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Party Systems and Realignment in the United States, 1868–2004

According to David Mayhew (2002: 58–59, 35), “Neither statistics nor stories bear out the canonical realignments calendar of 1860, 1896, and 1932,” and “no certifiable electoral realignment has occurred since 1932.” This study examines the national division of the U.S. presidential vote and House of Representatives seats from 1868 to 2004 to determine whether realignments occurred in 1896, 1932, and 1968 and whether other elections might be better designated as realignments. The analysis demonstrates the onset of realignments in the 1894–96 and 1930–32 elections and a staggered realignment in recent decades. Republicans registered significant durable gains in presidential voting starting in 1968 and in congressional elections in 1994. The analysis also finds evidence of a realignment favoring the Democrats in 1874–76.

American electoral history has long been characterized as a series of party systems and realignments.¹ Party systems define normal partisan politics, and realignments are the change from one party system to the next. In the classic New Deal realignment, Democratic Party dominance replaced Republican Party dominance. From 1896 to 1928 Republicans won seven of nine presidential elections. After the New Deal realignment, Democrats won seven of the next nine elections. Preceding these systems was a party system near parity. Although Republicans won five of seven presidential elections between 1868 and 1892, six were decided by popular votes within the 53 percent to 47 percent range, two of the five Republican victories (Rutherford B. Hayes’s in 1876 and Benjamin Harrison’s in 1888) failed to achieve pluralities,

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and a third (James A. Garfield's in 1880) was won with a smaller plurality than John F. Kennedy's margin in 1960.

Realignments Questioned

Despite this record and the extensive scholarship on realignments, the utility of the realignment concept has been called into question. One reason for this is its unsettled definition. Realignments have been defined as durable changes in the issues that politically divide the nation (e.g., Key 1955; Sundquist 1983) or in group or regional attachments to the parties (Key 1955; Petrocik 1981, 1987). They have also been defined as durable shifts in the balance of power between the parties (Key 1959) or significant changes in the normal vote (Converse 1966). Within this perspective, some require a change in which party holds majority status (Burnham et al. 1978: 49; Gans 1985) or shifts in party identification (Chubb 1978; Miller 1991). Some definitions bundle various political changes, including changes in party vote shares, the extent of intraparty conflict, third-party activity, issue polarization levels, turnout rates, and public policies (Burnham 1970: 6–10; 1991: 115–16). This conceptual muddle has caused some to abandon the term (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Shafer 1991; Silbey 1991).

The realignment concept has also been criticized as being unrealistically dichotomous, requiring overnight change in a single election rather than beginning in an election and extending over some period (Carmines and Stimson 1989: 20). Substantial aggregate partisan change takes time. Though secular realignments explicitly provide for gradual change (Key 1959) and despite repeated clarifications that realignments take place over years (Key 1955: 11; Kleppner 1981: 7; Sundquist 1983: 11–12), realignments are frequently mischaracterized as single-election events.

David Mayhew (2002: 6) has moved beyond previous critics to claim that the concept of realignment and a number of propositions regarding the causes and consequences of realignments have become “an impediment to understanding” American electoral history, that they constitute “a failed model of illumination.” With the exception of 1932, he disputes that any realignments have taken place (*ibid.*: 47, 141). He concludes that there is insufficient evidence to single out 1896 as a realigning election and observes that “no certifiable electoral realignment has occurred since 1932” (*ibid.*: 35).²

In light of Mayhew's scorching critique and that of several others (Licht-

man 1976; Gans 1985), this research reexamines the evidence that national partisan realignments have taken place since 1868. Specifically, was there a realignment in 1896, 1932, and the late 1960s? With respect to Mayhew's assessments of the 15 claims of the realignment genre, is he correct in rejecting the idea that realignment onset elections are distinguishable from nonrealigning elections (claim 1, "the genre's foundational empirical claim" [2002: 14]) and that "there existed a 'system of 1896'" (claim 15 [ibid.: 30])?

The conventional view is that the party system from the Civil War to 1892 was highly competitive. In 1896 or thereabouts, in the aftermath of the economic panic of 1893 and with the Democratic Party controlled by its pietistic, populist, Bryan-led wing, the electorate became more Republican (Key 1955: 12; Glad 1964: 199; Burnham 1970; Kleppner 1972; McCormick 1986). This Republican era lasted until the Great Depression of 1929. The influx of Catholic immigrant voters and the economic crisis produced an era of Democratic Party dominance. Although it showed signs of splintering and weakening as early as 1948, this New Deal party system survived into the 1960s in presidential voting and the 1990s in congressional voting. While there is not yet a prevailing view of the nature of the post-New Deal party system, the parties are now again near parity (Ladd 1997).

Before reexamining the evidence of whether these or other realignments took place, the definition of realignment in use here should be made clear. For our purposes, a realignment is a durable and substantial shift in the parties' national electoral balance of power. This definition comports well with common usage as well as with the definitions used in many previous studies, including Mayhew's (see also Key 1959: 198; Campbell 1966: 74; Clubb et al. 1980: 22; Miller 1991: 568; Bartels 1998). It also allows the effects and causes of realignments to be examined empirically. Realignments may have different causes and may take place in different ways, but differences in their development should not be confounded with whether a realignment occurred. This definition also recognizes that realignments vary in magnitude and duration. It provides for realignments to be more or less regionalized (Bullock 1988) or to involve changes in different population or regional subgroups (interactive change), so long as these changes yield a national shift in relative party strength. Many subnational electoral shifts are politically important even if they offset one another and produce no national change, but our concern is exclusively with national shifts. The limited purpose of this study is to determine whether and when national partisan realignments occurred (Mayhew's

claims 2–14 are beyond this scope). Finally, this definition recognizes that realignments occur over several elections. A realigning election refers to the election in which the change in the parties' balance of power is first evident.

Data and Methods

Two types of data are used to assess realignments: the national two-party popular presidential vote for the Democratic Party and the two-party percentage of U.S. House seats held by Democrats. Since the study concerns realignments as changes manifested in the national balance of power, the level of analysis is that of national elections. The data are drawn from *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections* (Moore et al. 2001). Since the analysis seeks to determine shifts in the balance of power between the major parties, third-party votes are excluded in examining the two-party presidential vote. The findings, however, are unaffected by this measurement decision. An analysis including third-party votes corroborates the two-party vote results. In the congressional analysis, following Charles Sellers (1965), House seats rather than votes are examined to avoid distortions in the vote that might be caused by low turnout in uncontested seats. Again, the findings were unaffected by this measurement decision. An identical analysis using House votes corroborated the findings of the House seats analysis. Both the presidential vote and House seats indicators are examined for elections from 1868 to 2004, a series of 35 presidential and 69 congressional post-Civil War elections. By 1868 most and by 1870 all Southern states had been readmitted to the Union.

