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The *Other* American Presidential Election: Choosing a President and Psychoanalyzing a Nation

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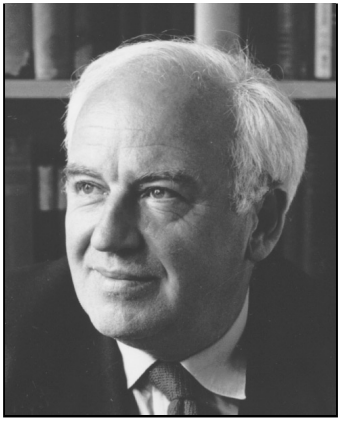

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Godfrey Hodgson

The *Other* American Presidential Election: Choosing a President and Psychoanalysing a Nation

For more than a year now, we have been living through the four-yearly gestation period of an American presidential election. Like the pregnancy of an elephant, this has become a very long drawn-out process. To have any chance of success, a candidate now needs to have his headquarters, both in Washington and in several key primary states, in place and operating at least a year before the final polling day. Well before that, he (so far it has always been 'he') will have been well advised to hire pollsters, advertising buyers, spot and creative people, public relations experts, scheduling experts and a team, perhaps more than one team, of political pundits.

All of this costs money, a great deal of money. In 2000, the whole election campaign cost at least $2 billion. In 2004 the best estimate is that it cost $3 billion. That covers all the money spent on all the elections, including those for the one-third of the United States Senate who are elected every four years, the House of Representatives, State governors and members of state legislatures, and a whole host of other offices, down to the proverbial dog catcher, as in "he couldn't be elected dog catcher."

Like most American political journalists, I will draw heavily on metaphors from two areas of human conflict: war, and sport. Candidates 'fight campaigns'. They enter the 'race'. They have managers, even 'handlers', like a boxer. They must 'peak' at the right moment, like an athlete. They, and their 'staffs' display 'generalship', and when a candidate triumphs in a given state; it used to be common to hear political professionals say, he 'took the state like Grant took Richmond'.

This language, of 'races' and 'campaigns', is perfectly natural if the election is considered in one aspect. Like a football match or a tennis tournament, an American presidential election, or rather the four-yearly event that chooses who is to occupy some 4,000 offices, from the highest to the humblest, is about winning and losing. From one point of view, an election — in the United States or anywhere else — is a mechanism for deciding who is to fill various political offices.

That campaign has been waged this year with exceptional fervour, even ferocity. It strikes an outsider as bizarre, for example, that a man like Senator Kerry, who has received five medals for gallantry in the field, has to defend his courage and patriotism against a politician, like President Bush, who did not serve overseas. But that only illustrates the deep divisions and angry passions of the desperate fight over who is going to lead America. The main point I want to make here tonight, however, is that there is another campaign.

Presidential elections have come to have another aspect, another purpose; and it is that other function of the election, certainly in the United States and perhaps to a lesser extent in all mature democracies, that I want to talk about. It has attracted far less attention than the business of filling offices.

What I have in mind is the election as an opportunity for the United States (and for other countries, too, if they are so minded), to take fad.

Like analysis in an individual life, an election can be an act of introspection, and perhaps even a form of therapy. Certainly it is an opportunity for a society to thrash out the answers to such questions as: What sort of people are we? What sort of people do we want to be? What are our priorities? Are we happy about what has happened in our recent past? Do we contemplate our immediate future with confidence? Is it time, on the contrary, for a new start? Should we 'throw the rascals out'? Or is it a time for, in nautical idiom, 'steady as she goes'? Such questioning can go quite deep beneath the surface. It can touch such matters as national guilt, national anger, national aspirations and national fear.

Some in the United States are impatient with this tendency for introspection. They suspect that it is all got up by 'the media', those universal whipping boys, to sell newspapers or advertising.

Some think this is a new tendency. They trace it back no farther than the hype and ballyhoo surrounding the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960. But hype and ballyhoo are no new things in American elections. I own a steel engraving, from *Frank Leslie's* magazine, I think, by none other than the young Winslow Homer. Before developing into one of the very greatest of American painters, Homer, like many artists of his day, earned his living by working to transfer photographs onto steel engraving plates for the new mass circulation magazines of the late nineteenth century. This shows a huge crowd listening to a political speech.

Next door to the Homer engraving in my study is an equally talented nineteenth century cartoon from *Le Petit Parisien*. In it you can see all the trappings of the campaign that have lasted to our day: red white and blue ribbons, bored listeners and an earnest orator, discussing the issues and questions of the day. A supercilious French editor has labelled it: *Election présidentielle. Curieuses moeurs électorales en Amérique*.

Those 'curious customs' have been with us for a long time. From a very early stage, certainly from the days of the "barnburners" and

"Tippecanoe and Tyler too" in the early nineteenth century, American elections have offered all the fun of the fair. Even today, when no national party convention has had a role in deciding, who would be the Republican or Democratic presidential candidate for more than 40 years, the convention still has some of the atmosphere of a fairground or of Barnum & Bailey's circus. Brass bands pound out old favourites and stage anthems: "Hail to the Chief!", or "California, here we come, Right back where we started from", or "The Yellow Rose of Texas", while thousands of red, white and blue balloons float down from the ceiling as they have always done. We are reminded that this country, so committed to modernity, is also profoundly conservative — with a small c as well as with a big C.

