THE MYTH OF THE REPUBLICAN "ESTABLISHMENT" AND THE GOLDWATER NOMINATION IN 1964

Before the publication of the studies by Paul T. David, Ralph M. Goldman, Richard C. Bain, and their associates, there was a large vacuum in American party literature concerning the leadership of the national party conventions. Although there are still unanswered questions about the leadership in these conventions, significant progress has been made in these studies to challenge with empirical evidence the hunches and guesses which have too often been the substitutes for more accurate information.

Many writers have suggested that the selection of presidential candidates in the national party conventions is made by a relatively small party elite. More adventurous students have gone farther, and suggested that within the parties there is an entrenched elite which carries over from convention to convention with the power to write platforms, establish criteria for candidate eligibility, and nominate the man who best conforms to this standard of eligibility. This latter approach is possibly best seen in the writings of James MacGregor Burns, who asserts that the Republican party is divided into two camps: the presidential Republicans and the congressional Republicans. "The national party convention is the bulwark of the presidential parties", says Burns, and "...the presidential Republicans for decades have been drawing internationalist-minded men out of the universities, law schools, and metropolitan law and banking firms of the East..."

The theme advanced by Burns and others, that within the Republican party there is a group which dominates the selection of presidential candidates, is ostensibly supported by certain events of the past few decades. For instance, it does seem that recent Republican conventions before 1964 selected as their standard-bearers men who possessed similar attributes. Before 1964, recent Republican candidates for the presidency have endorsed programmes in such areas as international affairs and civil rights not unlike those advocated by the Democratic candidates. The argument put forward in some quarters...
is that Republican candidates have no chance at all of winning if they differ significantly from the Democrats in certain broad areas of policy. Neither party, it seems, has any chance of success if it has no appeal to the great centre of American politics. There is the feeling that a broad consensus exists in the United States in favour of the United Nations and civil rights and that it would be suicidal for any candidate to hedge in endorsing these and other policies. So, at least, say the members of the presidential wing of the Republican party. And since it is this segment of the party which selects the candidates, it is no accident that Willkie, Dewey, Eisenhower, and Nixon were at least comfortable in the presence of members of the “Establishment”. No one is certain whether these candidates were actually members of the “Establishment”. That is not important. One need not see the exercise of power to know that it exists. As Professor Loewenstein has put it, “Political power is discernible, observable, explainable, and evaluable only by its external manifestations and realizations. We know, or believe we know, what power does, but we are unable to define its substance and essence.”

Further evidence supporting the Republican “Establishment” theories can be seen, at times, in the actions of prominent Republican politicians. The dramatic clash between the Taft and Eisenhower forces in the 1952 Republican convention was emotionally portrayed by Senator Dirksen—a leader of the Taft forces—when he pointed at Governor Dewey and said: “We followed you before and you took us down the road to defeat.” Some of the “anti-Establishment” Republicans obtained documentation for their thesis and felt more than a little betrayed in 1960 when the heir-apparent, Richard Nixon, was allegedly “forced” to submit the Republican platform on civil rights for clearance to Governor Rockefeller just before the opening of the convention. Even worse, it seemed to these people, Nixon had to meet Rockefeller in the latter’s apartment. This incident prompted Senator Goldwater to comment that “this was the greatest sell-out since Munich.”

Before 1964 there was perhaps no reason for either the interested scholar or the “anti-Establishment” Republican to make any distinction between “the elite” (or “Establishment”) and an elite. There was simply, it seemed, “the elite.” But with the nomination of Senator Goldwater came the necessity for evaluating the theories of “the elite.”