A set of four dummy variables reflects the hypothesized party systems. Simple dummy variables undoubtedly understate realignment effects, since their estimated effects are constrained as an average over a period rather than allowed to build to a peak and later decay. However, with the limited number of cases, fine-tuned functions of the data are unlikely to be reliable, and the dummy variables establish whether a realignment occurred. The first party system variable scores elections from 1868 to 1892 as one and later elections as zero. The second scores elections from 1894 to 1928 as one and elections before and after as zero. This marks the 1894 and 1896 elections as the onset of a late-nineteenth-century realignment and the 1930 and 1932 elections as the onset of the New Deal realignment (though 1930 could also be placed in the 1896 system). The midterms of both 1894 and 1930 are commonly iden-

tified as part of the new party system. Each followed the start of an economic depression, in 1893 and 1929, respectively, events that may have precipitated or accelerated these realignments.

The third- and fourth-party system variables differ in the presidential and congressional analyses. After years of weathering internal party divisions, the splintering of the party coalition in 1948 (the Dixiecrat and Progressive bolts), and the twin deviating elections of the Eisenhower years, the Democratic Party's majority in presidential voting dissolved in the late 1960s (Burnham 1991: 115; Shafer 1991: 47; Aldrich and Niemi 1996: 88; Beck 1999: 39). Although there had been significant regional shifts in congressional elections since the 1960s, including Republican gains in the South, Democratic domination of House elections survived until the early 1990s. In elections from 1958 to 1992, Republicans never won more than 192 seats (44 percent).

The recent realignment began with Republican inroads in presidential voting in the formerly solid Democratic South in the 1950s and 1960s.³ In contrast to the New Deal system, Republicans since 1968 have had a good measure of success in presidential elections, winning seven of ten contests. Aggregate shifts in both the direction and the strength of party identification followed in the mid-1980s (Norpoth 1987; Petrocik 1987: 349; Miller 1991; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Bartels 2000; Hetherington 2001), though change among white southerners was evident earlier (Ladd 1985; Wolfinger 1985; Stanley 1988). Between 1952 and 1980 Democrats outnumbered Republicans among voters by an average of 54 percent to 38 percent, with 8 percent independents (Campbell 2000: 211). In 1984 the gap narrowed to a two-point Democratic advantage (47 percent to 45 percent), but Democrats retained control of the House. Then in 1994 Republicans broke through in congressional elections, gaining 54 seats and a House majority for the first time in 40 years. It was, as Everett Carl Ladd (1995: 22) put it, another step in "the vast partisan realignment that has been occurring." According to Alan Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders (1998: 647), "The dramatic Republican victory in the 1994 midterm election and the reelection of a Republican Congress in 1996 reflected a long-term shift in the party loyalties of the U.S. electorate." House Republicans have continued to hold narrow majorities for six consecutive elections.

Prior to the realignment appearing in party identification numbers in the 1980s and deepening into House elections in the 1990s, some declared the party system dealigned and the realignment "hollow" (Wattenberg 1987),

“two-tier” (Ladd and Hadley 1978), or “split-level” (Ferejohn and Fiorina 1985: 113; Ladd 1991: 30). In retrospect, the dealignment was exaggerated and temporary (Petrocik 1987: 350; Keith et al. 1992; Bartels 2000). It also appears to have been transitional—part of a staggered realignment. John A. Ferejohn and Morris P. Fiorina (1985: 112) raised this possibility in the mid-1980s, suggesting that the post–New Deal realignment might have “lags so great that they are not yet apparent.”

Why was there this unprecedented delay between the shifts at the presidential and congressional levels? The increased advantage of incumbency played a part in this, but the critical reason for the delay was the legacy of the post–Civil War party system: the absence of the Republican Party in the South. Although not an impediment to Republican *presidential* voting in southern states in the 1960s, this was a considerable obstacle to Republican *congressional* voting. In the 1950s and early 1960s Republicans won only a handful of southern House seats (6 of 104 seats in 1960). By the 1970s they held about a third (38 of 107 in 1980). Further gains required building a southern Republican Party. As Earl Black and Merle Black (2002: 71) observe, “Only in a few enclaves did the Republicans operate as a real party capable of seriously contesting and actually winning elections.”

The Republicans’ southern problem was evident in state legislatures, the source of most viable House candidates. Only 13 percent (239 of 1,807) of southern state legislators in 1968 were Republican. Even after the 1980 election, only 18 percent (301 of 1,649) were Republican. With so few Republicans working their way up the ladder, Republican presidential candidates regularly carried dozens of southern House districts, often by large margins, without a Republican House candidate on the ballot (Campbell 1997: 203). There were 41 such districts in 1972, 43 in 1984, and 30 in 1988. Finally, by the early 1990s Republican party building in the South reached the point that the realignment could proceed. In 1992 a third of southern state legislators were Republican, and every southern House district carried by Republican presidential candidates in 1992 and 1996 had a Republican House candidate on the ballot. Republicans have won a majority of southern House seats in every election since 1994. In 2004 Republicans won almost two-thirds of southern House seats (66 of 105).

The disparity between presidential and subpresidential conditions in the South caused the realignment to be staggered, shifting toward Republicans first in presidential voting and only much later in congressional elections. To

reflect this, elections from 1932 to 1964 are counted as part of the New Deal party system for the analysis of presidential voting, and elections from 1930 to 1992 are counted as New Deal system elections for the analysis of congressional elections. The post–New Deal realignment system is coded one for elections since 1968 in the presidential analysis and since 1994 in the congressional analysis.

In addition to the party system variables, the congressional analysis includes a measure of the effects of the on-year presidential surge and the midterm decline (A. Campbell 1966; J. Campbell 1997). The variable is the difference between the Democratic presidential candidate's vote percentage and 50 percent, taking a positive sign in on years and a negative sign in midterms. A party should gain seats in the on year and lose seats at the next midterm in proportion to its presidential vote margin (J. Campbell 1997). Controlling for these short-term oscillations is necessary so that they are not confused with long-term shifts. These surge and decline effects have no net partisan effect. Within the on-year and midterm cycle, the midterm decline cancels the on-year surge.

The effects of realignment onset elections are estimated straightforwardly using multiple regression, with appropriate precautions for serial correlation. Although the analysis spans 136 years, it is possible that a few elections may have undue influence, producing findings reflecting that election rather than elections in general. To avoid distortion from influence points, in addition to examining the full set of elections, both of the analyses are examined with a least median squares (LMS) robust regression technique (Rousseeuw and Leroy 1987). LMS effectively identifies and excludes influence points. It removes any subjectivity in determining which, if any, elections are so unusual that they should be set aside. Also, to avoid privileging or "preselecting" the hypothesized realignment years or specifying some arbitrary span for realignments, the analysis considers a wide range of alternative realignment onset elections as well as the possibilities that the suspected realignments did not occur at all or were deviating elections. Over the course of the analysis, with only three justified exceptions, every presidential election is considered as a possible realignment onset.⁴ While this might appear ahistorical, the purpose is to avoid imposing on the data any preconceived notion of when the onset of a realignment may or may not have occurred.

