Static America:
Myths about Political Change in the U.S.

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I. Congressional Incumbents, 411; Primary Challengers, 7: Less-than-Eventful Primaries as Metaphor

The primary campaign has ended; Hawaii finished it off on the 18th of the month.

September turned out to be typical. On the 14th of the month, the last "Super Tuesday" in 2010, the media focused near-completely on a Tea Party/Republican victory in an open Senate seat in Delaware. But the media all but ignored the fact that that same week *five* incumbent Democratic senators sailed to re-nomination.

In fact, in this last month of primaries—conducted in eight states, two territories, and the District of Columbia—64 incumbents sought re-nomination for a seat in the House or the Senate. All 64 won.

The 100% success rate for congressional incumbents running in September went without mention by the national press. Committed to a two-part narrative of anti-incumbency and Tea Party potency, the media ignored the fact that every incumbent running in the closing days of this year's primary campaign won re-nomination. The only story getting attention, other than Christine O'Donnell's open seat victory in Delaware, was the Charlie Rangel Story. Could the 20-term (!) Democrat from New York, while facing 13 charges of ethics violations by his colleagues in the House, win yet again? He could, and he did.

So much for September. What about the first seven months of Campaign 2010, starting in February and extending on through August? Same story as to actual voting results. In 2010 the total number of incumbents seeking re-nomination for the House or Senate was 418. The total number defeated stands at 7. The percentage of all congressional incumbents—House and Senate—winning re-nomination: 98.

That too is typical. The average percentage of incumbents winning re-nomination for House and Senate seats during the last 10 congressional elections has been 99%. Since 1992, on average, five incumbents have lost in the primaries, only two fewer than in 2010.

While pundits have insisted that this primary season has been extraordinary, the actual election results seem almost garden-variety. Focusing on the Senate campaigns does suggest that 2010 has been, and might turn out to be, an exceptional year in American politics. Three sitting senators were given notice during the primaries that they will not return come January—the highest total since 1980. But 22 senators did win re-nomination—88% of those who sought it. And only one of the three is an unambiguous case study in which rebellious primary voters defeated an incumbent for policy-based causes.

Arlen Specter lost in Pennsylvania. Bob Bennett lost in Utah. But neither senator's case does much to prove the conventional wisdom about mass-based anti-incumbency.

Specter had switched parties in 2009, admitting he'd made the switch principally to get re-elected. As such, Specter was seeking *nomination*, not re-nomination, this time as a Democrat-by-deathbed conversion. Bennett was *not* defeated in a primary. He lost in a pre-primary state convention by 160 votes, even though in statewide polling he led his closest rival by 20 percentage points going into that convention.

Lisa Murkowski stands alone. The Alaska Republican lost (by 2000 votes) in a *real* primary, and she was not a Specter-style party switcher. She lost to Tea Party-backed Joe Miller, and lost because she wasn't Republican enough. She is the single case in the Senate that fits perfectly with the two narratives concerning anti-incumbency and Tea Party success.

Even on the House side, where four incumbents (1%) did lose, only one member of the House really fits the profile. Bob Inglis, a Republican from South Carolina, lost decisively in a runoff because he, like Murkowski, had not been sufficiently conservative for the primary voters back home. [1]

That makes *two*—two incumbents whose defeats comport precisely with the media-sponsored notion that this has been, and will be, an off-with-their-heads election, with incumbents most likely to experience the beheading.

Even here, however, there is a qualifying irony. The narrative holds that Democrats will be considerably more likely to lose their heads. But both of our best case studies from the primaries involve Republicans. And, in the end, one needs to remember: only seven heads from either party were chopped.

Primary outcomes are, at best, a weak predictor of general election results. [2] And polls, as well as pundits, predict a wave election in November. The most recent Pew Research Center reading on the question indicates that 56% of respondents want most members of Congress driven from office. Still, so far, the revolution seems more rhetorical than real.

The contrast between this year's punditry and this season's primary results raises several questions, questions much broader than merely the ongoing discrepancy between what voters *say* about incumbents and what they *do* about incumbents. For one, is the public really alienated, or mostly just frustrated? More importantly, is the electorate moving in any meaningful political direction, other than toward pique and annoyance? One also wonders how much is really going on out there? Are transformative changes taking place? Is there a "Perot" possibility on the horizon? Is this 1994 all over again, with 38 House incumbents run out of office? Or even 1946, when 52 House members were axed in the general election? Or, is this widely-predicted change in 2010 actually *less* than meets the eye?

It seems to me that the actual results in this year's primary campaign may reveal the big-change narrative to be wrong, not just in the short-term but in the larger scope as well. I decided to look only in passing at what might happen come November and focus, instead, on trying to answer the broader questions—about the changes in American politics taking place not just recently, but also during the last political generation. Changes in voting patterns, in opinions, and above all, in political values.

I returned to a special set of surveys that the Pew Research Center has conducted continuously since 1987—surveys that ask about the fundamentals of American opinion, and how they have shifted with time. With those "Values Surveys" as a data base, I discovered that the discrepancy between this year's primary voting and this year's narrative of political transformation appears to be resolved very much in favor of continuity. As in the primaries, where big changes were

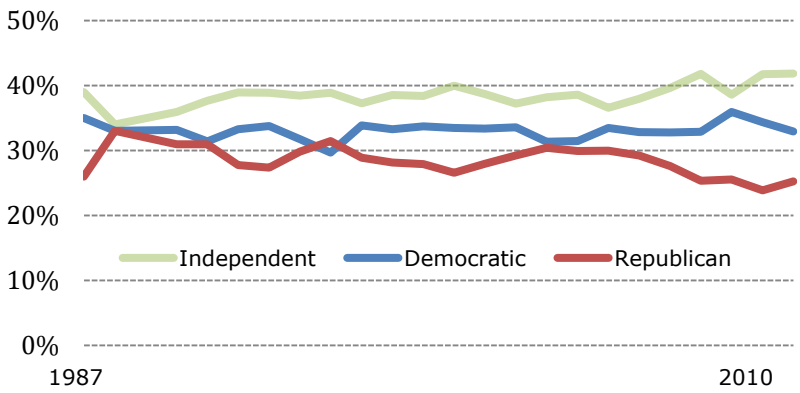
predicted, even proclaimed—but never materialized—the reality of "sameness" has revealed itself through nearly a quarter century of "values" polling. There has been, so far, less change than meets the eye in 2010; and less than meets the eye in the two decades that came before it.

II. Party Affiliation: Democratic, Then, and Now

There will be three major tests of the continuity theory. The first looks to partisan affiliation, starting in the '80s and on through today. The second involves self-expressed ideological positioning. The third, much larger in scope, looks closely at 22 years of American political *values*, expressed through 33 different values questions that I have extracted from Pew's long list of questions about all kinds of major beliefs.