This is the ceremonial, the reassuring side of presidential elections. But tonight I am more interested in the aspect of the process that is less reassuring, that can, indeed, be downright disturbing, because it is a moment of serious self-questioning. So far as I know, no historian has focused at length on this element in the election process. Many electoral experts, perhaps more in the United States than elsewhere, approach elections in something of the spirit of the sports fan, who knows all the statistics, all the anecdotes, all the quirks of personality and the chances of the struggle, but does not stop to ask what the fuss is all about. It is all a lot of fun, and I have fallen under its spell myself at times. But tonight I want to consider the presidential election as a device for national introspection. I propose to do so, by looking at the self-analytical element in four famous campaigns, the elections of 1876, 1912, 1968 and 2004.

Each came, at a turning point of a kind, in American political history. Three of them — 1876, 1968 and 2004 — were extremely close, and 1912 was hard to predict until the end. On election night in 1968, Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic candidate, was catching up fast on Richard Nixon. If the election had been held a day later, Humphrey

would probably have won. The elections of 1876 and 2004 were shrilly disputed: both ended up by being decided by judicial process after no winner could be declared by the normal electoral mechanism. Obviously, where elections are as close as that, no one can confidently take the result as evidence about the state of mind of the nation. The campaign, on the other hand, is a rich source of insights into what is on the people's minds.

1876

Each of the four elections happened at a time when the Republic was deeply troubled and stood, in the opinion of many citizens, at a point of decision, a fork in the road. In 1876, the "Reconstruction" of the conquered South after the Civil War was coming to an end. Reconstruction was the military occupation of something like one-third of the territory of the United States. The defeated southern whites watched in sullen and occasionally violent anger, as Northern abolitionists came down in an attempt to change the most deeply held mores of Southern life by allowing African Americans to vote and to hold political office.

By 1876, Reconstruction was failing. White southerners were demanding to be masters in their own houses. Radical Republicanism was accused of corruption, as well as of ideological fervour and a racial tolerance that many Americans, North and South, were not ready for. And a new generation of southern business leaders were in a hurry to forget the great quarrel over slavery and bring in railroads, investment and industrial development capitalism.

The Democrats had been kept out of power nationally, even as they controlled the Solid South, but now they put up a strong candidate, Samuel Tilden, a New York lawyer. The Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, was a moderate, a Civil War general turned governor of Ohio.

At first it seemed that Tilden had won. Then a dramatic scene ensued, not without elements of farce. A Democrat rashly sent a telegram to

the *New York Times* asking to check the results in three Southern States: Florida, South Carolina and Louisiana. That tipped off the editors at the then Republican *Times*. All was not lost. If Hayes carried those three States, he would beat Tilden with 185 votes in the electoral college, against 184 for Tilden.

At six in the morning an editor, John Reid, went to the hotel on Fifth Avenue at 23rd Street that served as the Republican headquarters. He asked for the room number of Zachariah Chandler, the Republican national chairman. At that point another Republican official, William E. Chandler, no relation, arrived, cursing those who had led the Republicans to defeat. Reid convinced him, by going through the results state by state, that the Grand Old Party had not yet been beaten. Telegrams were sent to the Republican leaders in the three states where all was not yet lost. They went to wake up Zack Chandler. The desk clerk gave them the wrong number, so the first door they banged on awoke an angry and frightened lady. Finally they found Zack Chandler and persuaded him that all was not lost. "Visiting statesman" were despatched to the three states, "amply supplied with the sinew of war".

On this narrow and corrupt election, much more hung than whether a New York Democrat or a Republican from Ohio would inhabit the White House for the next four or even eight years.

Ever since the surrender of Robert E. Lee's last Confederate army at Appomattox in 1865, the former confederate states had been ruled by military governments appointed by the Republican victors in Washington. Those who had fought for the South were disenfranchised and banned from office. Southern legislatures, governors and members of the federal Congress were all necessarily recruited from the blacks, or from Northerners, "carpetbaggers" they were called, or "scallywags", who had gone South out of a high-minded desire to preach the gospel to the freedmen, or out of a greed for booty, or, in some cases, out of a rather characteristically New England mixture of both motivations.

Now the "tragic era" of Reconstruction, as the southerners called it, was tottering to an end. Business interests wanted to develop the South and exploit its natural riches of cotton, cattle, timber, coal, and iron. Railroad barons, like Tom Scott of the Pennsylvania, wanted to build a southern Pacific route from Texas to California. And a new generation of pro-business southern leaders, replacing the planter-cavaliers who had taken the southern states into the War, was ready to sit down with northern capitalist to bargain about terms.

The result of the election hung in doubt, long after election day. The elections in all three disputed states had been marred by both intimidation, violence, and fraud. The Republicans held the fraud card, while intimidation was the long suit of the Democrats, who had only to prevent the blacks from voting to win. In Florida, a fair count would have given the state to the Republicans, while a free vote would have given it to the Democrats. As it was, the Republicans won by a narrow margin. In South Carolina, the election was both violent and dishonest, but there was no doubt that the Republicans had won. Louisiana was the key. The violence of the Democratic gangs, known as "bulldozers", after slaughterhouse workers, and the corruption of the Republicans were both impressive. One Louisiana Republican approached Abram Hewitt, Tilden's manager, and offered to sell him the whole state for a round million dollars. The chairman of the returning board was squared by being given the highly profitable office of Collector of Customs at the port of New Orleans. The result of the election was thrown, first of all, into the electoral college, where it could not be resolved, then into Congress. It was decided to set up a commission of 15 members, five from the Senate, five from the House of Representatives, and five from the Supreme Court. In the end, the deciding vote would have been that of Justice David Davis, Abraham Lincoln's former friend. But at the last moment he was made a senator, and therefore could not serve on the commission.