This research is in several respects an extension of Walter Dean Burnham's (1970: 13–18) analysis (see also Lawrence and Fleisher 1987). Burn-

ham examined changes in the national (usually two-party) presidential vote with dummy variables over ten elections, with five elections specified as pre-realignment elections and the next five as realignment-era elections. Possible realignments were examined by moving a window of ten elections one election at a time. The present analysis differs by including congressional elections, taking a direct regression approach rather than examining residuals, examining possible realignments simultaneously, and detecting and excluding influence points that would distort the findings.

Findings

The Canonical Party Systems

Tables 1 and 2 present the results of the analysis using the presidential vote and House election indicators of party strength. The first set of four equations in each table uses all of the elections in the series, and the second set uses those not excluded as influence points. The robust regression analysis set aside only 1912 (the Wilson-Roosevelt-Taft election) from the presidential analysis and excluded eight elections (1868, 1872, 1890, 1910, 1912, 1914, 1934, and 1936) from the congressional analysis. The equation sets are estimated excluding each party system variable in sequence to avoid perfect multicollinearity. Each set of four equations in tables 1 and 2 is essentially the same equation, hence the same summary statistics and symmetry of coefficients with different baseline eras. Each version is reported to facilitate comparison of the party eras. The constant in each equation is the mean of the dependent variable for the era of the excluded variable. This serves as the baseline for comparisons. The coefficients indicate the difference in the mean Democratic Party strength between the elections of the period designated by the variable and the baseline era. For example, according to equation 1 in table 1, the expected Democratic two-party presidential vote from 1868 to 1892 was 49.31 percent, and this dropped by 3.95 percentage points in the era from 1896 to 1928.

The important comparisons involve the coefficients in bold type next to the diagonal, which compare adjacent party systems. These coefficients indicate the magnitude of any change in expected party strength from one system to the next. A distinct party system ought to be significantly different in its partisanship from the preceding system and from the following system.

Table 1 Realignments indicated by presidential vote, 1868–2004

| Dummy variables | Dependent variable: Democratic two-party percentage of the presidential vote, 1868–2004 | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| | All presidential elections | | | | All presidential elections except 1912 | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| 1868–92 | — | 3.95 (1.19) | -4.12 (1.24) | 1.54 (.48) | — | 6.32* (2.18) | -4.12 (1.46) | 1.54 (.56) |
| 1896–1928 | -3.95 (1.19) | — | -8.07* (2.60) | -2.41 (.80) | -6.32* (2.18) | — | -10.45* (3.84) | -4.78* (1.80) |
| 1932–64 | 4.12 (1.24) | 8.07* (2.60) | — | 5.67* (1.87) | 4.12 (1.46) | 10.45* (3.84) | — | 5.67* (2.21) |
| 1968–2004 | -1.54 (.48) | 2.41 (.80) | -5.67* (1.87) | — | -1.54 (.56) | 4.78* (1.80) | -5.67* (2.21) | — |
| Constant | 49.31 | 45.36 | 53.44 | 47.77 | 49.31 | 42.99 | 53.44 | 47.77 |
| <i>N</i> | 35 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 34 | 34 | 34 | 34 |
| Adjusted <i>R</i> ² | .11 | .11 | .11 | .11 | .27 | .27 | .27 | .27 |
| Standard error of estimate | 6.58 | 6.58 | 6.58 | 6.58 | 5.59 | 5.59 | 5.59 | 5.59 |
| Durbin-Watson | 1.39 | 1.39 | 1.39 | 1.39 | 1.44 | 1.44 | 1.44 | 1.44 |

Notes: The parenthetical figures are *t*-ratios. An asterisk indicates that $p < .05$, one-tailed. The difference between the 1868–92 and 1896–1928 systems is significant at $p < .13$ ($t = 1.19$, one-tailed) in the first set of regressions and at $p < .02$ ($t = 2.18$, one-tailed) in the second. The difference between the 1896–1928 and 1932–64 systems is significant at $p < .01$ in both sets of regressions. The difference between the 1932–64 and 1968–2004 systems is significant at $p < .04$ ($t = 1.87$, one-tailed) in the first set of regressions and at $p < .02$ ($t = 2.21$, one-tailed) in the second. The exclusion of 1912 from the second set of regressions (equations 5–8) is based on the robust regression analysis. Coefficients indicating differences between adjacent party systems are set in bold type.

Table 2 Realignments indicated by U.S. House seats, 1868–2004

| Independent variables | Dependent variable: Democratic two-party percentage of U.S. House seats | | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | All congressional elections | | | | Influence-point congressional elections excluded | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Democratic presidential vote margin ($\times 1$ in on years, -1 in midterms) | .48* (3.40) | .48* (3.40) | .48* (3.40) | .48* (3.40) | .38* (3.63) | .38* (3.63) | .38* (3.63) | .38* (3.63) |
| 1868–92 | — | 6.50* (2.19) | -7.88* (2.94) | 3.69 (.92) | — | 11.51* (5.15) | -4.84* (2.43) | 5.76* (2.04) |
| 1894–1928 | -6.50* (2.19) | — | -14.39* (5.98) | -2.81 (.73) | -11.51* (5.15) | — | -16.35* (9.47) | -5.75* (2.19) |
| 1930–92 | 7.88* (2.94) | 14.39* (5.98) | — | 11.58* (3.19) | 4.84* (2.43) | 16.35* (9.47) | — | 10.59* (4.35) |
| 1994–2004 | -3.69 (.92) | 2.81 (.73) | -11.58* (3.19) | — | -5.76* (2.04) | 5.75* (2.19) | -10.59* (4.35) | — |
| Constant | 51.71 | 45.20 | 59.59 | 48.24 | 53.70 | 42.19 | 58.54 | 47.94 |
| N | 69 | 69 | 69 | 69 | 61 | 61 | 61 | 61 |
| Adjusted R^2 | .42 | .42 | .42 | .42 | .65 | .65 | .65 | .65 |
| Standard error of estimate | 8.15 | 8.15 | 8.15 | 8.15 | 5.44 | 5.44 | 5.44 | 5.44 |
| Durbin-Watson | 1.21 | 1.21 | 1.21 | 1.21 | 2.01 | 2.01 | 2.01 | 2.01 |

Notes: The parenthetical figures are t -ratios. An asterisk indicates that $p < .05$, one-tailed. The difference between the 1868–92 and 1894–1928 systems is significant at $p < .02$ ($t = 2.19$, one-tailed) in the first set of regressions. The differences between the 1894–1928 and 1930–92 systems and the 1930–92 and 1994–2002 systems are significant at $p < .01$ (one-tailed). In the second set of regressions, each partisan era is statistically distinct from adjacent eras at $p < .01$ (one-tailed). A robust regression analysis indicated that the 1868, 1872, 1890, 1910, 1912, 1914, 1934, and 1936 elections were influence points. These elections were excluded from equations 5–8. Coefficients indicating differences between adjacent party systems are set in bold type.

