democracy will be hard to roll back.

### *However imperfect in practice, democracy will be hard to roll back.*

20 years. The post-reform period of orderly nominations through the auspices of an invisible primary may have similarly short duration. But it is too soon to count it out.

By "orderly nominations," we mean nominations in which all of a party's factional groups have their voices counted and can thereby contribute to a united front behind a broadly acceptable candidate. No group gets exactly what it wants, but by accommodating rather than seeking dominance, party factions maximize their chances of winning the presidency and governing afterwards with a modicum of effectiveness.

If seeking broad acceptability seems to would-be reformers a recipe for status quo politics, they should recall that none of the last century's successful reform presidents—Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and Ronald Reagan—won major party nominations as factional leaders.<sup>10</sup> This should not surprise. How can a candidate unable to command broad support within his or her party hope to lead the national government, with its divided powers and multiple veto points, toward meaningful change? The party reforms of the 1970s may have changed the logic of winning presidential nominations, but not the logic of successful governance under the American Constitution.

The most important reason for expecting re-emergence of a more orderly nomination process, then, is the benefit to party

The difficulties that both parties have had containing factional impulses in 2016 make it likely that both will attempt reform ahead of the next nomination cycle, and if past experience is any guide, some of these proposals will aim at further undermining the role of national party leaders and groups in presidential nominations.

As students of parties and democracies, we would regret further anti-party reform. Like Madison in Federalist 10, many Americans continue to believe that the business of parties is to sow the "mischiefs of faction." But we think this is wrong-headed. As Polsby observed of the 1970s and we see again in the current period, weak parties create pathways to power for the most narrowly factional candidates. They also are unable to screen out men and women of unsuitable temperament. Picking up another strain of Madison, we suggest that setting the ambitions of one faction against another in presidential selection is the better way to tame factional impulses. But this can only work if party insiders retain a significant role in the process.

How to ensure salutary party influence in a system in which voters retain ultimate control is, of course, a hard question. But as Hans Noel has pointed out, a systemic switch to proportional representation for delegate allocation rules might be acceptable

even to voters jealous of their power, and it could have the highly desirable effect of making it harder for factional candidates to win delegate majorities in the voter contests alone (Noel 2016). In other words, PR vote counting might bring back deliberative national conventions in which each party faction gets its due weight and the incentive to find a broadly acceptable nominee is strong.

Yet we are placing no bets and making no recommendations. If two centuries of party history in the United States have taught anything, it is that parties are as hard to keep down as they are difficult to effectively reform. Even so, we can't help thinking that further weakening of the capacity of parties to find common ground among their fractious members would be a step in the wrong direction. ■

#### NOTES

1. The McGovern-Fraser Reform Commission of the Democratic Party inaugurated the reform. See Shafer (1983) for a history of the reforms.
2. While the Republican coalition is defined by a conservative ideology (Noel 2013, Grossman and Hopkins 2016), conservatism turns out to be less cohesive than liberalism typically is in driving constraint at least among voters (Ellis and Stimson 2012, Kinder and Kalmoe forthcoming).
3. Note that any "civil war" between Trump and Never Trump factions, crosscuts this earlier civil war.
4. Campaign stories are defined as carrying substantial information about some aspect of the candidate's campaign. They do not include stories unconnected to the campaign even if the candidate is featured, nor do they include sidebar campaign stories that only incidentally refer to the candidate. Coding rules are available upon request. Incumbent Presidents Carter and Ford are excluded. Stories were obtained from ProQuest for 1971 to 1979 and Lexis-Nexis thereafter.
5. The data have been averaged, so that if both parties had contested primaries, the number of debates is halved; hence, trends are unaffected by whether one or both parties have contests.
6. July 12, 1999, page 1.
7. "Why the GOP Establishment Hasn't Mobilized Behind Rubio" NBCNews.com December 12, 2015, "How a Debate Misstep Sent Rubio Tumbling in New Hampshire" New York Times, February 10, 2016.
8. In 18 open or contested nominations from 1972 to 2016, the mean vote share of the winning candidate at the point when opposition ceased was 47% (SD=11) and the mean share of delegates won was 60% (SD=11).
9. The contests were in Washington D.C., Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, North Carolina, Nebraska, West Virginia, Maryland, and Michigan.
10. While Reagan was initially seen as a factional candidate in national politics, he was able to win broader support in his bid for the 1980 Republican presidential nomination, as detailed in *The Party Decides*.

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