Men thought that there would be civil war. Some said it seemed more likely even than it had been in the summer of 1861, when the great civil war did break out. But in the end the impasse was resolved, in favour of Hayes, by compromise.

For roughly three-quarters of a century, it was believed that the deal was done in smoke-filled rooms at the Wormley hotel in Washington, between representatives of North and South. The deal, so the legend ran, was that in return for being given the presidency, the South would be compensated by the withdrawal of Union troops from the South, so that the South would retain control over its own affairs, including the exclusion of African Americans from full and equal citizenship. At the very last moment, on March 1, after the stormiest session ever seen to that date in the house of Representatives, Hayes was finally declared elected, and the next day Union troops were ordered out of the South.

In the 1950s, the great historian C. Vann Woodward, in one of the most elegant pieces of historical detective work I know, pointed out that, according to this traditional version,

> "Hayes's friends at the Wormley conference were giving up something they no longer really possessed" — that is, miilitary control of the South — "in exchange for something that had already been secured by other means" —namely the presidency.
>
> "While on the other hand the Southerners were solemnly accepting something that had been secured by other means in exchange for adherence to a course to which, by that time, they were already committed. It was, on the whole, one of the strangest bargains in the annals of horse swapping."

Woodward went on to demonstrate, with great subtlety, the role played by railroad politics and the struggle between the railroad barons, Tom

Scott, of the Pennsylvania railroad, and his rivals, Collis P. Huntington of the Central Pacific and Jay Gould of the Union Pacific, to pay off enough Congressmen to pass legislation allowing the Texas Pacific railway to be built.

What the compromise of 1877 really achieved, Woodward concluded, was to assure white southerners that the national majority would not interfere with their racial dominance, while assuring northern capitalists that the South would not combine forces with the dominant Republicans' internal enemies, that is a coalition of unionized industrial workers, Western agrarians and middle class progressives. The Republican president, Hayes, abandoned the carpetbaggers and their black allies in the South, and joined forces with a new, Whig and capitalist, southern elite.

It was a bargain that endured until Woodward's own day, when under pressure from the black civil rights movement, President Kennedy and President Lyndon Johnson tore it up. In the process, they drove many white southerners into the arms of their former enemy, the Republican party, where they were welcomed by President Nixon's "southern strategy", with consequences that have transformed the American political scene. By destroying the alliance between northern progressives and southern conservatives, as we shall see, those developments have made possible the conservative ascendancy of the last 20 years.

The Hayes-Tilden election was a true turning point in American political history. And people realized that at the time. The national examination took place, of course, mainly in the newspapers and to a lesser extent on the hustings, and also from the pulpit, as those were the only media available for national debate at the time.

1912

There were other important and dramatic presidential elections in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, notably the election of 1896, characterized by the crusade of Western agrarian radicals, led by the fervent Protestant populist, William Jennings Bryan. The next election I want to look at in more detail, however, is that of 1912.

Ever since the 1890s, the agrarian South and West had been in trouble. The price of both cotton and wheat, the staple crops of the two sections respectively, had fallen by a half. Many farmers, deep in debt, had been forced to work as tenants, usually on a sharecropping basis that left them with debts they could never hope to pay off. The farmers seethed with resentment against those they blamed for their plight: the holders of agricultural mortgages, the railroads, the financial communities of New York, Boston and the City of London. At the same time, industry had not recovered from the Panic of 1893. Immigration reached a new peak, and many of the new immigrants were from southern and eastern Europe: Roman Catholics from Sicily, the greater Hungary of the day and Poland, and many Jews from Poland and the Ukraine. Industrial unrest and labour union activity were at unprecedented levels. At the same time, many middle and upper middle class Americans were troubled by the widespread corruption of city government, and by what they saw as the threat from the new immigrants to traditional American values and standards of behaviour.

These political concerns bore a resemblance to the class politics of contemporary Europe, but it was only superficial. While a minority embraced socialism, the American majority tended to blame the new concentrations of industry, the "trusts", not capitalism itself, for the failings of the economic system. At the same time, what was called "progressive" opinion was distinct from the more radical populism of the western farmers, sharecroppers and miners. The progressive ranks included some who were 'nativist' and even racist towards the new

immigration, as well as others attracted by aggressive nationalism of the kind peddled by the Hearst papers. The incumbent president was William Howard Taft, a gentle, obese scholar/lawyer who would rather have been a judge. Taft weighed over 130 kilos. Once when his secretary of state, Elihu Root, called and was told Taft was out riding, the usually dour Root asked, "How is the horse?"

Taft had succeeded his former close friend, Theodore Roosevelt. Teddy Roosevelt was one of the most extraordinary men ever to occupy the White House. Scion of a wealthy family of Dutch landowners and millionaire merchants, Roosevelt went West and worked as a cowboy to build up his puny physique. He came to prominence for leading a cavalry charge in Cuba during the Spanish-American war of 1898. But he was also a well-read historian, fluent in French and German, and a devoted family man. He could not quite accept that he was no longer president, and after returning from a well-publicized African safari, he was irritated to see that his friend and protégé, Will Taft, had become increasingly conservative.