At the outset, let's consider one of the simplest of tests concerning how much political change is taking place outside Washington and inside America. Let's reconsider the level of partisan affiliation/identification among the general populace, as it was then (the '80s) and as it is now (the '00s).

Figure 1. Trend in Party Affiliation 1987-2010



PEW RESEARCH CENTER1987-2010. Data points represent annual totals from Pew Research Center surveys conducted in each calendar year. 2010results based on surveys conducted from January to September.

Combining surveys beginning in 1987 and continuing through the present, Pew has calculated, year-by-year, a profile of partisan affiliation: Democrat, Republican, or neither. The results show how, even in 2010, the movement in partisan attachments is scarcely detectible. In 1987, the percentage of respondents preferring the Republican Party was 26%; now it is 25%. For Democrats the figure "then" was 35%; now it is 33%. For independents the numbers are 39% and 42%.

This beginning-versus-end comparison masks a little movement, but not very much. Only once do the "party lines" cross, though barely, back in 1995. Only twice do they touch, in 1989 and 1991. And that "crossing" and those "touchings" took place some 15 or 20 years ago. Partisan identification moved more back then than it does now. But we've come full circle, in a rather small circle of change. In 1987 the Democrats held a nine-point advantage over the GOP; 23 years later the figure is eight.

So, after nearly a quarter century, party identification winds up revealing neither "realignment," nor "dealignment," two pundit-embraced theories of political change that may well have been more myth than reality.

III. An Ideological Flatline

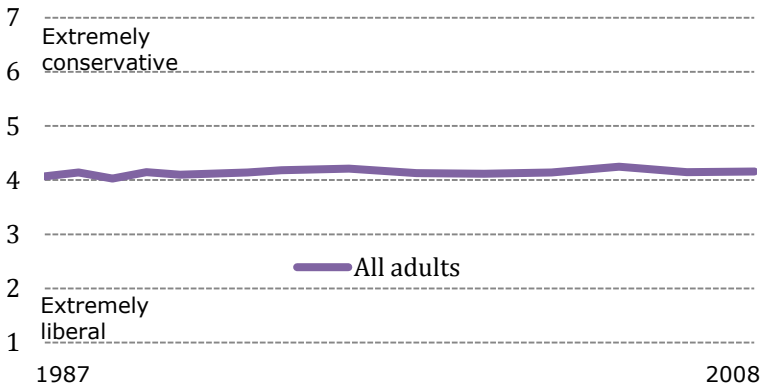
The General Social Survey (GSS) regularly asks a standard question about political ideology: We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal--point 1—to extremely conservative--point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale? In 1987, the percentage describing themselves as at least "slightly conservative" was 33%; in 2008, the most recent assessment, that number was 36%. The reading in 1998 (about midway between) was 35%.

The percentage at least "slightly liberal" has been similarly stable, ranging from a low of 24% to a high of 29% through the period. From the Clinton years on through the end of the presidency of George W. Bush, the share of self-described liberals varied by no more than three percentage points.

Because the General Social Survey question also uses *numbers* (a 1-to-7 scale), it lends itself to a simpler arithmetic. By definition, the midpoint is 4. Any mean score "lower" than 4 (individually or collectively) skews toward the liberal end of the measure; anything "higher" skews "conservative." In the earliest reading (1987), the mean was 4.1—slightly to "the right." Two decades later the mean was 4.2—essentially unchanged and remarkably close to the exact center of the spectrum.

Figure 2 offers the results from several years—1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008. The graph is mind-numbing in its consistency and the small variations that do occur seem to have no consistent relationship to larger happenings on the political scene. The most liberal reading (4.0) occurred in 1989, shortly after George H.W. Bush took over the presidency from Ronald Reagan, under whom he had served as vice president.

Figure 2. Trend in Ideological Self Identification 1987-2008



GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY 1987-2008. Line shows mean ideological self-rating on a seven point scale ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative.

The most conservative readings (4.2 and 4.3) appear in 1996 (a "Gingrich revolution" year) and 2004, a time when public approval of President George W. Bush had already fallen below 50% despite his reelection. And the last two readings indicate no substantial drop-off in conservatism, even though 2006 and 2008 were terrible years for Bush and the GOP. But there is so little variation in the means that explanations as to why change occurred seem almost pointless.

The topography of the graph above is not unlike that of Kansas—level all the way across. Or, one might say, it resembles what the doctors call "flatlining," the pattern of vital signs recorded on medical monitoring equipment by an expiring patient. There is little here to suggest meaningful self-expressed ideological change during the years that carry us from the final days of the Reagan presidency through to the final days of the second Bush presidency. What these numbers do tell us is that the U.S. leans consistently, but minimally, toward the conservative side of the political spectrum. Across the 20 years combined, the mean score is 4.14 – where, as noted above, 4.0 represents the center of the scale. Americans, on average, lean *much* less to the right than is suggested by those items that allow people to claim that they are moderates and give

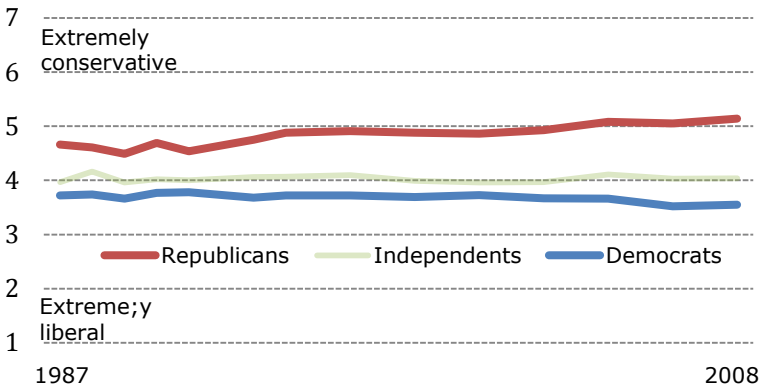
conservatives an exaggerated two-to-one advantage over liberals. We were and remain a center-right America, not a right-center America. But, more than anything, we are *Static America*.

(Semi)Dynamic Equilibrium

Change advocates will, however, reasonably argue that these averages (in Figure 2) mask a dynamic essential to understanding what has really happened to American politics during these last few decades. The argument is that the overall averages remain static, but that the averages hide the fact that Democrats and Republicans have grown increasingly "polarized."

Figure 3. Trend in Ideological Self Identification, by Party

1987-2008



GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY 1987-2008. Lines show mean ideological self-rating on a seven point scale ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative.

Not so much. While there has been some widening of the gap that separates the two parties, there has been no seismic shift occurring at the end of this decade, or at any time since the late '80s.

Using these same GSS data, I found the difference between the mean scores of the two major political parties had increased, but moderately.