Whether a party system is distinct from a much later or much earlier system is of no consequence. A comparison of the coefficients near the diagonal sustains the conventional views of the party systems. The balance of party strength in each party system is significantly different from the one before it as well as the one after it. Also, as expected, surge and decline significantly structured congressional elections quite apart from party system effects. To address possible serial correlation concerns, the presidential vote equation was reestimated using a Cochrane-Orcutt partial first difference technique. The results were substantively unchanged in this reestimation.

The 1868–92 party system was competitive as evidenced most clearly in presidential voting.⁵ In congressional seats, because of the distribution of the vote, Democrats held an edge. After 1894 the party system significantly shifted in the Republican direction, whether measured in presidential voting or in congressional results. Republicans on average gained 6.3 percent of presidential votes and 11.5 percent of House seats in the 1894–1928 era (equation 5 in tables 1 and 2).

As expected, the New Deal realignment was the most sweeping. The realignment increased the Democrats' expected presidential vote percentage by 10.5 points and their percentage of House seats by 16.4 points (equation 6 in tables 1 and 2). The 1894–1928 party system was substantially less Democratic than the New Deal party system that followed.

Both presidential and congressional elections indicate that we have moved beyond the New Deal party system to a more evenly balanced system. Democrats have lost 5.7 percentage points in presidential voting since 1968 and 10.6 percent of House seats since 1994. American politics was highly competitive nationally, then was dominated by the Republicans, then was dominated by the Democrats, and now is once again nationally quite competitive. This parity is reflected in the close divisions of the House and Senate in recent elections and the close margins of the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.

Alternatives to the Canonical Realignments

How certain should we be about the dates of the realignments? Are other elections more plausible? Mayhew suggests that 1876, 1912, and 1948 are as plausible as the realignments usually mentioned. Since the realignment process, as an aggregate of different individual decisions, is a continuous rather

than a binary process, dummy variables used here can only approximate when the first steps of a realignment were evident. To complicate matters further, many first steps (or presteps) may occur without shifting the normal vote at all. Democratic gains among Catholics, an important component of the New Deal party system, probably began in 1928, when Democrat Al Smith was trounced by Republican Herbert Hoover. Similarly, Republican gains among white southerners took a big step forward in 1964 despite Lyndon Johnson's landslide defeat of Barry Goldwater. Nevertheless, can we say that some designations of the observable onset of realignments are better than others? How well do alternative possible realignments compare to the canonical realignments?

Tables 1 and 2 confirmed the canonical realignments since 1868: four party systems separated by three realignments. Realignments apparently occurred in 1894–96, 1930–32, and 1968–94. To assess the accuracy of these realigning dates and avoid privileging these canonical elections, eight alternative realigning elections (eight alternative hypotheses) bracketing each canonical realignment year are examined (e.g., the first realignment examined in presidential voting is 1896). The eight alternative start dates of a realignment are set 4, 8, 12, and 16 years before or after the canonical election (designated as time t). The alternative onset elections for the suspected 1896 (t) realignment in presidential voting are 1880 ($t - 16$), 1884 ($t - 12$), 1888 ($t - 8$), 1892 ($t - 4$), 1900 ($t + 4$), 1904 ($t + 8$), and 1908 ($t + 12$). The highly unusual 1912 election, having been identified as an influence point in both the presidential and the congressional analyses, is excluded from the remainder of the analysis. The end dates for this party system are kept constant, in this case 1928. With the congressional realignment starting in 1894, the alternatives are also two years earlier, ranging from 1878 to 1910. The alternative dates of the 1930s realignment in presidential voting range from 1916 ($t - 16$) to 1948 ($t + 16$). As with the prior realignment, the congressional analysis begins two years earlier and ranges from 1914 ($t - 16$) to 1946 ($t + 16$). The third realignment hypothesized to start in 1968 in presidential voting ranges from alternatives of 1952 ($t - 16$) to 1984 ($t + 16$). For the corresponding 1994 congressional realignment, the alternatives range from 1978 ($t - 16$) to 2002 ($t + 8$). The equations in tables 1 and 2 are reestimated using the alternative realignment years and using the preceding party system as the baseline category. Since these alternative party systems have a large number of elections in common, we should see a similarity in coefficients. However, the addi-

tion or deletion of an election or two that does not belong in a party system should produce a measurement error and a weakened estimated effect. Using dummy variables for the transition period, we can also determine whether the lead-up to the suspected realignment onset involved significant partisan change of its own.

Two additional possibilities for each realignment are also examined. One, a ninth alternative hypothesis, is the possibility that there was *no* realignment on or about the designated realignment elections. In the case of the first realignment, this would amount to a single party system extending from 1868 to 1928. A tenth possibility examined is that the suspected realignment election was actually a deviating election rather than the beginning of a new party system. For example, Mayhew (2002: 53) doubts that 1896 was a realigning election but notes that “there is little doubt that the 1896 election stands out for its short-term change.” The impact of a deviating election is estimated using a dummy variable scored one for that year and zero otherwise. The empirical support for these alternatives, as reflected in the equation’s overall fit and the magnitude of the party system’s coefficients, is then compared to those for the canonical realignment.

Table 3 presents the party system’s coefficient and the percentage of explained variance for the canonical specification, its eight bracketed alternatives, the possibility that there was no realignment, and the possibility that the suspected realignment was actually a deviating election. These key statistics are presented for both the presidential and the congressional analyses. In essence, ten alternative hypotheses are tested for each commonly hypothesized realignment.