In the summer of 1912, Roosevelt bolted the Republican party and ran against Taft as the candidate of his own Progressive party. It was called the "Bull Moose" party, after Roosevelt characteristically compared himself to that macho animal.

The Democrats, who had been out of power except in the South since the Civil War, saw their opportunity in the Republican split. Five candidates came forward in the hope of taking advance of this once-in-a-lifetime chance. They included Senator Oscar Underwood from Alabama, Governor Judson Harmon of Ohio and Beauchamp 'Champ' Clark of Missouri. William Jennings Bryan, the candidate in 1896, 1900 and 1908, had not given up hope. But the most extraordinary candidate was Woodrow Wilson.

Until two years earlier, Wilson had been president of Princeton University, where he managed to quarrel with most of his colleagues.

He had been elected governor of New Jersey, where he proceeded to insult and alienate both the Irish machine politicians who had elected him and his wealthy Wall Street supporters. Wilson was a Southerner, who combined his region's traditional white supremacy, anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic prejudices with high-minded religiosity and an aloof manner. But he was becoming a convert to a blend of populist and progressive ideas, and he was a magnificent orator.

The fourth candidate was the socialist, Eugene Victor Debs. He stood halfway between the rough-hewn revolutionary, Big Bill Haywood, chieftain of the radical and sometimes violent Industrial Workers of the World, known as the Wobblies, and the conservative socialists in the tradition of Sam Gompers, leader of the craft unionists of the American Federation of Labor, and of Victor Berger, the socialist congressman from Milwaukee.

The campaign was energetic and ill-tempered. Taft and Roosevelt, once friends, denounced one another in personal terms. Debs was a fiery orator who lambasted his three opponents to an audience of 15,000 socialists, resplendent in red hats and red handkerchiefs, in Madison Square Garden. Taft denounced Roosevelt for running as a third party candidate "merely to gratify personal ambition and vengeance". Wilson mastered his distaste for machine politicians and reached a concordat with Charles Francis Murphy, the boss of New York's Tammany Hall. He overcame his natural shyness to travel to Nebraska, where he was anointed by Bryan, to the strains of nine brass bands and factory whistles shrilling.

But the most dramatic campaign, of course, was the Bull Moose's. He quartered the country, denouncing 'malefactors of great wealth' and jeering at Wilson and his former friend Taft alike. In Chicago, he was shot by a madman. The bullet lodged only an inch from his heart. But it took more than that, he proclaimed, to kill a Bull Moose, and after the briefest of stays in hospital, he returned to the stump and the fray.

In the end, Roosevelt was wrong, and the professional politicians were right. By splitting the Republican vote, Roosevelt let Wilson in. He won 6.3 million votes. Roosevelt won 4.1 million, and Taft 3.5 million. Debs won 900,000 votes, or six percent of the electorate, the largest socialist share before or since. The two former Republicans, Roosevelt and Taft, together won 7.6 million votes, against 7.2 million for Wilson and Debs.

That crude addition, however, ignores the swirling complexities of the politics of 1912. It would be truer to say that several million southern conservatives voted for Wilson because he was a Democrat, and several million northern and Middle Western conservatives voted for Taft because he was a Republican, while the angry but confused dissatisfaction of millions was distributed between three styles of insurrectionary politics: the working class moralist as socialist, in the lanky, arm-waving denunciations of Debs; the progressive as force of nature in the muscular body of Theodore Roosevelt; and the professor as reformer and idealist, in the angular persona of Woodrow Wilson.

What 1912 decided is less clear than what it ruled out. Wilson's presidency, as a reform ministry, was successful for the first four years. He introduced, and saw passed, a number of important pieces of reform legislation, of which the Federal Reserve Act has perhaps had the most lasting beneficial effect. But it was not long before his attention was distracted, first by the attempt to keep the United States out of the World War, and then by the effort to win it. He was re-elected in 1916, but in 1919 his fight to impose his vision of an American peace, maintained by the League of Nations, led to his physical collapse. In 1920 the Republicans slipped back into the White House and stayed there until they were discredited by the Great Depression and defeated by the second Roosevelt.

Building on Theodore Roosevelt's earlier achievements as president, and helped, like him, by the pressure of international events, Wilson

certainly helped to lay the foundations for a new, more ambitious and more powerful presidency, changing the balance of power within the American system. The most importance decisions of 1912, though, were negative. American socialism was outbid for the radical and progressive vote by both a progressive Democrat in Wilson, and a rebel Republican in Roosevelt.

The election meant that Roosevelt did not return to office for what would, in effect, have been a third term. If that had happened, if he had lived (he died young in 1919), he would have expanded American power and led the United States away from the isolationism of the 1920s, if he could possibly have done so. He would also, most probably have responded to the international economic crisis of the 1920s as an activist, impelled by his contempt for money-making (easier for a comfortably wealthy man!) to bring government in to protect the weak, as his fifth cousin, Franklin Roosevelt, was to do half a generation later. Perhaps the sharpest contrast was between Wilson who, for all his idealism, did not want to rely on government to protect people, and Roosevelt, who would have used the powers of government to break up the trusts and to protect the weak. One of his most attractive sayings, for me, was that "the country will not be a permanently good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a reasonably good place for all of us to live in".