In the 2008 GSS survey including this question, the difference in self-placement scores between Democrats and Republicans is 1.6, on a seven-point scale. (The entire distance between the lowest and highest scores is six—"seven" minus "one.") This tells us that the Republicans expressed, in 2008, a mean score that was 27% "more conservative" than did the Democrats (1.6/6.0). But in1987, the absolute difference in means was 0.9, on the same six-point basis. So, 20 years earlier Republicans were 16% (0.9/6.0) more conservative than Democrats.

That means that the gap between parties on ideological self-placement has increased by 11 percentage points, not a huge number in absolute terms, but a substantial increase compared with the baseline of 16%.

There is, however, another way to approach these GSS data, looking directly at expressed "extreme" opinion. In 1987, 3% of all GSS respondents labeled themselves "extremely conservative"; 3% labeled themselves "extremely liberal." By 2008, those numbers had scarcely moved: 4% claimed to be extreme conservatives while 3% described themselves as extreme liberals.

In other words, by 2008, still only 7% labeled themselves extremely anything. Americans rush headlong from whatever sounds extreme. So this is polarization à la American, with 93% of the 2008 electorate unwilling to associate themselves with *either* pole.

IV. Basic Political Values: Plus ça Change

Normative Attitudes: Values vs. Beliefs

Partisan identification and ideological self-positioning are useful as generalized measures of political thinking. But beneath, or beside, these two over-arching dimensions of political attitudes are the specifics of political values.

Political values are important not only because they offer greater specificity but also because they are, by definition, normative. They represent thinking as to what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, what should or should not be.

Pew has given special consideration to these values questions for decades, because they are normative, and because they touch on political fundamentals. These attitudes about values provide a useful metric for measuring changes in liberal versus conservative norms. And values research has its biggest advantage, for us, in assessing how great is the degree of change in a political system, or lack thereof.

Understanding the difference between beliefs and values is important. This difference motivated my decision to exclude nearly 30 "beliefs" questions from these Pew surveys so as to focus on the values items. An example should clarify the preference here to exclude beliefs and focus on values.

When asked if voting gives people some influence over what the government does—a "belief" about process—a clear majority (more than two-thirds) always says "yes." But over the course of time the percentage has dropped—10 points in 20 years. (78% to 68%). But when respondents are asked whether they feel guilty about not voting, the normative aspect of that question anchors responses. In 1987, 66% said they do feel guilty. By 2009 the drop-off was just one percentage point.

The "process" question and "values" question moved in tandem, and logically so. If political leaders are perceived to be listening less to voters, then voters would be right to feel (slightly) less guilty about not voting. But the "values" response shifts at a rate of only one-tenth of that observed when the question involves beliefs about process.

Values change less than attitudes, less than beliefs, and less than opinions. Because values are more fundamental—and less elastic—they provide a good test in gauging stability and change in a nation's political culture. So, just how stable are American political values? In absolute terms, very stable.

Looking only at normative questions—values questions—there are 33 separate items in these Pew surveys. The absolute shift is, on average, 6 percentage points. Nor is there—with the major exceptions of valuing (more) the rights of minorities and valuing (less) protection of the environment—much shift either toward liberal or conservative values.

When it comes to values, the nature of American mass politics is, in a word, static. Whether the value involves: honoring the time-honored tradition of helping the needy; or thinking that earned wealth is to be admired; or believing one should be willing to fight for his country, even if his country is *wrong*—surprisingly little has changed since the 1980s.

Detectives of change keep hearing the barking dogs of anti-incumbency, Tea Party revolution, retrenchment toward right-wing populism—even the recrudescence of racism. But the evidence here suggests that these detectives of change might want to recall Sherlock Holmes's observation about the dog that didn't bark. Because American political values have proven themselves to be conspicuously quiet these last 20 odd years.

Thirty-Three Specific Values, Moving in No Clear Direction

Responses to the Pew values questions add specificity to the more general dimension of party and ideology. But moving toward the specifics does not change the outcome.

There are 33 items that meet the definition of being a "values" question. Across three different decades, from the '80s through the '00s, these values have been mostly static. Table 1 lists all 33 items, organized not by topic but by degree of change overtime in the percentage of those agreeing with them—from least change to most. The 15 questions at the top of the table have changed not at all or by 3 percentage points or less. The next dozen have changed by less than 10 percentage points. Agreement with the six at the bottom of the table has changed by more than 10 percentage points since 1987. Only two values have shifted by 20 percentage points or more.

What makes this constancy more noteworthy is that the public expresses a firm belief that the three decades were themselves *in*constant. In late 2009 Pew asked respondents about the 1980s, the 1990s and the 2000s. Six in 10, with an opinion, considered the 1980s to have been a "positive" time; the same proportion considered the 1990s to have been "positive."

Table 1. Net Level of Agreement (Completely plus Mostly) with 33 Values Statements, 1987–2009

Listed from Least to Most Changing*

	Statement	% Agreeing Then	% Agreeing Now	Percentage Point difference	Direction of Movement
1.	Too much power in the hands of big companies.	77%	77%	0	None
2.	Government should guarantee food and shelter.	62%	62%	0	None
3.	I am very patriotic.	89%	88%	1	Left
4.	We should fight for our country whether right or wrong.	54%	53%	1	Left
5.	I feel guilty when I don't vote.	66%	65%	1	Neither
6.	I admire people who get rich working hard.	89%***	90%	1	Right
7.	We have gone too far pursuing equal rights.	42%	41%	1	Left
8.	I don't care whether a candidate calls himself liberal/conservative	64%**	62%	2	Neither
9.	Prayer is an important part of my daily life.	76%	78%	2	Right
10.	Labor unions have too much power.	59%	61%	2	Right
11.	The federal government controls too much of our daily lives.	58%	55%	3	Left
12.	Business corporations make too much profit.	65%	62%	3	Right
13.	Our society should make sure everyone has equal opportunity to succeed.	90%	87%	3	Right
14.	We should restrict immigration more than now.	76%***	73%	3	Left
15.	It's best for our country to be active in world affairs.	87%	90%	3	Left
16.	Should ban dangerous books from school libraries.	50%	46%	4	Left
17.	Dealing with federal government is not worth the trouble.	58%	54%	4	Left
18.	What's good and evil always applies in all situations.	79%	75%	4	Left
19.	The federal government should run only things local government can't.	75%	70%	5	Left
20.	The government should help more needy people, despite debt.	53%	48%	5	Right
21.	We should get even with countries that take advantage of the U.S.	44%	49%	5	Right
22.	It is my duty to vote.	85%	90%	5	Neither
23.	I like political leaders who compromise to get the job done.	72%	79%	7	Neither
24.	We should improve the position of blacks, even if it means preferential treatment.	24%	31%	7	Left
25.	Poor have become too dependent on government assistance.	79%***	72%	7	Left
26.	Need to be stricter laws to protect the environment.	90%***	83%	7	Right
27.	Government should take care of people who can't care for themselves.	71%	63%	8	Right
28.	Pay less attention to problems overseas and more here at home.	88%***	78%	10	Neither
29.	Women should return to traditional roles.	30%	19%	11	Left
30.	I have old-fashioned values about family and marriage.	87%	71%	16	Left
31.	People should be willing to pay higher prices to protect the environment.	67%***	49%	18	Right
32.	Schools should have the right to fire homosexual teachers.	51%	28%	23	Left

33.	OK for blacks and whites to date.	48%	83%	35	Left

*Exact question wording appears in the Appendix. ** First asked in 1991. ***First asked in 1992.