Those who prefer to think that there is such a thing as a continuous, unified elite within the Republican party could even explain away 1964 as “the year the ‘Establishment’ slept.” However, our own research has indicated one of the truly striking features of recent Republican party history: the unifi-
cation of a previous “out-faction” within the party, a faction which was tied closely to a rapid in-migration movement at the state delegation level of the Republican national convention party between 1956 and 1964. This, in turn, has resulted in two conclusions: (1) that if there has been anything like an “Establishment” within the Republican party in the past, it has existed only because it has not been challenged; (2) that the Republican convention party is a most fragile instrument. The continuity and stability of party convention leadership traditionally depended, in large part, on the ability of the convention leaders to return to successive conventions. These “old hands” have recently been seriously challenged (or ignored) in the convention as the result of a successful widespread effort to capture control of the state delegations. Here is but another example of the disorganized nature of American political parties: the former leaders of the conventions are still present (for the most part); they are still “powers” in their own state party organizations; but they lose out in the convention because of changes which take place in other parts of the country.

Paul David and his colleagues assert that “one of the most important findings” of their detailed study of Presidential nominating politics in 1952 was the widespread disintegration of state party leadership in both parties throughout the country. To this the authors added: “New sources of leadership were coming forward in many states but had not yet solidified their positions nor achieved much recognition.” This study will evaluate the disintegration detected by David and his colleagues as it occurred in the Republican party. Specifically, it will discuss the major patterns of break-up in the Republican party and the consolidation of the previous “out-faction” that has taken place during the past nine years.

The statistics in the footnote below summarize the continuity factor at the delegate level at recent Republican National Conventions.* During the period from 1952 to 1964, delegate turnover (i.e., the percentage of delegates who did not attend consecutive conventions) remained at about 70%. Standing alone, these figures tell us little about party leadership. They could be read to mean that the high turnover is indicative of disgruntled delegates who

*Delegates to Republican national conventions attending consecutive conventions:* attended 1952 and 1948, 30.5%; attended 1956 and 1952, 28.6%; attended 1960 and 1956, 31.5%; attended 1964 and 1960, 27.3%.
are mere pawns in a convention game played by party leaders and who return home vowing never to be used again.

Actually, such a conclusion about Republican convention delegations is far wide of the mark. While it is true that high delegate turnover is common throughout the 50 states, many states have had a complete turnover of delegates in recent years. Eleven states had a complete turnover in their delegations between 1956 and 1964, while still another thirteen states had only one delegate who attended the conventions held during this period (see footnotes ** and ***). Between 1956 and 1964, almost half of the Republican state delegations had a turnover which was total or within one delegate of being so. This high level of turnover in state party delegations takes place at all levels and affects both the leadership and the rank-and-file levels to a substantial degree.

This rapid in-migration has important implications for both the leadership for the state delegations and the leadership for the convention itself. Within the state delegations with very high delegation turnover, the opportunity for having delegation members participate in the more important bargaining sessions would normally be reduced. According to David, Goldman, and Bain, there are possibly as many as one hundred delegates “who occupy bottleneck positions . . . during the convention.”11 “With rare exception”, these authors say, “they are persons with much previous experience.”12 If, then, the important decision-makers are usually men with “much previous experience”, do men with convention experience tend to come from the same states? Is there any pattern—geographical or other—to support the belief that convention party leaders have come from the northeastern section of the country? The answer to this may be found in the footnote below,**** which lists those states which had a delegation carry over—and leadership nucleus—of at least three delegates during the period 1956-64. Only 15 state delegations


***States with one delegate carry-over in delegations, 1956-64: Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia.

****States with High Delegate Continuity—3 or more delegates attended conventions held in 1956-64: California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Texas, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Wisconsin.
fall into this category. It is interesting that usually the states with the highest delegate carry-over also happened to be the states with the strongest long-term Republican party leadership. In other words, the Republican leaders in such states as New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Massachusetts became leaders in the conventions because they were able to stay on top of matters at home. The Ohio delegation, for instance, has a reputation for knowing “how to operate in a political convention.” In 1952, the Republican delegation from Ohio “... was completely committed, internally cohesive, strongly led, highly experienced, and energetically active.” Although the Ohio delegations have frequently backed men who failed to win the nomination, there is little doubt about the important role members of the Ohio delegations have played in the Republican conventions. If the brief accounts on the subject of convention decision-making found in such works as those cited in this article are correct, it seems reasonable to conclude the following: that until quite recently, convention delegations from the relatively strong Republican party states of New York, New Jersey, and Ohio, among others, dominated the decision-making process of the national Republican conventions because the strength of the party organizations in these states was sufficient to insure that the delegations had some degree of membership carry-over, if not a large degree of internal cohesion.