The forum where the national debate of 1912 took place was essentially the same as in 1876: the press and the stump. Magazines, especially the investigative Progressive "muckraking" magazines of the day, such as McClure's, offered an opportunity for longer and more sensational exposés of corruption than even the new "yellow press" exemplified by Pulitzer's *World* and William Randolph Hearst's *Journal,* could afford. New media, film and radio, were available but not yet ready to be used for the national debate.

1968

The election of 1932, which elected Franklin Roosevelt and made possible the New Deal, was an important one. So too was the heroic contest of 1948, when many newspapers were so sure that Governor Dewey of New York had won that they printed special editions with the wrong result. The election of 1960 saw the narrow victory of John F. Kennedy, famed in song, story and the best-seller by Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960*. And the election of 1964, which seemed, at the time, a walk-over for Lyndon Johnson and the coronation of the big government liberalism of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, looks more important in retrospect. It was the occasion of the capture of the Republican nomination by a Western conservative, Barry Goldwater, and the first appearance of the new conservatism, personified by Ronald Reagan, who first appeared on the national scene in that year with a famous speech for Goldwater.

I want to speak next, however, about the election of 1968, which I was fortunate to cover myself, from start to finish. It took place in the shadow of three movements that transformed the assumptions of American politics at the time. The first was the civil rights movement. By 1967, there was a culminating riot in Detroit, in which 40 people, almost all black, were killed, mostly by the police or the army. The raptures of 1963, when Martin Luther King's oratory persuaded many Americans that the time had come for an overdue act of national generosity towards black people, were fading. The overtly racist but also populist governor of Alabama, George Wallace, campaigned with some success in the North in 1964, and threatened to do well all over the country in 1968 until he was shot and paralyzed. In 1964 President Johnson persuaded Congress to pass a far-reaching civil rights act, and in the next year he asked for, and got from Congress, a voting rights act that finally ended the disenfranchisement of African Americans in then South. At the same time, in the spring of 1965, Johnson took the decisive moves to escalate American involvement in the Vietnam war.

A movement against the war grew. In the 1968 primaries, first Senator Eugene McCarthy, a Minnesota Catholic Democrat, and then President Kennedy's younger brother, Robert Kennedy, both challenged Johnson. In March, the president announced that he would not run for re-election, effectively abdicating. These events reflected a third, more diffuse but very real shift in the country's mood. This was a pervasive challenge to authority of all kinds: a cultural rebellion of adolescents against their parents, pupils against teachers, soldiers against officers, church members against priests and theologians, party members against party machines. It was very much a generational shift. The generation that had known privation in the Depression and discipline in the war was giving way to a generation that grew up in the prosperous, conformist 1950s. It was also, it seemed to a European witnessing the changing mood, a very conservative and very successful society going through belatedly some of the disillusion with established authority that Europeans had been compelled to undergo by the failures of leadership between 1914 and 1945.

In any event, the election was won neither by President Johnson's designated successor, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, a liberal Democrat who had been trapped into support for the war, nor by a challenger. (Robert Kennedy was shot dead the day after he won the California primary.) It was won by Richard Nixon, who came to prominence as an anti-communist Right winger in the 1950s, and who was narrowly beaten in the 1960 election.

Nixon was a complex man. In certain respects his presidency can be considered liberal. Certainly, he had inherited the New Deal instinct for using the power of the federal government for social change. But his electoral strategy leaned heavily on two devices. One was a new version of populism that attacked liberals, especially in the media, as privileged metropolitans. The second was his 'southern strategy'. Subtly, avoiding the raw racism of a George Wallace, Nixon sought

to persuade both white southerners and working class Democrats in the North that he understood their fears of racial change.

The strategy worked. The election was close. But Nixon won. The New Deal era was over at last. Nixon's own foolish, paranoid, over-striving to make sure of re-election in 1972 led to his resignation, just ahead of an impeachment that had become unavoidable. But it was the Nixon victory in 1968, that prepared the way for a conservative ascendancy that has lasted until the present time.

By 1968, news media had come to play a part in the national self-assessment, unimaginable in both their variety and their power in 1912. In the 1930s, both Franklin Roosevelt and his demagogic opponents, such as Huey Long and Father Coughlin, had mastered the political use of radio. John Kennedy had used television to deadly effect in defeating Nixon in 1960. The importance of advertising as a means of reaching voters, who now increasingly lived in dispersed suburbs and could no longer be shepherded by urban 'machines', was growing. It was in relation to the 1968 campaign that Joe McGinnis wrote the first account of the role of advertising and public relations in a presidential campaign, *The Selling of the President*. And a new element in the national debate was the rise of 'counter-culture' magazines, blending almost scholarly analysis, caricature, smut and vulgar abuse, like the Boston *Phoenix*, the Berkeley *Barb*, *Ramparts* and the like.

Between 1968 and 2004, the most obvious change has been the coming of the computer and of new on-line sources of information and opinion, such as Salon or Slate, and the immense variety of 'blogs'. More influential, probably, was the weakening of the three once almost all-powerful TV and radio networks (CBS, NBC and ABC) and their supplementing by cable and satellite stations, and especially by the blatantly partisan Fox network.