The 1894–96 Realignment

How does the 1894–96 realignment stand up to the alternatives? Although some rival elections are strong contenders, none is clearly superior to the 1894–96 start. In the congressional election analysis, the 1894 start date is stronger than the others ranging from 1882 through 1906 and has the only statistically significant effect. This does not test whether the 1894 start date is significantly different from the others, but it does indicate that House election outcomes were significantly more Republican from 1894 to 1928 ($b = -7.62$, $p < .05$) than they were from 1868 to 1892. We cannot make the same claim about the difference between an 1868–96 system and an 1898–1928 system

Table 3 Alternative start points for electoral realignments, 1868–2004

| Alternative realignment years | 1894–96 realignment | | 1930–32 realignment | | 1968/1994 realignment | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Presidential | Congressional | Presidential | Congressional | Presidential | Congressional |
| $t - 16$ | .16 $b = -2.13$ | .40 $b = 4.49$ | .00 $b = 4.56$ | .27 $b = 13.68^*$ | .35 $b = -8.25^*$ | .38 $b = -4.83^*$ |
| $t - 12$ | .17 $b = -3.12$ | .39 $b = 2.40$ | .00 $b = 3.07$ | .24 $b = 11.67^*$ | .26 $b = -5.98^*$ | .39 $b = -5.99^*$ |
| $t - 8$ | .19 $b = -4.00$ | .39 $b = -1.78$ | .02 $b = 5.97^*$ | .31 $b = 13.35^*$ | .20 $b = -3.69$ | .41 $b = -7.50^*$ |
| $t - 4$ | .22 $b = -4.95$ | .39 $b = -2.38$ | .17 $b = 8.97^*$ | .36 $b = 13.95^*$ | .19 $b = -3.45$ | .42 $b = -8.95^*$ |
| t | .27 $b = -6.32^*$ | .45 $b = -7.62^*$ | .27 $b = 10.45^*$ | .45 $b = 15.53^*$ | .27 $b = -5.67^*$ | .45 $b = -11.67^*$ |
| $t + 4$ | .29 $b = -6.82^*$ | .41 $b = -4.37$ | .12 $b = 7.94^*$ | .41 $b = 14.22^*$ | .26 $b = -5.49^*$ | .41 $b = -10.45^*$ |
| $t + 8$ | .30 $b = -7.32^*$ | .41 $b = -3.93$ | .00 $b = 4.78$ | .25 $b = 10.19^*$ | .18 $b = -2.97$ | .39 $b = -11.16^*$ |
| $t + 12$ | .25 $b = -6.13^*$ | .40 $b = -2.63$ | .00 $b = 3.41$ | .20 $b = 8.56^*$ | .19 $b = -3.24$ | — |
| $t + 16$ | — | .39 $b = -1.22$ | .00 $b = 2.26$ | .21 $b = 8.56^*$ | .16 $b = -2.09$ | — |
| No realignment | .18 | .40 | .00 | .09 | .18 | .38 |
| Single election | .15 | .43 | .00 | .09 | .15 | .37 |
| Change at t | $b = 2.00$ | $b = -17.16^*$ | $b = 11.30$ | $b = -9.25$ | $b = -0.91$ | $b = -9.63$ |

Notes: Entries are the adjusted R^2 and the realignment coefficient from equations specified in tables 1 and 2, with the prior party system as the baseline. An asterisk indicates that $p < .05$, one-tailed. The year 1912 is excluded. The alternative realignment year is the start year for the realignment variable. The end point for the party system is unchanged for each party system variable. For example, in the 1894–96 presidential analysis ($t = 1896$) the alternative start years range from 1880 ($t - 16$) to 1908 ($t + 12$) ($t + 16$ if 1912 were included). Start points for the latest realignment at the congressional level ($t = 1994$) cannot be examined beyond 2002 ($t + 8$).

Table 4 The 1894 election as a realigning, deviating, or realigning and deviating election

| Dependent variable: Democratic two-party percentage of U.S. House seats | | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Independent variables | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| 1894–1928 | -7.62* (2.61) | — | -6.79* (2.33) |
| 1930–92 | 7.91* (3.04) | 11.63* (5.62) | 7.91* (3.09) |
| 1994–2004 | -3.77 (.97) | -.02 (.01) | -3.77 (.98) |
| 1894 deviating single election | — | -17.16* (2.10) | -14.14* (1.76) |
| Democratic presidential vote margin (× 1 in on years, -1 in midterms) | .39* (2.78) | .42* (2.90) | .39* (2.82) |
| Constant | 51.72 | 47.99 | 51.72 |
| <i>N</i> | 68 | 68 | 68 |
| Adjusted <i>R</i> ² | .45 | .43 | .47 |
| Standard error of estimate | 7.90 | 8.04 | 7.77 |
| Durbin-Watson | 1.12 | 1.11 | 1.18 |

Notes: The parenthetical figures are *t*-ratios. An asterisk indicates that $p < .05$, one-tailed. The year 1912 is excluded. Equations 1, 2, and 3 specify 1894 as a realigning, deviating, and both realigning and deviating election, respectively.

($b = -4.37$, $p > .05$). Misclassifying even a couple of elections significantly blurs the difference between the two periods.

The significant effect of the 1894 deviating election in the congressional analysis (the final regression in the second column of table 3) raises the possibility that 1894 was simply a deviating election. This possibility is examined more closely in table 4. The equations consider 1894 as a realigning election (equation 1), as a deviating election (equation 2), and as both a realigning and a deviating election (equation 3). The results suggest that the party system experienced both a short-term jolt and a long-term shift in the Republicans' favor in 1894—that 1894 was both a deviating *and* a realigning election. The deviating election specification indicates that Republicans were favored (a 17 percent gain in House seats), as one might expect in the wake of the 1893 Panic while a Democrat occupied the White House. However, the overall fit of the equation is not as strong as that identifying 1894 as the onset of a realignment. Equation 3, including both the 1894 single election variable

and the 1894 realignment variable, indicates that significant short-term and long-term shifts both occurred in 1894. The equation indicates that 1894 produced a short-term boost to Republicans of about 14 percent of House seats as well as a long-term boost to Republicans of almost 7 percent of the House. In short, 1894 was an aberration but not only an aberration. It was *both* a deviating and a realigning election.⁶

In the presidential election analysis, the 1896 realignment date is better supported than any of the earlier dates, but both the 1900 start date ($t + 4$) and the 1904 one ($t + 8$) exhibit slightly stronger effects and also indicate a significant shift from the earlier party system. In addition, though 1908 has a weaker coefficient than 1896, it also is statistically significant. However, given that 1896 precedes its most likely rivals and that there are only small and not statistically significant differences between 1896, 1900, and 1904, the realignment start in 1896 seems the most plausible. When the presidential and congressional analyses are combined, 1894–96 appears to be the best bet for when the realignment began. No other election in this era marks a significant departure from earlier elections in both presidential and congressional tests. Also, the notion that there was no realignment in this era fails the test in both analyses. Assuming a single party system with no realignment from 1868 to 1928 reduces the explained variance in presidential voting by a full nine percentage points from the 1896 start and in congressional elections by five percentage points. Finally, unlike the congressional analysis of 1894, the evidence lends no support to the notion that 1896 was a deviating election.