It is clear that in the past nine to thirteen years, great changes have taken place at the state delegation level which have affected the entire convention decision-making apparatus. In the summary just presented, it was observed that the convention decision-makers are such only because they, like Congressional committee chairmen, are able to establish seniority. Until recently, this factor of seniority meant that the Republican convention leaders came mainly from the northeast quadrant of the United States. Factional struggles within the conventions were fought between party leaders from this section of the country. Moreover, factional disputes were confined within a framework of common membership and established communications facilities. In recent years, fundamental changes have occurred within this whole structure.

For instance, the “out-party” seldom holds a convention where the outcome is a totally foregone conclusion. In Republican conventions since 1940 when the Republicans were the “out-party” (1940, 1944, 1948, 1952, and 1964), only in 1944 was there little or no room for doubting the outcome. In these contested conventions, the major contenders usually had access to the vast
majority of state delegations before which they could plead their case. In other words, the absence of unanimous state delegations meant that almost every candidate had at least one advocate in most state delegations. It was usually possible to obtain access to 80% or more of the state delegations.\footnote{18} Moreover, the non-candidate convention leaders could not only count on having points of contact within most state delegations but—of greater importance—they had sources of information to enable them to estimate voting patterns and to sample delegate sentiment on such matters as "compromise candidates." There were very few state delegations in which the leading candidates and convention leaders were "shut-out" with no visible facilities with which to establish channels of communication.\footnote{20} But, as the Table indicates, the changes detected by David in 1952, which we can see more clearly today, have altered the Republican convention configuration. The delegate turnover remained relatively constant at about 70% during this period—although it did increase at a more rapid rate between 1960 and 1964. The important happening during this period was the significant increase in state delegation cohesion, which in 1964 reached the highest point since 1928.

### TABLE

#### Delegation Candidate Agreement in Contested Republican Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention Year and Nominee</th>
<th>Proportion of State Delegations Voting Solidly</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>1928 (Hoover)</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>1940 (Willkie)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948 (Dewey)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952 (Eisenhower)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964 (Goldwater)</td>
<td>19</td>
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The consolidation is the important factor because, as has already been shown, the turnover itself tended to strengthen the position of the party leaders in the past. Since 1956, however, many Southern and Western states have sent to the national Republican conventions delegations that were sufficiently united to "undermine" the base of strength formerly held, albeit tenuously, by the convention leaders. In the 1964 Republican convention, 19 state delegations voted unanimously for Senator Goldwater on the first ballot. Using state delegation first-ballot voting unanimity as the index of state-party internal solidarity, we see that internal agreement for the eventual winning candidate was much higher in 1964 than it had been at any time since the nomination
of Herbert Hoover in 1928. And these states are not confined to the sparsely-populated regions of the country. In fact, these 19 states represent 32.5% of the total convention vote. On a regional basis, 3 of the state delegations voting unanimously for Goldwater in 1964 are in the mid-West, 8 are Southern states, and 8 are Western states. In actual numbers, this voting “bloc” consists of 455 delegates.

“More than any other social organization”, Professor Eldersveld has observed, “the critical action locus of the party structure is at its base.” The evidence which now exists suggests that a similar conclusion had been reached by backers of Senator Goldwater in recent years.

One of the questions yet to be answered concerns the degree to which the nomination of Senator Goldwater in 1964 was due to an organized attack on local Republican party organs. In a post-election analysis, Richard Dudman concluded: “The story of the capture of the Republican party . . . is a tangled one. It is not the same in all parts of the country. But the same threads—the same persons and the same right-wing organizations—appear often enough to show a pattern.” Available evidence supports Dudman and also illustrates how easy it is for a determined faction to sweep state delegations clean of rival factions.