Another influential change was the power and the wealth of conservative research institutes such as the American Enterprise Institute and Heritage. Although they call their employees 'scholars', in reality they fund work intended to strengthen Right wing ideas in competition with the once near-dominance of liberal thinking in the better-educated layers of American public opinion. Conservative ideas, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say conservative attitudes, are also now disseminated by Right-wing television outlets such as Fox, conservative radio 'shock jocks' and 'Christian' broadcasters.

2004

As in 1876, in 1912 and in 1968, the country in 2004 was bitterly polarized. I personally witnessed the tail end of the McCarthy period as a graduate student, and I experienced 1968 as a reporter. America was more bitterly polarized in 2004 than during either of those two earlier, admittedly bitter, conflicts. Both sides hurled wild charges and violent abuse at one another. As election day approached, both parties boasted of the thousands of lawyers they had recruited, ready, presumably, to file instant lawsuits at the first sign of electoral fraud.

The country seems split in half between two ideologies. One is a distinctively American conservatism, radical, aggressive, nationalist. It is resisted by a liberal ideology, as exemplified both by the candidate, Senator Kerry, and by the last Democratic president, Bill Clinton, that has moved some way from the traditional liberalism of the New Deal or the Johnson 'Great Society'. Modern Democrats have abandoned much of the old liberals' faith in governmental action. Both liberals and conservatives fear that, if their opponents win the presidency, the nation will be in clear danger. But it is an asymmetrical conflict, between conservatives, who hold their doctrines with passionate conviction, and opponents who are not sure how much of their traditional faith they need to jettison.

Conclusions

All four of the elections I have focused on came at times when American political society stood at a crossroads. In 1876 the great question was whether, and on what terms, the defeated South was to be readmitted to the American political communion. Behind that issue lurked the question how much the promise and the price of unrestrained capitalism were to shape American society.

In 1912, the American electorate had to decide how to restrain and regulate the energies of capitalism in a society that was being culturally transformed by industrialization, urbanization and mass immigration. The choice was between two approaches to the control of rampant corporate capitalism: the New Nationalism preached by Theodore Roosevelt, and the New Freedom of Woodrow Wilson.

In 1968,what was at stake was no less than the moral claim to American exceptionalism. During World War II and the Cold War, both parties had more or less grudgingly accepted a liberal consensus. Liberals accepted a conservative, nationalist and anti-communist foreign policy; while conservatives, for the time being, at least, accepted the need for a Welfare State. In 1968 a new Left came close to overthrowing the liberal consensus from the progressive flank. But it was a new, more assertive conservatism, heralded by Barry Goldwater and George Wallace, led out to battle by Richard Nixon, and finally triumphant under Ronald Reagan, that won the ideological war for a generation.

As I said at the outset, a national election in any developed democracy involves debate and discussion about the direction the nation should take. There is, I suggest, a special reason why an American election takes on this second function, of national self-examination, with peculiar intensity. It is, I mean, a function of the American ideology itself. The historian Richard Hofstadter famously said that it was the fate of America not to have ideologies but to *be* one.

One dimension of that ideology is the belief in what is called American exceptionalism. This does not just mean that America is exceptionally big, or exceptionally rich, or exceptionally formidable militarily. It means that America is morally exceptional.

American exceptionalism has roots going back to the beliefs of the Puritans in colonial New England and even beyond, to the European origins of the first settlers. John Winthrop's famous image, that America was 'a city set upon a hill', is part of the iconography, so to speak, of European Protestantism. It would have been a familiar thought to Martin Luther, whose God was *ein feste Burg*, a strong castle, or for that matter to John Bunyan or Oliver Cromwell.

Those who see their political society as endowed by its creator with a special mission, a 'manifest destiny', to 'overspread' the North American continent and perhaps the world, so as to evangelize it with the twin gospels of American democracy and American capitalism, must take with the utmost seriousness the question: How are we doing?

This is not just political narcissism. It is the political equivalent of the Roman Catholic practice of confession, the hallowed ritual of a political religion. The introspective dimension of American presidential elections is *not,* as it seems to some, a shrill and self-indulgent media fad. It is an intrinsic and, to my mind, an appropriate response to the conviction that politics matters, not just to give the victors the spoils, not just to share out the loaves and fishes, but to direct a democratic nation on the right path. The debate may be shrill. But it is, I submit, as important as the question whether John Kerry of Massachusetts, or George W. Bush of Texas, was to be the next president of the United States.

