

Macro-Level Data for CNEP II

The United States

1. Structure of the National Government

- The United States has a presidential system.
- The national legislature, the Congress, is bicameral. Its upper house, the Senate, has 2 members from each state, for a total of 100 current members. Its lower house, the House of Representatives, has 435 members, who are apportioned among the 50 states by population size except that each state is guaranteed 1 representative.
- The two houses of Congress are effectively co-equal; although only Senate approval is required for high-level presidential appointments (by a majority) and treaties with foreign governments (by 2/3s), all revenue bills must originate in the House. A bill must receive a majority vote in both houses on identical language and not be vetoed by the President to become a law. Presidential vetoes can be overruled by a 2/3 super-majority in both the House and the Senate.
- The U.S. is a federal system, with specific (and substantial) powers granted to the national government or absorbed by the national government over the years. Substantial powers are reserved for the states, which may delegate them to sub-state units.
- The CNEP survey focused primarily on the 1992 presidential election, although voting in the House election also was measured. A unique feature of the 1992 contest was that an independent candidate, Ross Perot, won 18.9% of the popular votes. However, because he finished first in no state, Perot won no electoral votes.

5. Electoral Law

- Presidents are elected by winning a majority of the electoral votes in the 50 states, with electoral votes apportioned by population size beyond the minimum of 3 (one for each member of Congress) per state. How its electoral votes are allocated to candidates is up to each state, but all of them now award all of their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who wins the plurality of the state's popular vote for President. If no candidate receives a majority of the electoral vote, the U.S. House of Representatives (with each state delegation casting one vote) elects the President by majority vote from among the top three electoral vote-getters.
- Senators and Representatives are elected by popular vote in state or sub-state (congressional district) constituencies. The victor is the plurality winner in virtually all cases, although at least one state requires a majority in a second-round election. House members are elected every two years for two-year terms; Senate members are elected for six-year terms, one-third of them every two years. House and Senate elections are held concurrently and, every four years, with presidential elections. Except in a few states where voters can cast a single party-line vote for all offices, Presidents, Representatives, and Senators are voted upon separately. This can produce split control of the national government, as has been the situation in a majority of years since 1945. Although it is not required and has not always been the case for the House, House and Senate members are elected from single-member districts.
- Because each state is guaranteed two Senators, at least one representative, and at least three presidential electors regardless of population size, the electoral system has a slight bias in favor

of the less populous states; this bias is especially pronounced in the Senate where each state has equal representation. Because the 8 largest states control a majority of the presidential votes, however, presidential contests tend to be fought mostly in the largest states, which also are typically the nation's most competitive states, which gives a practical and strategic advantage to them.

- Because presidential electoral victories are based on winning pluralities in the largest states and members of Congress are elected by pluralities from single-member districts, American elections are dominated by two national parties and are notoriously hostile to third parties, unless they happen to be regionally concentrated.

3. Politicized Social Cleavages

- Since the 1930s, when a major realignment of the party system occurred, the American party system has had a mild class cleavage in the northern states, but this class cleavage developed in the southern states only in the 1960s and remains weaker there.
- Overlapping the class cleavage since the 1930s was a tendency for minority religious groups (especially Catholics and Jews) to support the more left-leaning of the two major parties, the Democrats.
- Beginning in the 1980s, and significantly in the 1992 election, the nature of the religious cleavage changed as more fundamentalist and lower/working-class white Protestants, especially in the South, turned to the more right-leaning of the two major parties, the Republicans. This group had supported the Democrats in previous elections in this century.
- The U.S. has two sizable ethnic/racial minorities, blacks and Hispanics, which in the mid-1990s comprised about 12.5% and 10% of the population, respectively. Blacks live mostly in the southern states and the major cities of the North. Most Hispanics are concentrated in the southwestern states, Florida, and the major cities of the North and West. Both minority groups have had much lower rates of electoral participation than the average, but they have been participating at higher rates in recent years. Although there is a history of Republican voting among blacks and Cuban-Americans, both minority groups now overwhelmingly support the left-leaning party, the Democrats.
- Overall, the U.S. is not characterized by deep or divisive cleavages but rather by a pluralism of cleavages, some of which are cross-cutting, that soften political conflicts.