But public perceptions have changed drastically during the new millennium—fewer than three in 10 think this last decade has been positive. "Things" have changed as the public sees them, but values have not.

Among all 33 items the absolute degree of change—either in a positive or negative direction—is 6 percentage points. And, if one excludes the four items that involve the two values where substantial change did occur—values involving the worth of the environment or the worth of minority rights—that number falls to 4 points.

If either the 6-point or 4-point shift had revealed a consistent direction, either left or right, then the change measured in Table 1 might still be considered glacial, and yet meaningful. That is not the case. In fact, the two exceptions—values about the environment and about minorities—move in opposite direction. Across 22 years, the public has come to value the environment *less* (a "conservative" shift), but also to value the rights of minorities more (a "liberal" shift).

And so it goes with the entire list. Adding together all the percentage points showing values moving in the liberal direction yields a grand total of 128 points. Divided by 33 items that number – 128 -- yields an average shift to the left of 3.9 points. Adding together all the percentage points moving values in the conservative direction produces a total of 54 points—or 1.6 points on average.[3] The net shift in favor of liberal values is 2.3 percentage points (3.9 points minus 1.6 points), a clearly insignificant amount.

What adds to the *in*significance of this degree of shift is the starting and stopping points of these measures. The first Values survey was conducted near the end of the Reagan presidency. The last was done just months after Barack Obama's historic inauguration—near the height of his short-lived but memorable political honeymoon.

One might have expected that the journey from the Reagan years on through to the Obama honeymoon would have magnified changes in values. But neither the change in the political zeitgeist—nor the impact of the Great Recession—produced marked impact on political values. This is made even more surprising when one considers that *some* change did occur on items asking about the government's proper role in helping the have-nots. But, between 1987 and 2009, the shift was toward *less* government involvement. The percentage feeling that the government should do more for the needy, even if it means more debt, declined by 5 percentage points. Over the same period, the percentage believing the government should take care of those who can't take care of themselves also declined, by 8 points.

These modest changes indicate that neither Obama nor economic stress has moved the public toward liberalism in the last three difficult years. In fact, the findings about growing slightly less sympathetic toward the dispossessed in the late '00s reinforce the basic premise: that from Reagan's America on through to Obama's America, changes have been, at most, modest. But the recent, if slight, shift toward more conservative values concerning the welfare state also suggests that some changes in values, however small, may be less counter-intuitive than counter-cyclical. These changes might even be a type of limited backlash against major government initiatives.

Value Polarization: Same as Above

There remains the theory of polarization—that while, in *aggregate*, things haven't changed much, beneath the surface things—values—have changed significantly. As with self-expressed ideology, it is plausible that Democrats have moved to the left to the same degree Republicans have shifted toward the right, giving the appearance of continuity.

Again, using those values that can be classified as liberal or conservative, and checking the differences in values between Democrats and Republicans—then and now—one finds that the gap has grown, by 6 percentage points over the last 20-plus years. In 1987, the average difference between Democrats and Republicans on all values was 10 percentage points. By 2009 the difference had extended itself to 16 points**.**

Using twice as many items—values and opinions and beliefs—the Pew Research Center found precisely the same growth in the gap—from 10 percentage points to 16 points. (See

"Independents Take Center Stage in Obama Era," May 2009, Sec. 11.) The Pew report notes that this *is* the largest party-based difference uncovered in the 10 different Values surveys that have been conducted since 1987.

There is, however, another way to look at the growth in the gap—to interpret the level of partisan agreement, then and now. In 1987, Democrats and Republicans were on the same "side" of the values in 85% of the questions asked (28 of 33 values). In 2009, Democrats and Republicans were on the same side in 73% of those same values (24 of 33).

Back then, Democrats and Republicans, agreed on five values out of six. Now it is still about three values out of four. These ratios do indicate change, but they also show Democrats and Republicans reaching agreement on a large majority of issues.

If one returns to the data in Table 1 and looks separately at Republicans, then Democrats, one discovers, even by 2009, that substantial numbers of Republicans and Democrats "agree" (measured either by plurality or majority opinion) that big companies are too powerful (66% vs. 84%); that they consider themselves to be "very patriotic" (97% vs. 86%); that they feel guilty about not voting (74% vs. 69%); that they admire the hard-working rich (92% vs. 90%); that they don't care about labels "liberal" and "conservative" in political campaigns (52% vs. 63%); that prayer is an important part of their daily life (82% vs. 78%); that business corporations make too much profit (49% vs. 74%); that society should make sure everyone has equal opportunity (83% vs. 95%); that we should restrict immigration more than we do now (83% vs. 64%); that it's best for the U.S. to stay active in world affairs (90% vs. 91%).

There are other surprising agreements. Republicans and Democrats agree that we should concentrate on domestic problems, not foreign affairs (79% vs. 78%); that interracial dating is OK (77% vs. 88%); that the poor have become too dependent on government assistance (83% vs. 62%). And, when asked if women should return to their traditional roles in society, just 20% of Republicans, and just 18% of Democrats said "yes."

There were, in 2009, stark disagreements about the power of labor unions; about whether food and shelter should be guaranteed; about the correctness of welfare spending that increases the

national debt; also about the worth of environmentalism. Even so, there was—and there is—agreement (by majority or plurality) on most of these 33 values.

In 1987, the *vast* majority of values questions had pluralities or majorities of both parties in agreement. By 2009, a sizeable majority of values questions had Republicans and Democrats on the same side. Change has occurred, but continuity still prevails.

Where We End Up: Centrist, Suburban

What, then, is the value system in today's America? It is, mostly, as it has been. For God, with eight in 10 regarding daily prayer as personally important. For country, with nine in 10 describing themselves as "very patriotic." For equality of opportunity, with nine in 10 believing society should ensure it. For citizenship, with nine in 10 regarding voting as a civic obligation. For charity, with about two-thirds believing that government should help the helpless.

Then there are the values that represent longstanding two-mindedness, with the worth of capitalism and the federal government as chief examples. Big business is not much appreciated but the hard-working rich are admired. The federal government ought to strengthen environmental regulations but the same federal government is considered too intrusive and too controlling.