The Europaeum Record

I. Academic Conferences

1993 Oxford *Are European Elites Losing Touch with their Peoples?*

1994 Oxford *Europe and America after the Cold War: the End of the West*

1995 Bonn *Integration of East Central Europe into the European Union*

1996 Geneva *Defining the Projecting Europe's Identity: Issues and Trade-Offs*

1997 Paris I *Europe and Money*

1998 Leiden *Human rights, the plight of immigrants and European immigration policy*

2000 Bonn *The Implications of the new Knowledge and Technology*

2001 Oxford *Democracy and the Internet: New Rules for New Times*

2001 Berlin European Universities Project: *Borderless Education: Bridging Europe*

2002 Paris European Universities Project: *New Times : New Responsibilities*

2003 Oxford *Whose Europe? National Models and the European Constitution*

2003 Bonn European Universities Project: *New Partnerships:Opportunities and Risks*

II. Student Summer Schools

1994 Leiden *Concepts of Europe*

1995 Bologna *The Problem of Political Leadership and the Ethnic Nation*

1996 Bologna *The Civic Nation and the Ethnic Nation*

1998 Budapest *Risk Policy Analysis*

1998 Oxford *Human Rights*

1999 Paris I *NATO and European Defence*

2000 Bologna *European Policy and Enlargement*

2000 Oxford *Church as Politeia*

2001 Oxford *Human Rights and the movement of People in Europe*

2002 Oxford *The Economics of European Integration*

2003 Prague *Old and New Ideas of European Federalism*

2004 Leiden *Islam and Europe: Building Bridges*

III. Teaching, Courses and Study Programmes

1992 - Oxford	*European Community Law* involving joint teaching and study, and student exchanges, linking Oxford, Leiden and Sienna.
1999 - Paris	*Economics of European Integration* module open to Europaeum undergraduates and graduates.
1999 Bologna	*Political Cultures and European Political Systems* MA programme, linking Bologna to Oxford and Leiden.
2000 - Geneva	*International Refugee Law* joint teaching programme, linking Geneva and Oxford.
2004 - Leiden	Leadership Programme in *European Business, Cultures, and Institutions,* linking Leiden and Oxford.
2004 - Leiden	MA in *European History and Civilisation* linking Leiden, Paris I and Oxford.

- Cross-Europe academic networks function in Economics, History, Politics and Theology, helping to promote collaborative teaching and mobility of graduate research students. Other initiatives link scholars in Classics, History of Science and International Relations and Diplomacy.

- The Europaeum played the key role in the creation at Oxford of the *Centre for European Politics, Economics and Society, the Oxford Institute of European* and *Comparative Law*, the European Humanities Research Centre, plus a number of fellowships, including the *Chair in European Thought* and, most recently, the *Bertelsmann Europaeum Visiting Professorship in 20th Century Jewish History and Politics*. The Europaeum is also supporting many other projects such as the Leiden University diplomacy training programme.

IV. Scholarship Programmes

- ***The Roy Jenkins Memorial Fund*** scholarships brings students chosen from the nine Europaeum partner universities. The awards are worth £10,000 per annum, tenable for up to two years, and enable *Jenkins Scholars* to study a Masters degree in the Humanities or Social Sciences (or senior BA degree). The first two *Jenkins* Scholars have begun their courses in the year 2004 at Oxford and Paris I.

- The ***Oxford-Geneva Bursary Scheme*** provides annual bursaries for student exchanges between Oxford and the Graduate Institute of International Studies, together with other collaborative activities including joint teaching and Europaeum Lectures.

- The ***Scatcherd European Scholarships*** scheme, founded at Oxford, as part of the Europaeum initiative in 1997, offers fully funded places at Oxford for European graduates, including all Europaeum partner institutions; and also places for Oxford graduates at leading European Universities, including Europaeum partner universities.

- The ***Europaeum Scholarships in Jewish Studies*** have provided up to six places each year for Europaeum graduate students to spend a year in Oxford studying for the Diploma in Jewish Studies at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies between 1995 and 2001. Discussions continue to create a new scheme to accompany the upgrading of the Jewish Studies programme to an MA course.

- ***Henry R Kravis Scholarships*** allowed students from Central or Eastern Europe read an M.Phil in European Politics and Society or the M.Juris in European and Comparative Law at Oxford; and ***Thyssen Scholarships*** supported study of the M.Phil in European Politics and Society at Oxford. Both schemes have now expired.

V. Joint Research and Support Projects

- The Europaeum Project on the ***Future of European Universities***, supported by DaimlerChrysler Services A G, a three-year investigation into the impact of new technology and the Knowledge Revolution was initiated in 2001. International conferences on *Borderless Education: Bridging Europe* (Berlin 2001); *New Times : New Responsibilities* (Paris 2002); and *New Partnerships: Opportunities and Risks* (Bonn 2003) have been held.

- The ***Europaeum Research Project Groups*** scheme encourages collaborative research across the association. The following groups backed so far include; The Churches and the Family; European Monetary Integration; The Kosovo Stability Pact; International Intervention; European identity; Unilateral Action; Regulation of E-commerce; Liberalism in 20th Century Europe; Transmission and Understanding in the Sciences; and Cultural Difference in Europe.

- Past international ***Europaeum Research Projects*** have been on *Party System Changes* (1997) and *The origins and aftermath of the Kosovo crisis* (2000).

VI. Mobility Schemes

- The ***Europaeum New Initiatives Scheme*** provides seed funding for, innovative and imaginative forms of academic collaboration within, but not exclusive to, the Europaeum academic community.

- The ***Europaeum Visiting Professors Scheme*** supports the movement of academics from one partner institution to another. By 2004, 12 Europeaum Visiting Professors had been created and supported linking Europaeum Universities.

- ***Europaeum Mobility Schemes*** aim to support individual academics and students from member institutions participating in selected European events and activities, including conferences, seminars and summer schools. In recent years, key Europaeum scholars have been supported at conferences on *The Future of the Third Way*; *Russia and Europe*; and *Telecommunications Policies for the Future*.

- More than 20 projects have been supported including Staff Exchanges on e-commerce; a Theology summer lecture series; Anglo-Czech Historians Project; Classicists Colloquiums; Model European Student debates; EU Policy Transfer Seminar; and inquiries into the Church and the Family; and Transmission of Science ideas in Europe.