Mayhew (2002: 55–59) suggests 1874–76 as an alternative to the 1894–96 realignment. This falls outside the 32-year window examined in table 3.⁷ Burnham (1967: 297; 1970: 15–17) and Jerome M. Clubb et al. (1980: 92–97) also found evidence of partisan change favoring the Democrats around 1874. In fact, Burnham (1970: 17) refers in passing to “the realignment of 1874–76” and speculates that the driving force behind this realignment was the economic “depression of 1873–79” under Ulysses S. Grant’s administration and the dismantling of Reconstruction in the South.

Is there evidence that the party system changed in 1874–76 rather than the canonical 1894–96? This is assessed in table 5. The first regression in each set (equations 1 and 4) specifies a realignment in 1894–96 but not in 1874–76. The second (equations 2 and 5) specifies a realignment in 1874–76 but not in 1894–96. The third (equations 3 and 6) specifies a realignment in *both* 1874–76 and 1894–96. An 1874–76 start (an 1874–1928 party system) fared well in

Table 5 The possibility of an 1874–76 electoral realignment

| Independent variables | Dependent variable: Democratic two-party percentages | | | | | |
|--|--|------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | U.S. House seats | | | Presidential vote | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| 1874–92 | — | — | 21.62* (4.82) | — | — | 5.06 (1.08) |
| 1874–1928 | — | 13.56* (2.84) | — | — | .28 (.06) | — |
| 1894–1928 | -7.62* (2.61) | — | 8.94* (2.10) | -6.32* (2.18) | — | -2.71 (.61) |
| 1930–1964/92 | 7.91* (3.04) | 24.41* (5.15) | 24.55* (5.97) | 4.12 (1.46) | 7.74 (1.64) | 7.74* (1.77) |
| 1968/94–2004 | -3.77 (.97) | 12.76* (2.30) | 12.82* (2.67) | -1.54 (.56) | 2.07 (.44) | 2.07 (.48) |
| Democratic presidential vote margin ($\times 1$ in on year, -1 in midterms) | .39* (2.78) | .40* (2.90) | .35* (2.87) | — | — | — |
| Constant | 51.72 | 35.21 | 35.09 | 49.31 | 45.70 | 45.70 |
| <i>N</i> | 68 | 68 | 68 | 34 | 34 | 34 |
| Adjusted R^2 | .45 | .46 | .59 | .27 | .15 | .27 |
| Standard error of estimate | 7.90 | 7.83 | 6.79 | 5.59 | 6.02 | 5.58 |
| Durbin-Watson | 1.27 | 1.23 | 1.40 | 1.44 | 1.29 | 1.45 |

Notes: The parenthetical figures are t -ratios. An asterisk indicates that $p < .05$, one-tailed. The year 1912 is excluded. Party system variables are identified by their initial year, which may be a midterm election. The most recent party system is identified as starting in presidential elections in 1968 and in congressional elections in 1994.

the congressional analysis (equation 2) but not in the presidential analysis. In the presidential analysis the adjusted R^2 drops to .15, and the coefficient falls well short of significance. In the congressional analysis the adjusted R^2 is .46, and the effect is significant. Reconstruction and its dismantling may have had a substantial effect on congressional elections in this period. As a result of Reconstruction in the South, the percentage of Democratic seats was kept low in the 1868, 1870, and 1872 elections (only about 30 percent of the seats in 1868 and 1872). This changed dramatically in 1874, with Democrats winning 63 percent of the seats and maintaining at least 45 percent of U.S. House seats until 1894.

If an 1874–76 realignment occurred, it was in the opposite direction of an 1894–96 realignment. The first favored Democrats as the South emerged

from Reconstruction. The second favored Republicans in the aftermath of the 1893 Panic and the leftward drift of Bryan Democrats. When the 1874 election is considered as a separate realigning election in the congressional analysis (equation 3 in table 5), along with 1894 rather than in lieu of 1894, *both* are significant. The congressional equation with both an 1874 and an 1894 realignment has an adjusted R^2 of .59. The 1874 realignment shifted about 22 percent of House seats in favor of the Democrats, and the 1894 realignment then shifted about 13 percent of the seats back to the Republicans ($8.94 - 21.62 = -12.68$). A robust regression with both 1874 and 1894 realignments included is consistent with these results.⁸ Moreover, though the evidence of a partisan break in presidential voting in 1876 is not statistically significant (equation 6 in table 5; the coefficient is in the expected direction), Democrats nevertheless fared better in *every* election from 1876 to 1896 than they did in 1864, 1868, or 1872. In effect, as Mayhew suggests, there is evidence that significant partisan change took place in 1874. However, this does *not* undercut evidence of an 1894–96 realignment. In fact, the 1894 realignment stands out *more* sharply (a 12.7 percentage point [$21.6 - 8.9$] estimated change from the prior party system, as opposed to a 7.6 percentage point change) when an 1874 realignment is included in the congressional election analysis.

The 1930–32 Realignment

There is no question about the start of the New Deal realignment. Following the stock market crash of 1929, the economically devastated nation turned away from the Republicans and toward the Democrats. The 1930–32 start for the New Deal realignment indicates a party system significantly different from the prior system in both presidential voting and congressional elections. The difference is most distinct using the 1930–32 cut points. Other elections, both before and after, also indicated significant differences from the prior system, but this reflects the long time span of the New Deal system, and therefore the substantial overlap in the elections in the alternatives, and the great differences between it and the preceding Republican dominated system. To test this, a set of transition variables is created for the elections from 4, 8, 12, and 16 years before the realignment to the realignment year (e.g., a dummy variable in the congressional analysis coded one from 1914 to 1928). Each transition variable is tested in the equation, and, as anticipated, none

remotely approaches statistical significance. Coefficients associated with each of the transition variables were in the wrong direction. The apparent effects of the earlier alternatives in the 1930–32 analysis are the result of these alternatives including many post-1930 elections. Finally, as expected, a realignment definitely occurred in this period. The 1930 and 1932 elections were not simply deviating elections. If the New Deal realignment is not taken into account, in essence supposing a single party system from 1894 to 1968 in presidential voting and to 1994 in House elections, the proportion of variance explained drops to zero in the presidential equations and only 9 percent in the congressional equations.

The Staggered Realignment of 1968–94

How well do the 1968 and 1994 staggered realignment years for the new party system hold up to alternatives? At the presidential level, the 1968 start date is well supported, but the 1972 ($t + 4$) election is also a possibility (see table 3). Although the temporal sequence suggests that the case is stronger for 1968, the large overlap in elections requires a test to determine whether 1968 or 1972 was in fact the start and whether either of these elections was simply a deviating election. Table 6 presents the analysis. Equation 1 specifies 1968 as the realigning election. Equation 2 specifies 1972 as the realignment with 1968 as a deviating or transition election. Equation 3 specifies 1968 as the realignment with 1972 as a deviating election. The strongest equation is clearly the third: 1968 was the realignment onset, and 1972 was a pro-Republican deviating election. The 1968 onset regression with 1972 specified as a deviating election is much stronger than specifying 1972 as the realignment onset (adjusted R^2 of .33 versus .26 in table 3 ($t + 4$)). The realignment begun in 1968 increased the expected Republican presidential vote by 4.6 percentage points, and the 1972 election provided an additional 10.6 percentage point short-term boost to the Republican presidential vote in that year.