Traditionalism is also seen as a mixed blessing in contemporary America. Seven in 10 still believe in traditional values about marriage and family. But only two in 10 want women to return to their traditional role.

Nothing is more a part of the American consensus than the two-mindedness about the rest of the world: 90% think it "best" that the U.S. be active in world affairs; yet nearly 80% think we should pay more attention to domestic problems than problems overseas. Finally, regardless of the question asked, there is little desire to restrict anybody's rights or freedoms.

Not so long ago these norms, taken together, would have been called Heartland Values. Neither hip nor reactionary, these values, today, might better be characterized as Suburban Values. Suburban Values are: liberal-to-moderate about rights and freedoms; moderate-to-conservative

about spending; and conflicted about Big government, Big business, and Big labor. They are, above all, centrist values, and recognizable as American, even if somewhat more differentiated by party than was once the case.

Two Exceptions: Environmentalism and Minority Rights

One could make a case that traditionalism has suffered some during the last quarter century. The fourth greatest percentage point change in Table 1 (16 points) involves a question about whether the respondent has "old-fashioned" values about family and marriage. But despite the shift away from these old-fashioned notions, more than seven in 10 continue to regard themselves as traditional.

There are, however, two dimensions that stand out from the rest as values-in-transition: environmentalism and rights for minorities, specifically, gays and African-Americans.

Although Americans still feel that environmental laws should be tougher than they are (83% say so), the percentage saying so has dropped 7 points since the late '80s. The much bigger shift has occurred when the question is *directly* related to values—how much environmentalism is worth, in dollars.

Respondents were asked if they agree that "people should be willing to pay higher prices . . . to protect the environment?" Since the question was first asked in 1992, the proportion agreeing has dropped 18 percentage points (67% to 49%). That drop-off is the third biggest in Table 1. Environmentalism is slipping as a value.

Why has there been a decline in valuing environmental protection, when so many other values seem near-immutable? The answer might be, in part, a solution that has, to this point, continued to fail us in trying to understand these values. That solution might be the Great Recession.

Clearly the decline in environmentalism coincides with the ongoing recession. The willingness to pay higher prices to protect the environment held rather steady until 2007. Between 2007 and 2009 the willingness to pay "more" fell by 11%--a two-year level of decline that is extraordinary in these surveys.

But why have other values—even if expressed in dollars and cents—not been so much affected? The answer may involve nothing more than time. Among all the values considered here, environmentalism may be the "newest." As such, it is more susceptible to events, in this case, economic shock. Understanding the swing toward a somewhat more conservative posture on this value may be as straightforward as remembering the relatively brief history of environmentalism, as well as the greater depth of economic crisis that has enveloped it.

The other exception—minority rights—is both more dramatic and more complicated. Support for the rights of gays has risen sharply over the last 20 years. In 1987, a tiny minority (51%) thought school boards *should* "have the right to fire teachers who are known homosexuals." By 2009, that figure had fallen to 28%. That change ranks as second greatest on our list. (Interestingly, agreement with banning school books containing "dangerous ideas" did not experience anywhere near that kind of liberalization.)

Greatest, by far, is the change in thinking about interracial dating, yet another aspect of minority rights. Back in 1987, a very slim plurality (48%) thought it "all right" for blacks and whites to date each other. By 2009, an overwhelming majority (83%) came to feel that way. Taken together, these two questions about gays and interracial dating reveal a degree of changing values far greater than any other observed.

Two circumstances help to explain this anomaly. First, one can point to schools and to the media. American schools and media increasingly teach the values of integration. Neither institution teaches the value of segregation, as was the case in the not-so-distant past. Therefore, unlike almost all the other values considered here, integration—multiracialism—is a norm that receives a single-sided presentation. One might consider this to be education, or indoctrination. But whichever it is, the result has been the same—a dramatic shift in acceptance of interracial dating, and an increasing acceptance of integration in general.

A similar argument applies to the acceptance of gays and gay rights. There remain some religions and religious institutions that do not accept the notion that sexual orientation is one's own business. But schools, the media, and the popular culture increasingly do voice an

acceptance of nontraditional sexual orientations. Again, value instruction has become increasingly one-sided about gays and gay rights, and that instruction has prevailed.

Such is not the case with other values. Schools, for example, have not expressed increasingly one-sided beliefs about business or labor unions. And these beliefs have remained stable. The belief in minority rights has increased substantially because, for decades, that is the value that all major opinion-forming institutions have taught.

There is a second aspect to the shift toward minority rights—the dovetailing between those rights and the basic American value—freedom. Dating outside one's race is a personal freedom. Teaching in the public schools isn't a personal freedom, but it pertains to equality of opportunity, another expression of and for freedom—in this case the freedom to have a job and to succeed. Inculcating a deeper commitment in favor of minority rights for blacks and gays is made easier by one simple fact: that, at base, minority rights involve just that—*rights.*

Only one value examined here has undergone full-blown transformation—the right of minorities to do what they wish. The special combination of single-sided instruction about minorities and America's deep commitment to rights of almost any kind helps explain that uniqueness.

Liberals and Conservatives: Tie Score

Liberals have done well in the competition that is political values. Liberals, for example, have led in the promotion of minority rights, especially for gays. And these rights have received much greater acceptance nationwide.

Liberals have also made greater gains in the extended list of values that have been studied here. There have been 26 items that have shifted either left or right since 1987, and 16 have moved—or inched—in the direction of liberalism (Table 1). Ten have moved—or inched—the other way.

But recall that the net shift toward liberal values has been a meager 2 percentage points on our scale. That is not change so much as drift.

The conservatives have also scored. With the recession there has been a (very) slight shift away from welfarism, and also a measurable shift away from environmentalism.

The conservatives score again on the overall assessment of current values—whether as specific questions, or as more generalized values. Table 2 contains a final list—one in which I have broadened the scope of the 33 specific values questions that appear in Table 1. So now a specific item about preferring stricter laws to protect the environment is reclassified as "Environmental Regulation," a general value on which the public has a liberal orientation. And a specific question about more control over people coming to live in the U.S. is now reclassified as "Immigration Restrictions," a general value on which the public has a conservative orientation.

Among these generalized values, 25 can be reasonably categorized as either liberal *or* conservative—and where opinion is *not* equally divided on the value being considered. *Eleven* generalized values listed in Table 2 have a majority (or plurality) now expressing a liberal point of view. *Fourteen* of these generalized values have a majority (or plurality) that currently expresses a conservative orientation. That works out to a 12-percentage-point advantage for conservatism (56-44). At most, the U.S. has wound up after two-plus decades as "Center Right" as conservatism continues to hold a slim values advantage.