5. Structure of the Media.

- Media markets are decentralized in some respects but centralized in others, and are now virtually unregulated, which leads to a complicated media system.
 - Newspapers:
 - The U.S. has no truly national newspapers – that is, no papers whose audience is dispersed substantially across the nation. The papers almost all Americans newspaper readers read are the local papers for their cities/communities, and these papers typically monopolize their local newspaper markets. However, two papers (the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*) are distributed widely outside of their home metropolitan area, and a third (*USA Today*) is widely distributed without having any

home city. The circulation of no one of these "national" papers, though, exceeded 2% of the adult population in the 1990s.

- Newspaper decentralization is off-set by increasing concentration of ownership of local newspapers as large chains own more and more of them and by the reliance of local newspapers upon a few national news "wire" services (especially the Associated Press and the *New York Times* news service). Editorial policy and choice of stories, however, remains largely at the discretion of local editors, though that may be changing.
- Newspaper circulation has steadily declined from a high point of 37% of the population in 1947 to 21% of the population as recently as 1996.
- Television:
 - The television market is becoming increasingly decentralized and fragmented. After three decades of domination by the big three private television networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) and their local affiliates who ran their programming locally, the availability of cable service in almost all markets (2/3 of all American households now have it) has provided multiple independent options (in some cases, nearly 100) for most Americans. The fare for the average viewer now ranges from the comprehensive networks to all-news (CNN), all-public-affairs (C-SPAN), all-sports (ESPN), all-movies, religious, and other specialized options. As a consequence, the audience share of the big three networks (now joined by a fourth national network, Fox) has been declining, and consumers have been tuning in specialized stations increasingly.
 - Unlike newspapers, which operate in free (if somewhat monopolized) markets, television has a history of governmental regulation flowing out of government licensing of "air wave property rights." In recent years, this regulation (especially the equal time provision for treatment major party candidates) has been relaxed considerably, to the point that it is relatively unimportant today.
 - The U.S. has a public television network, PBS, that provides programming to numerous local affiliates and is governed by a nonpartisan board. PBS and its local affiliates, though, attract only no more than 1-2% of the viewing audience.
- Radio:
 - The U.S. has a large number of radio stations, all of which are focused primarily on their local markets.
 - Through multiple ownership and nationally syndicated "network" programming, local radio seems to be becoming more concentrated.
 - Based on licenses they must obtain to use their "air ways" from the federal government, radio has been regulated to be balanced in its political coverage and to devote some time to public affairs programming, but the trend has been towards less regulation.
 - The U.S. has a public radio network too, a part of PBS, that provides programming to numerous local affiliates and is governed by a nonpartisan board. It attracts only a small slice (no more than 1-2%) of the audience.
- Media bias:
 - Television: Although conservatives and liberals alike accuse television of being biased against them, the national networks provide essentially balanced and even-handed coverage

to the major parties and candidates. For the most part, our content analysis and the reports of our survey respondents confirm this for 1992.

- Newspapers: Once highly partisan, American newspapers increasingly do typically adopt a nonpartisan stance in national politics. Editorial endorsements of presidential candidates, historically biased heavily in a Republican direction, are declining in number. Less than a third of all newspapers endorsed candidates for president in 1992 or 1996. By all accounts, and our own data, newspapers tend to report in a balanced fashion on the presidential campaigns.
- Radio: Although radio as an industry is little involved in political coverage aside from reporting headlines of the day, some stations have come to play an important role in politics as so-called "talk radio" has become more prevalent, even though most stations still are music-oriented. Talk radio these days has a conservative tone, because the dominant nationally-syndicated talk radio shows, heard in virtually every market by aggregate audiences in some cases as large as 10% of the adult public, feature conservative commentators and critics.
- **High-quality policy-relevant content vs. personalized, trivialized sound-bite journalism?**
The picture is mixed here.
 - On the one hand, the "political junkie" can find more political information and political material in the media, including via the internet, than ever before. Some newspapers (*The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, even the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*) provide deep and penetrating coverage of political issues and politics generally. The so-called "elite press" and many major metropolitan dailies provide probably the best coverage of politics in the history of American newspapers. And most local newspapers provide more coverage and more unbiased coverage of politics and political issues than ever before. Cable TV channels such as C-SPAN and CNN provide greater coverage of politics than the networks ever did and give more opportunity for viewers to hear political leaders directly, without reporters as intermediaries. Talk radio airs ideological viewpoints, albeit much more conservative than liberal these days, more than radio ever has.
 - On the other hand, Americans read newspapers less than they used to, and maybe less carefully among those who still do, and "quality" coverage of politics by the networks has declined as they have turned to more entertainment-oriented programming in a so far fruitless effort to retain their audience share. In effect, where the networks are concerned, fewer and fewer viewers are watching less and less quality political news. All in all, a richer fare of material is available than ever before, but fewer people seem to be partaking of it.