The presidential vote analysis in table 3 also raises the question whether the 1952 election or the 1956 election ($t - 12$ and $t - 16$) might have been the onset election for the recent realignment. The significance of the 1952 and 1956 specifications, however, most probably is a consequence of their being deviating elections, as suggested by the fact that the following two alternative party system specifications ($t - 8$ and $t - 4$) are not significant. A regression including both a single election dummy for 1956 as a deviating election and

Table 6 A comparison of the 1968 and 1972 elections as realignments

| Dependent variable: Democratic two-party percentage of the presidential vote | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Independent variables | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| 1868–72 | -7.74* (1.77) | -7.74* (1.75) | -7.74* (1.85) |
| 1876–92 | -2.68 (.86) | -2.68 (.85) | -2.68 (.90) |
| 1896–1928 | -10.45* (3.86) | -10.45* (3.80) | -10.45* (4.02) |
| 1968–2004 | -5.67* (2.21) | — | -4.61* (1.83) |
| 1972–2004 | — | -5.87* (2.20) | — |
| 1968 transition single election | — | -3.84 (.64) | — |
| 1972 deviating single election | — | — | -10.62* (1.88) |
| Constant | 53.44 | 53.44 | 53.44 |
| <i>N</i> | 34 | 34 | 34 |
| Adjusted <i>R</i> ² | .27 | .25 | .33 |
| Standard error of estimate | 5.58 | 5.66 | 5.35 |
| Durbin-Watson | 1.45 | 1.44 | 1.29 |

Notes: The parenthetical figures are *t*-ratios. An asterisk indicates that $p < .05$, one-tailed. The year 1912 is excluded. Equation 1 specifies 1968 as the realignment onset. Equation 2 specifies 1972 as the realignment onset, with 1968 as a deviating election. Equation 3 specifies 1968 as the realignment onset, with 1972 as a deviating election.

the realignment start in 1968 produces significant coefficients for *both* effects and is overall a much stronger equation (adjusted $R^2 = .36$). Including both Eisenhower elections (1952 and 1956) as deviating elections produces a still stronger equation (adjusted $R^2 = .45$) with a 1968–2004 party system effect of -8.53 ($p < .01$, one-tailed).⁹

The 1968 onset was similarly sustained in an equation including 1964 as a deviating election. The 1968–2004 era remained statistically significant ($b = -4.68$, $p < .05$, one-tailed) and the evidence failed to support 1964 as a deviating election. Finally, table 3 offers no support for the idea that the New Deal system survived through this period or that 1968 was simply a deviating election. In short, with respect to presidential voting, 1968 was the onset of the post–New Deal party system.

The congressional equations for 1994 in table 3 display a pattern similar to that of the 1930 realignment. The 1994 start point for the new party system is the strongest specification, but the four alternatives leading up to it (1978, 1982, 1986, and 1990) also indicate a party system statistically different from the New Deal era. Are these earlier elections rival start dates to 1994, or do they simply reflect the overlap of elections in the series and the large difference between post-1994 elections and those that came before? Transition variables are examined to test whether these elections were part of a transition between party systems. These are dummy variables for elections from 1978 to 1992, from 1982 to 1992, from 1986 to 1992, and in 1990 and 1992. When each of these transition variables is tested with the 1994–2004 party system variable, none remotely approaches statistical significance ($p < .05$). It is also clear from table 3 that a realignment took place at some point in this period (the nonrealignment specification fails), that the New Deal system did not survive, and that 1994 was not simply a deviating election.

The 1994 election was a breakthrough for congressional Republicans. They did especially well in the South, where they had been strong since the 1960s in presidential voting and where they had made some strides at the congressional level and below, as noted above with respect to state legislative gains. In the New Deal party system, Democrats held an overwhelming majority of southern House seats. Although Republicans regularly won about a third of these seats in elections from the 1960s to 1990, Democrats continued to dominate the region. This changed in 1994. Since 1994 Republicans have held a majority of southern seats. Combined with their gains in the Midwest and elsewhere, the party that had not won a House majority since 1954 and had been unable to win more than 192 seats, 26 shy of a majority, since 1956 has now won six consecutive majorities. In short, the 1994 midterm election brought the long-anticipated deepening of the 1960s realignment into congressional elections.

Conclusion

Contrary to Mayhew's conclusion about "the foundational empirical claim" of the realignment genre, this reassessment of electoral data finds solid evidence of four realignments since the Civil War. The first of these, often unacknowledged, was a realignment in 1874–76 in the aftermath of Reconstruction. A fairly competitive party system, with a tilt to the Democrats

in congressional seats, was in place from 1874 to 1892. The realignment of 1894–96 produced a substantial shift to the Republicans in both presidential and House elections and elevated Republicans to the dominant party. Some Republican gains in 1894 were short-lived, but the party also registered long-term gains in support. The 1930–32 realignment ushered in a new Democratic Party majority. This party system survived until a staggered, secular realignment began in 1968. This realignment first produced a nationally competitive party system in presidential elections. In congressional elections, owing largely to time needed to build a serious Republican Party in the South, the realignment was delayed until 1994. The finding of a post-New Deal realignment contradicts both Mayhew's (2002: 36) assertion that no realignment has taken place since 1932 and his speculation that partisan decomposition and the parties' aversion to polarization have "sent the old realignments dynamic to the attic."

While generally supportive of the prevailing specifications of realignments, three differences emerge from this analysis. First, the analysis finds evidence of a staggered realignment in recent decades. The development of this party system was certainly unprecedented but understandable, since a large amount of the partisan change took place in the South, a region that had long lacked a local Republican Party. Second, the 1874 realignment, while suggested by some past research and by Mayhew (*ibid.*: 59), is not in the general catalog of realignments. The Democratic Party was significantly weaker in congressional elections, and to some extent in presidential elections, before 1874 than after. Whether this realignment was excluded from the usual list because institutional arrangements, such as the end of Reconstruction and the readmission of the Southern states, rather than voter behavior may have been the driving force behind it, or because this realignment does not fit the cyclical calendar for realignments, as Mayhew speculates, it belongs on the list. With respect to the particulars of 1874, the economic depression of 1873, like the realignment precursor depressions of 1893 and 1929, may also have played a role in the 1874 realignment. Notably, when the 1874–76 realignment is included, the evidence of an 1894–96 realignment stands out more sharply. Third, contrary to the mutually exclusive typology of elections, 1894 appears to be both a realigning and a deviating election, involving both short-term and long-term political changes.