Table 2. Values That Have Majority (or Plurality) Support: "Liberal" vs. "Conservative"
(Listed from Most to Least of Either)*

Liberal Values	**Conservative Values**
• Involvement in world affairs	• Admiration of earned wealth
• Ensuring equal opportunity	• Level of patriotism
• Interracial dating	• Centrality of prayer
• Environmental regulation	• Universality of Good versus Evil
• Concern about corporate power	• Immigration restrictions
• Women's role in society	• Government assistance for poor
• Gay rights	• Values about marriage and family
• Help for the needy	• Preference for local control of programs
• Guaranteed food and shelter	• Preferential treatment of minorities
• Size of corporate profits	• Concern about union power

• Speed of Civil Rights gains	• Intrusiveness of federal government
	• Experience with federal government
	• My country, right or wrong
	• Revenge as motive in foreign affairs
* See Appendix for actual questions.	

If this were an athletic rather than a political competition, the final score would appear to be something akin to a tie. But as important as the final score may be, the type of "sport" being observed is also significant. This competition has been much less like watching NBA basketball than sitting through FIFA soccer. Regardless of who it is that wins in a soccer match, not all that much has happened during the game. In this 20-year competition of and for values, not all that much has been happening during this game either.

V. Explaining Continuity: Nothing Succeeds Like Success

Political values don't change much in America, in part because political values don't change much anywhere. Unless. Unless cataclysmic circumstances produce those changes. Or, unless the state makes a concerted effort to generate them. The first two reasons that American values—and politics—have remained so static since the late 1980s are that neither of those exceptions obtains. While there have been catastrophic events—September 11 being the obvious example—cataclysms have not been that much a part of recent U.S. history. Nor has the federal government committed itself to a political re-education campaign; it rarely does.

As for conditions, neither the war on terrorism nor the Great Recession has had the intensity and duration of earlier cataclysms. The Civil War, industrialization, urbanization, the Great Depression, the world wars, Vietnam and the 1960s cut deeper. Besides, September 11 did not teach lessons directly relevant to the left-right divide that defines American politics.

September 11 did cause a brief, but dramatic, change in attitude. For example, between September 1999 and August 2002, the percentage of Americans believing "we should get even"

with those who harm the U.S. leapt 19 percentage points, pushing the percent agreeing to a record high of 61%. That new figure was a full 17 points higher than the percentage expressing a desire for revenge back in 1987, when the question was originally asked.

Nevertheless, as is often the case in these values surveys, that number has moved back from whence it came. As of 2009, the "get-even" percentage was just five points higher than in 1987, when it was 44%.

Sudden, events-driven leaps involving normative issues do seem to resolve themselves—to dissipate—quickly. Values, apparently, have a self-correcting element that returns the American public to what seems to be a sort of baseline.

What about a set of historic events, such as the West winning the Cold War? There seems to be scant evidence that victory in the Cold War during the late '80s and early '90s had much impact on American political values. Then again, that victory was a *confirmatory* set of events – implying for the public that American values are valid and sound.

That kind of confirmation might serve as a booster shot for American values, but leave them where they had been before the Cold War victory. Again, values seem to be self-sustaining – even self-correcting – despite these two significant events of the last quarter century.

So much for events. What about government attempts to influence or control values?

As for political re-education campaigns, in the U.S. that sort of thing has traditionally been the exception, not the rule. American political institutions were designed to minimize modification of values. (It is, however, instructive that in the one domain where the government did decide to re-educate—about values concerning minority rights—there has been substantial change.)

In most domains—norms about prayer, or values about capitalism, citizenship, social welfare, etc.—the national government has usually deferred to religious institutions, states, local schools, interest groups, and above all, the family, to inculcate political values. In short, the American Way is not to practice government-sponsored values re-education; i.e., indoctrination.

The American Way is to practice pluralism in all things, including values education. And all this pluralism seems to have worked. Without federal involvement in the process of values education, the default option is for values to remain where they have been in the past.

Minimization of change is more obvious with respect to policy than to values, but the process is much the same. Constructed specifically to minimize changes in policies, American political institutions have succeeded in doing just that.

Practically nobody regards the U.S. as pace-setting when it comes to policy adoption or transformation. The long and tortuous path of adopting (limited) national health insurance proves the point.

Pluralism reinforces the status quo in policies such as government-sponsored health insurance -- unless cataclysms override the several impediments to change in those policies. The same holds true for values. Americans remain rock-solid in most old-fashioned political values because the system works as designed—succeeding in not changing much of anything, at least not quickly.

A third bulwark against change also exists, and increases with time. The resilience (one might say stubbornness) of values can be linked to the deep-seated legitimacy of the regime that helped to create them.

Pew conducted an end-of-millennium survey in 1999. In that survey Americans were asked what they considered to be the "major reasons" that explain the successfulness of their nation during the 20th century. The top three reasons, chosen from a list of 13, were "free enterprise," (chosen by 81% of respondents as a "major reason"), "free elections" (84%), and "the Constitution" (85%).

Those choices prove, again, the center-right nature of American political beliefs. But those choices also demonstrate just how much political legitimacy the public confers on its core principles and institutions. That level of legitimacy inevitably extends to political values as well.

Americans have a down-home expression about personal relationships: that people should always "dance with them that 'brung ya.'" That notion also has political implications: That people should stick with the values that made the dance possible, and successful.

It is fact that the single best predictor as to whether a political regime will survive another year is the number of years that have preceded the current one. This important truth is the political science equivalent of another longstanding American aphorism—that "nothing succeeds like success." And that aphorism also applies to political sociology. The best single predictor of value stability is the number of years those values have already held sway.

Longevity *in* political values equates with stability *of* political values. So Americans, with a value-system that spans nearly 10 generations, remain fixed in those values. For good—or for ill—U.S. political values exhibit great continuity because those values have been in place for so long a time.

VI. Some Things Do Change

Not everything stays the same. Opinions about political *leaders* often change and sometimes very quickly. The two Bush presidencies hold the dubious distinction of having experienced record-setting levels of negative opinion change during the last 20 years. Pew (or Gallup) surveys conducted since 1987 show George H. W. Bush at or near the top of the charts on two counts: he holds the record for the *highest* approval score in the modern era—89% "approval," recorded, by Gallup, in March, 1991—in the afterglow of victory in the Hundred Hours War. He also comes close to holding a second record: most approval points lost during his term in office. Pew Research Center surveys show that Bush, the father, fell 60 points, in a year and a half, down to 29% approval.

George W. Bush, the son, is the record-holder on that second count. According to surveys, his approval peaked at 86% two weeks after 9/11. By autumn 2008, he had fallen 64 points—to a record-tying low of 22%.

"Conditions" are also subject to huge shifts in opinion. A familiar case involves the perceived state of the nation. Since 1988, the greatest level of satisfaction "with the way things are going in this country today" was reached immediately following the victory in the first Gulf War in 1991—66% satisfied, according to Gallup. That figure is more than 50 points higher than the nadir reached, according to Pew, in October 2008.