In the pre-convention activities in behalf of Senator Goldwater, the immigration of Goldwater supporters into the party was a by-product of a number of factors: (1) Republican state and local party organizations have been very weak in the South and Southwest; (2) party realignment is taking place in the South on a massive scale; and (3) the recent emergence of an attractive political figure (Goldwater) who could serve as a catalyst to accelerate the realignment of the parties. In the South and Southwest particularly, insurgents supporting Goldwater combined his name, the appeal of “states’ rights”, and the even more important ingredient of determination. In the spring of 1964, followers of Goldwater demonstrated the accuracy of the observation: “The structure that is built on precinct meetings in the spring of a presidential election year is demonstrably open to invasion if the effort is made with sufficient fore-knowledge of procedure, training of the troops, and courage in the assault.”

In Missouri, for instance, while party officials backing Rockefeller, Scranton, and Goldwater were verbally assaulting one another, the Goldwater forces concentrated their efforts in local party meetings. On April 28, 1964,
the GOP town meetings were held in St. Louis County for the purpose of nominating delegates to the state convention in June. In the words of one reporter,

Hundreds of Goldwater supporters packed many of these meetings. They overwhelmed the regular party organizations by sheer weight of numbers, or held rump meetings and named rival slates to support Goldwater.

The Goldwater backers had done their homework well. They were effectively organized and fully prepared to meet any contingencies that might have cast a legal doubt on their efforts. In townships where a fight was anticipated, Goldwater supporters showed up with notaries public to take affidavits of persons attesting that they were Republicans. They had shorthand reporters to record the proceedings of any rump sessions that were necessary.²⁷

At the Missouri state GOP convention in June, control of the party went automatically to the Goldwater forces that had won most of the local battles. At the state convention, several anti-Goldwater delegations from townships were ousted, four Goldwater supporters were elected to the at-large delegate posts, and the Missouri delegation voted 23-1 for Goldwater on the first ballot at the national convention.

In Georgia the story was much the same. According to Fifth District Chairman Richard C. Freeman,

We felt we had built a fine, dedicated organization in Fulton County. Many of the members and leaders were moderates, but Goldwater attracted the dissident groups who took over the party—not so much Fulton County—we salvaged that, but they took over the party in the rest of the state . . . .

They took over the Republican party in this state by design and plan. They were ruthless in doing it and in kicking out everybody who had worked long and hard for years. I saw people in our county convention I had never seen before.²⁸

In Alabama, the insurgents

. . . sat down four years ago and laid out the plan for a political organization . . . Many of them worked a full day making a living and then devoted half the night or more and weekends to the political organization they were building. Build it they did, precinct by precinct, county by county and district by district. Then they welded the organization. Today they run it.²⁹

In California the tactics of the insurgents were similar to those described for Missouri. Richard Dudman asserts that the case of Mrs. Bernice Wilson, President of the Oakland unit of the California Republican Assembly, was similar to a score of others which took place in that state:
Newcomers, some from outside the unit's area and none of them eligible to vote until they had been members three months, swarmed into a meeting in December, 1963, nominated their own slate of officers and shouted their election through to victory. It all happened so fast that Mrs. Wilson had no chance to challenge their right to vote.

The right-wing newcomers clinched their capture of the club at a dinner meeting the next month. About 100 persons pushed past sentries assigned to check credentials, touching off a combination riot and filibuster that lasted five and one half hours.

Gardiner Johnson, a Goldwater field man, now California national committee man, sat in a corner with the bylaws on his lap and signaled parliamentary moves. Herbert V. Brown, an aggressive newcomer with a good knowledge of Robert's Rules of Order, was on his feet 31 times with points of order and other motions. Finally the intruders jammed through a motion expelling Mrs. Wilson from the president's chair "in the interest of harmony."