These findings of four realignments since 1868 are sustained after considering a large number of alternative realignments, the possibility that no

realignments occurred, and the possibility that the suspected realignments were instead deviating elections. They stand out from other elections, including all of the alternatives raised by Mayhew. Why weren't these four realignments clear in the studies that Mayhew examined? In some cases, deviating elections, the inclusion of an aberrant "influence point" election such as 1912, or short-term fluctuations of surge and decline may have masked long-term partisan change. In other cases, the fact that a realignment was not obvious may reflect Mayhew's point that realignments are not binary events. Indeed, this analysis has identified the onsets of realignments that may have taken several elections to emerge and several more to complete. That the realignment process is not instantaneous and that this may create some uncertainty as to when exactly a realignment began should not be construed as evidence that realignments have not occurred. The evidence is that they have.

The soundness of Mayhew's overall critique of the realignment genre is difficult to assess. Realignments are only one of many components of a full appreciation of what has transpired and why. Like any single aspect of electoral history, the importance of realignments can be exaggerated to the exclusion of other important qualities. Mayhew may also be right about some or all of his assessments of the realignment genre's claims (2–14) regarding the causes and consequences of realignments—these issues are beyond the scope of this study. That said, Mayhew is wrong in concluding that realignments have not occurred and that the 1896 realignment, in particular, did not take place. This analysis has not delved into the many ramifications that realignments may or may not have, but it would seem obvious that an understanding of U.S. electoral history is severely impeded if it lacks an appreciation of the very real long-term shifts in the balance of power between the major parties in presidential and congressional elections.

Notes

- 1 For an excellent history of realignment research, see Rosenof 2003.
- 2 Mayhew (2002: 50–55) relies heavily on Bartels's (1998: 287–91) indirect assessment of critical elections using state-level presidential returns. Besides the indication of the method and the omission of nonpresidential data, Bartels's analysis raises several concerns: (1) it counts states equally despite population and turnout differences; (2) realigning effects are restricted to single elections; (3) subnational effects (an election's stochastic error) and potentially short-term effects (identified as national forces) are counted in calculating the long-term impact of an election;

and (4) the analysis is not sensitive to the impact of influence points (such as 1912). A national analysis using lagged votes (similar to Bartels's specification) confirms the realignment findings in table 1. Using the Democratic presidential vote margin (and excluding 1912) as the dependent variable and the vote lagged for the prior three presidential elections, the equation accounts for 33 percent of the variance (adjusted R^2). Introducing the realignment onset variables for 1896, 1932, and 1968 increases the explained variance to 52 percent, and each realignment is significant ($p < .05$, one-tailed). Significant realignment effects were also preserved in the congressional analysis after including the lagged seat percentage in the equation. Including the lagged seat percentage increased the explained variance from 42 percent to 58 percent.

- 3 Carmines and Stimson (1989) trace the development of the realignment to the defeat of a number of northern liberal Republicans by liberal Democrats in congressional elections between 1958 and 1964. This changed the ideological balance within both parties on racial issues. With a more receptive Democratic Party in Congress, President Johnson pushed passage of a civil rights agenda. This increased both the turnout and the Democratic loyalty of African Americans. This in turn moved Democrats further to the left and presented Republicans with an opportunity to court conservative southern whites. Republicans reaped dividends quickly in presidential voting, but congressional returns were delayed because of the lack of a viable Republican Party in southern states. See Black and Black 2002: 5–13, 375–76. See also Ladd 1985, 1989, 1995, 1997; Bullock 1988; and Jacobson 2000.
- 4 In table 3, 27 of the 35 presidential elections are considered as possible realignments. The eight not considered are 1868, 1872, 1912, and 1988 through 2004. The 1868 and 2004 elections are not considered because it requires more than a single election to identify a party system. The election of 1912 is identified as an influence point in both the presidential and the congressional analyses. The 1988, 1992, 1996, and 2000 elections were examined and found not to challenge the 1968 onset specification. Each had an adjusted R^2 of about .15, and none of the realignment coefficients were close to significant ($p < .10$). The 1872 election, considered as an alternative to the 1896 realignment, was also not significant.
- 5 The competitiveness of the 1868–92 system was also clear in equation 1 of table 2 (a constant of 51.71 percent). Dropping three influence point elections (1868, 1872, and 1890) made this era appear slightly tipped in favor of the Democrats. As will be noted later, elections before 1874 might be better thought of as in a different party system.
- 6 The election of 1894 could also be labeled “maintaining” rather than “deviating,” since short-term forces in the election favored the majority Republican Party. Labeling an election deviating (or maintaining) as well as realigning is unusual, though Clubb et al. (1980: 88) also allow for this possibility. While the classification of elections is commonly thought of as a mutually exclusive typology, this need not be the case. Both short-term and long-term changes could occur in one election, as apparently they did in 1894.

- 7 Mayhew (2002: 47, 51) also suggests 1920 as an alternative to the 1894–96 realignment. Sundquist (1983: 182) terms the 1920s “a minor realignment.” The 1920 election was examined as the start of this pro-Republican realignment (instead of 1896). It fares well in the presidential vote analysis (as in Bartels 1998: 289). Republican presidential candidates won in landslides in 1920 (Warren G. Harding), 1924 (Calvin Coolidge), and 1928 (Herbert Hoover). However, the 1920 start is not statistically significant in the congressional analysis (whether or not 1874 is also included as a realignment). Without a plausible reason for a delay of the realignment at the presidential level, 1896 remains the most likely start of this realignment as it remains the only election in this period with a significant realignment effect in both presidential and congressional elections.
- 8 A robust regression of the congressional seat equation including surge and decline and party system variables for 1874–92, 1894–1928, 1930–92, and 1994–2004 produced an adjusted R^2 of .68. Each coefficient was significant ($p < .01$, one-tailed). The estimated effects were 0.30 for surge and decline, 20.10 for the 1874–92 system, 9.80 for the 1894–1928 system, 23.66 for the 1930–92 system, and 12.88 for the 1994–2004 system. The constant (the baseline of 1868–72) was 35.00.
- 9 Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1952 and 1956 presidential elections, along with Woodrow Wilson’s 1912 and 1916 elections, are classic deviating elections (Campbell 1966: 69–74). Controlling for Eisenhower’s deviating elections, the 1968 realignment start fits the data better than the 1948 alternative, an alternative suggested by Mayhew (2002: 146). With a variable for Eisenhower’s deviating elections, the equation with a 1948 realignment (a 1948–2004 party system) has an adjusted R^2 of .38. A similar specification with the 1968 onset has an adjusted R^2 of .45.

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