The satisfaction-with-the-nation question elicits not just huge changes, but also some remarkable ironies. Satisfaction after victory in the Gulf War makes sense. But the second highest satisfaction score recorded since 1988 occurred a month after the Monica Lewinsky scandal erupted (59%). Next highest came immediately following Al Qaeda's great success—and America's enormous failures—on September 11, 2001 (57% satisfied). However ironic it may be, late September 2001 turned out to be the high point in satisfaction-with-the-nation for the rest of the decade.

By October 2008—as the economy teetered toward collapse—opinions about "conditions" proved their elasticity; satisfaction cratered, falling to 11%. During the 18 years between the victory in the Gulf War and the "defeat" of Lehman Brothers, satisfaction had fallen by 55 percentage points.

Opinions about conditions are highly elastic. Beliefs about how the political *process* works (or doesn't) are also elastic, but not quite so elastic as opinions about conditions. For example, when asked by Pew whether respondents believe that political officials care about what average people think—a classic "process" question—over the course of 20-plus years, the proportion saying "yes" fell from 47% to 38%, a 10-point shift being about par for a "process" item. The same pattern holds on a related subject—how *policies* are working (or aren't). When asked whether or not NAFTA was helping the U.S., economy—a policy question—over 11-years time (1997–2008) the percentage believing NAFTA was helping fell a dozen points. Then support jumped seven points in the following year. That pattern is also commonplace with regard to "policy" per se.

These process and policy questions involve unanchored beliefs. So it is not at all surprising that they are subject to meaningful levels of change. But these sorts of beliefs are not nearly as

volatile as opinions involving political leaders or public officials. Nor are beliefs about process or policy nearly as evanescent as opinions about events, circumstances, or conditions.

There is a hierarchy here. Values are the least elastic of attitudes; attitudes about people and conditions are the most. This hierarchy helps explain not just the reason this report has been about values, it also proves the obvious: Some things do change – quickly and by a lot. And those feelings that do change – opinions far more than values – usually explain why the public votes the way it does in any given election, and in most elections.

It is not surprising that most elections are decided based upon opinions about leaders and opinions about conditions – not about values. "Values elections" are rare because values tend to remain static. "Conditions elections" are far more frequent because conditions really do change.

VII. Political Values: So What?

November's general election will not be decided by values. Conditions – plus incumbency – will, as usual, determine the outcome. As noted just above, "conditional elections" are commonplace, at least in the U.S.

"Values elections" are few and far between: the last obvious example was in 1988, the Bush-Dukakis race. And because values elections tend to be ugly, and a little scary, Americans might take comfort in knowing that most elections are "conditional."

But then, what is the point of identifying political values and working, assiduously, to measure any shifts that occur within them if values rarely influence voting directly? There are answers.

To review:

1. Political values define a nation's political culture, and political culture sets the limits within which the political debates and campaigns are fought.
2. Then there is the degree of value consensus – another useful measure in predicting how much civility one can expect in a given political system. In the U.S., Democrats and

> Republicans are still on the same side of the issue in almost three values out of four. That level of value consensus portends a politics that is likely to remain comparatively nonviolent. One wonders, in fact, in just how many European countries one can find a three-quarters values consensus between the two largest political parties in those nations.

But values also have some utility in helping us understand actual vote patterns, and not just in value elections such as 1988. If values are mostly fixed -- and both parties accept them as given -- then there is some advantage and necessity for parties to emphasize conditions – or even personalities – when they campaign. Fixed values tend, then, to promote "conditional" elections.

Finally, and ironically, static American values now seem to have an ongoing impact on parties that win an election and become the new government – an impact that runs contrary to those parties' political agendas.

Having won an election, and become the government, the victorious party pushes its agenda. But if the policies adopted or proposed move outside the parameters set by existing political values, the public is likely to contradict the new government by moving, albeit slightly, in the opposite direction on those values.

Pew's values surveys show this phenomenon to have taken place at least twice in the last two decades, first in the two years after the 1994 Newt Gingrich revolution, and then within months after the inauguration of Barack Obama. Both sides, arguably, overreached at the outset. And in those two cases, Republicans and then Democrats faced a slight degree of values backlash.

For the Gingrich Republicans, their anti-government overreach led, approximately, to a five-point shift toward *greater* appreciation of federal programs and *less* concern about government controls. Concomitantly, when Obama and the Democratic Congress added more current stimulus and prospective health care spending to the already huge Bush-era deficits, the Pew 2009 Values survey revealed a shift away from support for welfare programs and toward spending less on the needy – a shift of some half dozen points on those two issues.

Unless peace and prosperity are breaking out everywhere, governments that move outside the values parameters that have long existed are likely to experience at least some values backlash. The Republicans suffered from this back in 1995 and 1996. And quite possibly the Democrats will suffer the same thing come November.

Again, conditions will be overarching in the coming election. But this phenomenon of values backlash does seem to exist. It is self-correcting and is yet another kind of dynamic equilibrium, this one values-based. All this represents a politics of equipoise, one in which voters tend to move away from governments that transgress against the very political values those voters have so long embraced.

VIII. Conclusions: Political Change, American Style: Life in the Slow Lane

Americans may well see themselves as living in the political fast lane. Pundits certainly depict America that way. In technology, a case can be made for "fast-lane America." In demography, change may not be all that fast, but it is considerable and constant—moving inexorably toward greater racial and ethnic diversity.

But in politics, one should, as a first conclusion, remember that Americans tend to avoid the fast lane; they prefer the slower ones. And that is true in ways that transcend political values.

As of 2010, there are, worldwide, 195 nation states. The number of those that have operated under the same political regime since the advent of the First World War is *five*. The U.S. is not merely one of the five, it is also the "oldest," if *form* of government is the measure of time. The U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1788, made operational in 1789, and has continued on since then. Since 1789, France, our oldest ally, has experienced *12* forms of government. Talk about regime change.

By 1791, the U.S. Constitution had been amended, in a package deal, 10 times. Since then, just 17 times. That works out to one amendment every 13 years. But not in our time. Only one amendment has been ratified since the starting point in this research, back in 1987. That

ratification occurred in 1992. But Congress proposed the 27th Amendment in . . . 1789. Change in our time has certainly not meant Constitutional change. To think otherwise is mythology.

Since 1860 only two parties have seriously contested the Congress and the presidency: the Democrats—the party of 1800—and the Republicans—the party of 1856. For six generations, Americans have maintained not just the same two-party system, but the same two (not-much-approved) parties. No other party system comes close to maintaining this level of continuity (or rigidity). In this perspective, any thought that American politics lives in the fast lane—no matter what happens this November—is more mythology.