The Europaeum Partners & Representatives

OXFORD

The University of Oxford, comprising 39 Colleges and 6 Private Halls, dates its foundation offically to 1249, though teaching at Oxford is known to date back to 1096, the first overseas scholar having arrived in 1190.

Vice-Chancellor: Dr John Hood

Academic Committee: Professor Michael Freeden (Politics)
Professor Mark Freedland (Law)

Management Committee: Mrs Beverly Potts
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Email: Beverly.Potts@admin.ox.ac.uk

LEIDEN

Universiteit Leiden founded in 1575 by the States of Holland, as a reward for the town's brave resistance against the Spanish, at the behest of William of Orange.

Rector: Professor Douwe D Breimer

Academic Committee: Professor Henk Dekker (Politics)
Professor Wim van den Doel (History)

Management Committee: Dr Joost JA Van Asten
Director of International Relations
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BOLOGNA

Università degli studi di Bologna officially constituted in 1158 by Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, though independent teaching dates back to 1088.

Rector: Professor Pier Ugo Calzolari

Academic Committee: Professor Tiziano Bonazzi (History)
Professor Carlo Guarnieri (Politics)

Management Committee: Dr Giovanna Filippini
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Università degli studi di Bologna
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BONN

Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn founded in 1818 by Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm III, preceded by an Academy established in 1777.

Rektor: Professor Dr Mathias Winiger

Academic Committee: Professor Dr Wolfram Kinzig (Theology)
Professor Dr Uwe Holtz (Politics)

Management Committee: Dr. Hartmut Ihne
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GENEVA

The Graduate Institute of International Studies founded in 1927, associated to, but not part of, the University of Geneva.

Director: Professor Philippe Burrin (History)

Academic Committee: Professor Slobodan Djajic (International Economics)
Professor Vera Gowlland-Debbas (International Law)

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PARIS

Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne founded in the 12th Century, formally constituted by Papal Bull in 1215, was briefly suppressed during the French Revolution (1793 - 1808), and reconstituted in 1890.

Rector: Professor Pierre-Yves Henin

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Professor Annie Cot (Economics)

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PRAGUE

Charles University, Prague, founded in 1348, was divided into Czech and German institutions by the Vienna government in 1882. These operated in parallel until 1939, when the Czech institution was closed by Nazi occupation. After 1945, the German institution was abolished and the Czech Charles University revived.

Rector: Professor Ivan Wilhelm

Academic Committee: Professor Luboš Tichy (Law)
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MADRID

The Complutense University of Madrid, one of the oldest and largest in the world, was founded in 1293, originally in Alcalá de Henares, moving to Madrid in 1836. It has about 100,000 students, including 3,500 international students.

Rector: Professor Carlos Berzosa

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Management Committee: Mr Fernando de Hipòlito
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HELSINKI

Helsinki University was established in Turku in 1640, but was transferred to Helsinki in 1828. The University is trilingual, providing teaching in Finnish, Swedish and English, with operations at 20 localities throughout Finland.

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Academic Committee: Dr Teija Tiililainen (Political Science)
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Management Committee: Mr Markus Laitinen
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KRAKOW

The Jagiellonian University, one the great European Medieval Universities, was founded in 1364 in Krakow . It began work in 1367 and today there are 11 faculties (including Law and Administration, Philosophy, History, Philology, Mathematics, Chemistry, Management and Social Communication, Medicine (with Dentistry), Pharmacy, Health Protection.

Rector: Professor Franciszek Ziejka

Academic Committee: Professor Maria Nowaskowska (Sociology)

Management Committee: *Vacancy*

Europaeum Lectures

Europaeum Lectures have been a part of the consortium work since its foundation, examining key issues confronting Europe today. Since 2002, those marked with * have been published. Those marked with + are available on our website.

- **October 2000, Prague**
  Dr David Robertson, on *A Common Constitutional Law for Europe: Questions of National Autonomy versus Universal Rights* * +
- **November 2000, Oxford**
  Dr John Temple-Lang, on *The Commission and the European Parliament – an uncertain relationship* * +
- **February 2001, Geneva**
  Professor Ian Brownlie CBE QC, on *International Law and the use of force by states* * +
- **May 2001, Oxford**
  Professor Philippe Burrin, on *Strands on Nazi Anti-semitism* * +
- **June 2001, Paris**
  Professor Raymond Barre, on *Quelle Europe pour demain?*
- **December 2001, Berlin**
  Professor Peter Scott, Kingston University, on *The European University - What is its Future?* +
- **April 2002, Geneva**
  Lord Professor (Ralf) Dahrendorf, on *Global Security Interlinked, Poverty, Security and Development* * +
- **April 2002, Bonn**
  Professor Michael Meyer-Blanck, on *Tradition - Integration - Qualification: Some Reflections on Religious Education in European Schools*
- **June 2002, Bologna**
  Professor Tiziano Bonazzi, on *Europa, Zeus and Minos: or the labyrinth of Euro-American relations*
- **November 2002, Oxford**
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  Professor Christian Hacke, on *Challenges for German Foreign Policy at the beginning of the 21st Century.* * +
- **March 2004, Geneva**
  Sir Alan Budd, on *A Tale of Two Economies.* * +
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  Sir Anthony Kenny, on *What it is to tbe European.* *

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