Mrs. Wilson carried her fight to the Assembly's state convention where the credentials committee backed her. But she ultimately lost in a "riotous floor fight" where Gardiner Johnson, leader of the Goldwater forces, shouted at one point: "Parliamentary rules be damned when it comes to thwarting the will of the majority."

In many states it was unnecessary for factions supporting Goldwater to resort to the dramatics that took place in Missouri, Georgia, and California. In Alabama and Mississippi, state party machines have been built in recent years under the leadership of Wirt A. Yerger, Jr., John Grenier, James D. Martin, Glenn Andrews, and others. In Ohio and Illinois, many incumbent party leaders favoured Goldwater anyway. One Ohio leader explained the agreement made among the various Republican leaders:

We didn't have any trouble with the Goldwater people here. When it came time to select our delegates by Congressional districts, the Goldwater guys sat down with the county chairman and worked it out so that the Goldwater people named one delegate and the party people named the other. Usually, it was someone connected with finances who was picked by them.

On the basis of the evidence presented above, there is evident need for a re-evaluation of the circumstances surrounding the nomination process for the presidential candidates. In the first place, much more attention must be given to the process of delegate selection within the states. Too often the delegations to the national convention are accepted as "givens", and analysis and
evaluation begins with the convention delegations. Our study clearly shows that the convention delegations were not only the beginning but also the end of the process that nominated Senator Goldwater. Attention must also be given to the “convention elite” and the role it plays in the nominating process. As has been noted above, the first requirement is to stop thinking of an elite and begin thinking of the elite for each convention. Within the Republican party, at least, a largely accidental perpetuation of convention elites has been made into an inflexible rule of conventions. The 1964 Republican convention proved that the “Establishment” was due more to a lack of competition than to anything else.

Third, recognition must be given to the unique nature of the convention party. American political parties have as their basic function the nomination and election of individuals for public office. Whatever the intentions of its original proponents may have been, the system of direct primary has not eliminated this function, and it is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the case of the Presidency. Yet, even though this is a national office (and perhaps because it is), there is no national party to propose and work for a candidate. Since the days of Andrew Jackson, representatives of the various state parties have met in some kind of convention to select a single individual to represent the party label in the states. For over a century this system has remained basically unchanged, though the advent of modern mass media has offered candidates a means of communicating directly with the electorate.

Whatever the façade of party unity that is presented at a national convention, no one has seriously contended that the various state parties are, in fact, converted into a truly national party. Neither has it been seriously suggested that there is a single mechanism for the selection of presidential candidates. The interplay of various party factions in a party out of power or the domination of the President within a party in power are the two basic forms of presidential nominations, but there are many possible patterns, which each form, and especially the first, can take.

David and his colleagues have identified the convention elite as the leadership cadre which leads the convention in its choice of a nominee. They assert that seniority is the principal requirement for membership in this elite. But, as has been shown, this requirement is not absolutely necessary. Moreover, the successful capture of the convention party by the Goldwater forces did not reflect or presage a similar capture of control of Republican state parties across the nation. But neither does the defeat of Goldwater guarantee the removal of those state leaders who originally supported him. These are ques-
tions that must be answered within each state. Members of the convention party perform a national and state function and are answerable, if at all, only at a state or sub-state level.

Until recently, party members and their leaders throughout the country communicated with one another on the basis of probable election success. Most delegates to most conventions seriously considered only those candidates who had a good chance of winning in the impending national election, so that each convention had a built-in standard of responsibility. At home it mattered little what kind of process was used to nominate and elect the candidates. So long as everyone—convention leaders, delegates, and party members alike—were in agreement as to the criterion for selecting a candidate with a good chance of winning, then there was little need for evaluating the process of selecting a delegate. But once the criteria for candidate eligibility changed, then it became easy to detect the actual nature of the convention party. It was the tacit agreement concerning eligibility that had served to convey the impression of a permanent convention leadership cadre.