4. Basic Nature of Campaign

- The primary characteristic of American campaigns is that they are run by the candidates, not by the parties. This means that there is little, if any, coordination between presidential and congressional campaigns – and occasionally congressional candidates reject the presidential nominee of their own party.
- Paid commercial advertising, mostly on television spot ads, is an important feature of presidential and congressional campaigns. Presidential candidates spend millions of dollars on

it, and many House candidates have crossed the million-dollar threshold as well. The parties spend additional millions in "soft money" in support of the party ticket and voter mobilization. It is difficult to know, however, what the net impact of paid advertising is. Occasionally a particular ad dominates the agenda of the campaign (e.g., the Willie Horton ads by Bush supporters in 1988), but more often the election result is due to a confluence of forces, particularly the prior popularity of the incumbent.

- Free air time is sometimes available from television and radio for candidate debates and the party nominating conventions. But the electronic media are not under any obligation to provide it and occasionally do not. For example, none of the national television networks provide complete coverage of the national party conventions any more, and coverage has become more and more limited. Candidates must negotiate with the networks (and each other) on debates and their coverage.
- The Federal Elections Commission oversees the campaign finance side of the campaign. It focuses on adherence to campaign contribution and spending limits, although increasing "loopholes" in federal campaign finance laws have virtually eviscerated this regulation. The FEC has equal numbers of Democratic and Republican members (and no third party members), who are appointed by the President with the advice of their party leaders and serve for fixed terms. The FEC can fine candidates for campaign finance law violations, and it has fined most major party candidates for president – though always after the election, when it matters little.

4. Basic election data

(see attached table)

5. Females in labor force and educational levels

- Participation and employment rates of women in the civilian labor force:

	<u>Participation, 1997</u>	<u>Employment, 1996</u>
16-19 years old	51.3%	43.5%
20-24	71.3	64.9
25-34	75.2	71.1
35-44	77.5	74.2
45-54	75.4	73.0
54-64	49.6	47.9
65 and over	8.6	8.3
all ages	59.3	56.1

- Education rate of women vs. men in 1997 [no age breakdown available]:

	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
Less than high school	17.8%	18.0%
High school grad	35.5	32.1
Some college	25.2	23.7

College grad

21.7

26.2

Salient Features of Key Secondary Organizations

- Trade unions:
 - Because of the American federal system, most labor law is state law, and the state organizations are key levels in many unions. Some states allow "closed shops," but most require "open shops."
 - Most of the 245 American unions are specific to individual lines of employment, even within industries, although these lines have become blurred in recent decades (with, e.g., some traditional blue-collar unions representing university professors).
 - Most unions belong to the national AFL-CIO federation, but they jealously guard their independence from one another and sometimes disagree over policy.
 - Until the 1930s, the labor movement refrained from endorsing parties in national (and often local) politics. Since then it almost always has endorsed Democrats for President and Congress, with a few conspicuous exceptions (e.g., the Teamsters endorsed several Republicans for President), and labor spending during campaigns (around \$25 million in 1996) has gone to support Democrats.
 - There is a union specifically for public-sector employees, 37% of whom were union members in 1997, although many at the state and local level belong to other unions.
 - Trade union membership has been declining over time: to only 14% of wage and salary workers by 1997.

- Business organizations:
 - Beyond the numerous industry specific trade associations at the national level, there are several "peak" organizations of business associations. The most important are the National Chamber of Commerce, representing small "main street" businesses; the National Association of Manufacturers, representing large manufacturers; and the Conference Board, representing large mostly multi-national corporations.
 - All three organizations traditionally have favored the Republican party, although the relationship is not always a close or amicable one, and they are careful to court Democrats as well, especially when the Democrats control the Congress. The three "peak" organizations also occasionally oppose one another on particular pieces of legislation.