If one shifts topics from Constitutionalism, history and sociology to those of public opinion, elections, and voting, the fast-lane model still fails. The last political "revolution" came in 1994—the Gingrich revolution. But, confused, as we are, by an always sensationalist news media, how quickly we *mis*remember. Ninety percent of incumbents won re-election to the House that year. And, in 1994, 92% of incumbents won re-election even in the less incumbent-friendly Senate.

Even in the Democratic "Reconquest" elections of 2006 and 2008, 94% of all House incumbents were re-elected, in *both* years. This year's primary elections have ended up being about par for our electoral course. In 2010, 88% of sitting senators seeking party re-nomination (or first-time nomination) prevailed – slightly below average. Over on the "House side," 99% won re-nomination, remarkably, just about the average for the last quarter century.

Voter revolution could soon be in the offing. But the last time as many as 50 House incumbents—17% of those running for re-election—lost in a November election was in 1948! Twenty percent of the Senate incumbents did lose in 2006, but that hadn't happened for 20 years.

In 2008, the Senate incumbency success rate was 87%. In fact, in the not-so-safe Senate, since 1987, when the Pew Values surveys began, 303 senators have sought to be re-elected. And 265 made it safely back to office—87% of the total.

One might ask how and why the myth of voter rebellion remains so deeply ingrained. Part of this is, again, narrative—now every national election has one. The year-of-the-woman has been a favorite when the Democrats do well. The year-of-the-angry-white-man is a useful story-line whenever Republicans win. The mad-as-hell independent-voter works if neither party scores a decisive victory. As narrative, populist insurgency fills in almost any gap. In 2010, it's the Tea Party's emergence—or, depending on the information source -- the Tea-Party *emergency*, that predominates.

Political pundits typically depict the electorate in open rebellion and Washington in ongoing paralysis. Generally, neither thesis is true. Closer to the truth about American politics is the second conclusion: that there have been three defining characteristics of American politics for decades. They are: institutional stability; electoral moderation, and the power of incumbency. But now we have evidence to add to that second conclusion a fourth dimension: *value constancy*. And constancy of political values is very much a piece of the other three.

In nearly a quarter of a century Americans have grown slightly more secular. Besides that, acceptance of what were once called "outgroups" has increased substantially. But the continuities are legion: patriotism; religious commitment; citizenship duty; appreciation of hard work; admiration for property and (earned) wealth; charity for the needy; international cooperation, and, above all, a preference for personal freedom rather than state-sponsored equality.

A third conclusion brings us to American Exceptionalism – the belief (or the reality) that the U.S. is fundamentally different from other nations, even those with which it shares a similar heritage. Almost nobody doubts the plausibility of American Exceptionalism; the debate is usually about its effects, as either beneficial or deleterious. But pundits, press, pollsters, and political scientists have reached something of a consensus about American Exceptionalism. That (near) consensus includes two elements: (a) that Americans do tend to believe they have a special role to play in the world, and (b) that Americans do hold a unique set of political attitudes.

The final conclusion is that there is one other element within American Exceptionalism, an element that has not been much observed. This is an element of self-deception about how quick America is to change its politics.

Political analysts and the public tend to see American politics as always in flux. Again, the narrative: that change is the watchword for U.S. politics; that America lives its political life in the fast lane, more so than most other nations with which it compares itself.

That element of American Exceptionalism—that the U.S. is the embodiment of change—may be easy to believe, but it, too, is mostly myth. Americans exhibit a world-class tendency toward the political status quo. And they have adopted political institutions that work hard at maintaining that stasis. One can now conclude that Americans, do *not* drive in the fast lane, the one over there on the left. They drive in the slower lanes, more toward the center and the right.

American Exceptionalism envisions a politics in the passing lane, but Americans usually prefer the lane designed for cruising. They do so not because they are careful, knowing or wise. They do so because that is what they have done in the past, and for a very long time. That is why they live in Static America. And why American politics are more in keeping with back-to-the-future than any brave-new-world.

Despite all this, the myths about political change endure: that *this* time it will be different. That this election will be a watershed. That voters won't take it anymore. That incumbency will prove to be toxic. That "Washington-Insider" status will be a political death warrant. That the center won't hold. That realignment—if not the end—is nigh. Meanwhile, 98% of the House members and senators who are seeking re-election in November have just been re-nominated for the office each holds. . . . As they say, "only in America."

Appendix

This is the exact wording of the questions that were asked in the Values Surveys. They are abbreviated in Table 1. The questions are listed here by degree of change, from least to most, 1987–2009. Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

1. There is too much power concentrated in the hands of a few big companies.
2. The government should guarantee every citizen enough to eat and a place to sleep.
3. I am very patriotic.
4. We all should be willing to fight for our country, whether it is right or wrong.
5. I feel guilty when I don't get a chance to vote.
6. I admire people who get rich working hard.
7. We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.
8. I don't pay attention to whether a candidate calls himself or herself a liberal or a conservative.

9. Prayer is an important part of my daily life.
10. Labor unions have too much power.
11. The federal government controls too much of our daily lives.
12. Business corporations make too much profit.
13. Our society should do what is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.
14. We should restrict and control people coming to live in our country more than we do now.
15. It's best for the future of our country to be active in world affairs.
16. Books that contain dangerous ideas should be banned from public school libraries.
17. Dealing with a federal government agency is often not worth the trouble.
18. There are clear guidelines about what's good or evil that apply to everyone regardless of their situation.
19. The federal government should run ONLY those things that cannot be run at the local level.
20. The government should help more needy people even it if means going deeper in debt.
21. It is my belief that we should get even with any country that tries to take advantage of the United States.
22. I feel it's my duty as a citizen to always vote.
23. I like political leaders who are willing to make compromises in order to get the job done.
24. We should make every possible effort to improve the position of blacks and other minorities, even if it means giving them preferential treatment.
25. Poor people have become too dependent on government assistance programs.

26. There needs to be stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment.
27. It is the responsibility of the government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves.
28. We should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home.
29. Women should return to their traditional roles in society.
30. I have old-fashioned values about family and marriage.
31. People should be willing to pay higher prices in order to protect the environment.
32. School boards ought to have the right to fire teachers who are known homosexuals.
33. I think it's all right for blacks and whites to date each other.

[1] The three other House members losing a primary were either under investigation or linked to scandals in their family, or, in one case, was another party-switcher.

[2] In 1992, 19 House incumbents were defeated in primaries, but the general election produced only a 10-seat shift in favor of Republicans. In 1994, however, only four incumbents were defeated in primaries, but in November, Republicans gained a modern-era record of 52 seats.

[3] On two items there was no movement whatsoever—whether there is too much power in the hands of big companies, and whether the government should guarantee food and shelter to the needy. On five items there was movement, but movement that could not be classified as left or right—whether, for example, compromise among political leaders is a good thing. The total point shift on these questions was 25.