If ideological acceptability is substituted for the criterion of probable election success, we may then witness a drastic transformation of the theory of “co-ordinate factionalism” which Professor David and his colleagues have used to describe the nominating process in the “out-party.” In fact, one of the major trends in recent Republican party history has been the hardening of the ideological arteries—a condition which shows signs of altering the Republican method of reaching decisions. Such a trend may be only short-run, but it now appears that the period between 1956 and 1964 was a significant one for the Republican party.

NOTES


4. Ibid., pp. 197, 200.
7. For one of the best known of the many “anti-Establishment” works, see Phyllis Schlafly, A Choice Not An Echo (Alton, Illinois, Pere Marquette Press, 1964).
9. These figures update a chart on party convention experience (see op. cit., p. 350). To make this table consistent with the one cited above, we are including delegates who had served in the previous convention as either delegates or alternates. If only delegates are considered, the figure would be 23.6% for 1960 and 20.9% for 1964.
10. In footnotes ** and ***, the term “turnover” is synonymous with discontinuity. Thus in footnote**, no delegates in these eleven states attended all three conventions held between 1956 and 1964. There were very few cases of delegates attending in 1956 and again in 1964. (Delegates from the territories and the District of Columbia are not included in this analysis.)
12. Ibid., p. 351.
13. For an assessment of the strength of Republican party organizations in some of these states, see David, Moos and Goldman, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 173-83; 241-2; Vol. 2, pp. 77, 157, 191; Vol. 4, p. 10. See also David, Goldman and Bain, op. cit., p. 552.
15. Ibid.
16. See footnote, and discussion on this point, ibid., p. 405.
17. Following David, Goldman and Bain, the concept of “contested conventions” is used to include those in which the winner received less than 90% of the vote at the end of the roll call at the end of the first ballot. See ibid., p. 371.
18. The term access is used as follows: if a state delegation was not totally committed to a single candidate upon arrival at the convention, it is assumed that the candidates for nomination would have a better opportunity to plead their case before the delegation because (1) the not totally-committed delegation indicates indecision or “open-mindedness” to the candidates or (2) that the non-total delegation commitment means that within the delegation, backers of different candidates will insist that their own favourite candidates be given the opportunity to speak before the delegation.
19. There were 22 state delegations voting solidly in 1964, but the purpose here is to measure the solid delegations, on the first ballot, to the eventual winning candidate.
20. This “shut-out” theory is derived from the behaviour in certain state and local party conventions in 1964. As will be seen below, intolerance was often shown to delegates opposed to Goldwater.
21. These states are Indiana, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.


24. For discussions of this point see David, Goldman and Moos, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 171-2, 240-1; Vol. 3, pp. 4-5, 64, 210; Vol. 5, pp. 5, 143 and passim.


26. Ibid., p. 240.

27. The discussion of state contests is drawn largely from the excellent series of articles by Richard Dudman, William K. Wyant, Herbert A. Trask, and Robert Collins which appeared in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 6-12, 1964.


29. Ibid.

30. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 11, 1964. (The California Republican Assembly is influential in California politics and organizes local precinct campaigns).

31. Ibid.

32. Yergey has been chairman of the Mississippi Republican party since 1956. Grenier, Martin, and Andrews are high-ranking members of the Alabama Republican party. These men typify two important things about Republican politics in the South in recent years: (1) the youthfulness of the leaders; (2) the fusion of regular-party and convention leadership. The same men often have iron-clad control of all party activities which, ironically, is something that only the "Establishment" people are supposed to have.


34. One of Goldwater's top aides was quoted as saying just after the convention, "I know we probably won't win in November and I don't give a damn. Winning control of one of the two major parties is victory enough for me." Quoted in Joseph R. L. Sterne, "The Old Guard Returns," Reporter, Vol. 32, no. 3 (February 11, 1965), p. 28.

35. For an excellent discussion of this process, see David, Moos and Goldman, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 11-18.