- Religious organizations:
 - In 1997, only 8% of all Americans professed no religious preference, and only 33% reported belonging to no church or synagogue.
 - Of the population 18 years of age and above, 58% were Protestants, 26% were Catholics, and 2% were Jewish. Protestants divide, sharply in recent years where politics and faith are concerned, between the relatively more numerous fundamentalists/evangelicals and the more upper-status mainline churches, which are declining in membership.
 - American churches refrain aloof from politics in most cases in order to protect their tax-exempt status. Only the now-splintering Christian Coalition of fundamentalist/evangelical Protestants has been a politically-active ancillary secondary organization.

9. Basic Socioeconomic Structure

- Of the active labor force in 1997, 35.8% were employed in the service sector with another 6.4% in finance and 20.7% in retail or wholesale trade. 16.1% were in manufacturing and 6.4% in construction; 3.1% were agriculture (2.6%) and mining (0.5%); 7.1% were in transportation, communication, and other public utilities; and 4.4% were in public administration.
- Of the civilian labor force 16 years of age or older, 7.5% were unemployed in 1992 at the time of the survey, whereas 4.9% were unemployed in 1997. Not in the labor force were 33.6% of the adult population (16 and over) in 1992 and 32.9% in 1997.
- In 1996, the U.S. population was divided as follows in terms of the %s living in various sizes of place:

500,000 or more residents	19.1%
100,000 to 499,999 residents	23.1
50,000 to 99,999 residents	14.4
25,000 to 49,999 residents	12.7
10,000 to 24,999 residents	13.2
under 10,000 residents	17.5

Parties and Politicians in the United States

The U.S. is dominated by two major political parties, the Democrats who originated in the 1830s and the Republicans who were created in the 1850s and rose to prominence in the 1860s as the party favoring the abolition of slavery. In recent years, these two parties have been about equal in their numbers of party identifiers and in their control of the government. Republicans have held the presidency for 19 of the last 30 years, while Democrats controlled the House of Representatives from the 1950s through 1994 and the Senate most of that period. But for only 6 years (1977-80 and 1992-94) since 1968 has a single party controlled both houses of Congress and the presidency at the same time.

About a third of the American electorate identifies itself as politically "independent." These voters have provided the principal base for third-party and independent candidacies for president since the 1960s by George Wallace (1968), John Anderson (1980), Ross Perot (1992 and 1996) and for a few successful non-major-party candidates for governor of the states (e.g., Jesse Ventura in Minnesota in 1998). None of these candidates has run with a slate of candidates for many (if any) lower offices, so they represent independent candidacies rather than broad-based third-party movements.

The Democrats are the left-leaning party in the American two-party system and dominated it from 1932 into the 1960s. Since the 1930s, their broad voter coalition has contained minority group members such as blacks (who moved heavily into the party in the 1960s) and Hispanics, adherents to the minority religions (especially Catholics and Jews), lower/working class people (particularly members of labor unions), and some intellectuals and middle class people. In the last two decades, women increasingly have been more likely than men to be Democrats. The principal Democratic leaders have been Bill Clinton (President from 1993-2000), Jimmy Carter (President from 1977-1980), congressional leaders such as Richard Gebhardt, and unsuccessful presidential candidates like Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis. The candidates for their party's presidential nomination in 2000 are Vice-President Al Gore and former Senator Bill Bradley. The most electorally-successful Democratic leaders in recent years have come from the party's center-left wing rather than from its left wing.

The Republicans are the right-leaning party in the American two-party system. Since the 1930s, their broad voter coalition has been based primarily on white middle class Protestants, including the business community. Since the 1960s, the Republicans made great gains among white southerners, who had been overwhelmingly Democratic in loyalty since the Civil War of 1861-1865, and white southerners are now more Republican than Democratic. In the 1980s and 1990s, conservative Protestants (many of fundamentalist and evangelical persuasion, including many white southerners) flocked to the Republican party. Major Republican leaders in recent years have been Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush and former congressional leaders Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich. Bush and Dole were defeated by Bill Clinton in the 1992 and 1996 elections, respectively. The contest for the party's 2000 nomination for President involves George W. Bush (George Bush's son and governor of Texas), Elizabeth Dole (Bob Dole's wife), Steve Forbes (the millionaire publisher of *Fortune* magazine) and Pat Buchanan (a conservative political analyst and talk show personality) among the most well-known candidates. Since Ronald Reagan's presidency in the 1980s, the Republican party seems has been more right-leaning, more conservative, than it was in the 1960s and 1970s, with religious conservatives vying with economic conservatives for internal control of the party.