The House in the 104th Congress I:
An Institutional View

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Introduction: 40 Years

I am a Congress-watcher. And for any Congress-watcher, the 104th Congress surely stands out as one of the most fascinating of recent times. For me, the fascination grows largely from one, simple historical fact: the 104th was the first Congress in 40 years in which the Republican party controlled the House of Representatives. Every account of the 104th Congress mentions it. But none of them makes anything of it. I want to tell a story that does make something out of it.

Certainly, there is nothing in our history to match this 40-year stretch—from 1955 to 1995—without an alternation in party control of the House. In the 100 years from 1855 to 1955, the longest previous span of one-party dominance was 16 years. The Republicans did it twice, from 1859-1875 and from 1895-1911, and the Democrats did it once, from 1931-1947. Indeed, forty years is an extraordinarily long time for one-party control of any democratically elected national legislature. During the same 40 years that one party controlled our U.S. House of Representatives, for example, partisan control of the British House of Commons changed hands four times, and the least victorious party ran that institution for nearly one-quarter of the period.

Forty years of unchanging partisan dominance may be quite idiosyncratic. But it is enough of a phenomenon, I would argue, to have had some effect on the Congress that finally broke the mold—the 104th. Certainly, it was enough of a phenomenon to have had an effect on political scientists. For 40 years, we Congress watchers simply assumed that politics in the House of Representatives meant Democratic politics. We wrote extensively about the House Democrats; and we became the victims of our Democratic diet. We were quite unprepared to answer the question posed for us by the events of 1994—the question of long-term one-party dominance and the effects of its sudden reversal.

For students of Congress, the question is: "What effect did twenty consecutive Democratic Congresses have on the activity of the first Republican Congress that followed?"

For me, the question has been stimulated by the counterfactual hunch that had we experienced even some minimal alternation in party control during the 40 preceding years, the politics of the 104th Congress would have been different than it was. My hunch is that 40 years of one party control of the House helped produce some serious consequences, among which were the confrontational leadership behavior of Newt Gingrich, the decline in cross-party civility inside the House, the Republican-led movement for term limits in the country and the accelerated decline of public confidence in Congress as an institution. Whatever the validity of
these hunches, they have reinforced my notion that 40 years without a change of party control had a major impact on the activities of the House of Representatives in the 104th Congress. And the House, let us not forget, is the institutional centerpiece of our system of representative democracy.

The argument I want to make is that 40 consecutive years as the minority party in the House left the Republicans, as of November 1994, totally without any first-hand political experience of two essential sorts--first, experience in interpreting electoral victory and, second, experience in governing the country. In both respects, the relevant experience had been available only to the majority party Democrats. Their lack of relevant experience, together with their accumulated frustrations, I shall argue, led the new Republican majority to make serious mistakes--first, of interpretation and then, of governance. Because of their inexperience and their mistakes, the House Republicans missed their golden governing opportunity and made possible the rehabilitation, the resurgence and the reelection of Bill Clinton.

This argument is deliberately more developmental and more institutional than the accounts produced by observers who were close to the day-to-day action in Washington and who focussed their analysis on the three leading players--Newt Gingrich, Bob Dole and Bill Clinton.

Elizabeth Drew, author of Showdown, a book about the first 15 months of the 104th Congress, concluded her analysis this way.

(A great deal) no less than the role of the federal government--was at stake last year and is again this year. The histories of these battles cannot be understood in abstraction from the nature, and the interplay among, the three major personalities who commanded them.¹

Similarly, Michael Weisskopf and David Maraniss, authors of their book about the 104th entitled, Tell Newt to Shut Up, concluded,

This (winter's) historic struggle over the role of government has turned on a number of intertwined factors: [the clear clash of ideologies, the 1996 presidential campaign, the battle of political message.] But in the midst of those larger forces were three men... whose goals and personalities played the determining role in shaping events.²

My story of the 104th is perfectly compatible with accounts which center on personalities. And I shall rely heavily on such on-the-scene reports. But my perspective is more institutional, more long-term and more generalizable than that of the journalists on the beat. Or so, as a practicing political scientist, I should like to think.
The Electoral Interpretation

The period following an election is a critical time for every victorious political party. It is the time during which the winners decide for themselves what their victory meant, and how their victory will shape their future activity. It is for them to interpret the election results; and it is their electoral interpretation that becomes the essential link between the business of campaigning and the business of governing. Everything that follows in the new Congress will be affected by the post-election interpretation of the winners. Political scientists will, of course, decide after many years and many Ph.D. dissertations what the voters message really was. But the winning party cannot wait. It must choose its own working approximation early and will soon face the consequences thereof.

The Republicans of 1994 had never faced this interpretive problem before. For 20 consecutive elections, they had faced a very different problem--interpreting their defeat. And their interpretation had usually focussed inward--to a rash of blaming and bloodletting, and to the cannibalizing of their leadership. This time, by contrast, their 1994 electoral interpretation would be their guide to governing the country. And this time, their electoral interpretation was faulty. It set them off on the wrong course and was most unhelpful to them over the crucial year-and-a-half that followed.

They chose to interpret their victory as an electoral mandate to undertake wholesale change--a mandate for what they called a Republican revolution. The election, they decided, had ratified their call for a more responsive government--by way of such constitutional-level changes as term limits, a balanced budget amendment, a line item veto--and their call for a smaller government--by way of legislative-level reductions in spending for a huge array of government programs.

So long as they described their mandate in the general language of change to a smaller, more responsive government and with an open-ended timetable, they retained some necessary flexibility in implementation. But the Republicans also decided, in very concrete terms, that the electorate had given its approval to their campaign document, the Contract With America. That document contained a lengthy list of policy proposals and a 100-day timetable for completing House action on all of them. This more detailed electoral interpretation held that the public had voted support for a fairly specific program and for quick action to get it all underway. This refined reading of the election returns had two problems. There was scant evidence to support it. And, more important, it did not serve the party's long-term interest.

In the aftermath of the '94 election, all available evidence told us that the election had been more of a repudiation of the
Democrats than an endorsement of the Republicans. Every incumbent House member, senator and governor who lost was a Democrat. Every poll, plus the larger-than-normal mid-term loss of Democratic seats, suggested an unusual degree of dissatisfaction with the Democratic President. Besides which, a large majority of voters had never heard of the Contract With America.

The voters had thrown out the Democrats and given the Republicans the opportunity to govern. But they had put the Republicans very much on trial and on a very short leash. Given their total lack of experience with Republican House majorities, the voters could hardly have done anything more than that. An accurate reading of the election results, therefore, would have been more provisional and more modest than the revolutionary, ten-point mandate interpretation the Republicans adopted.

The accuracy of an electoral interpretation may not, however, be the only measure of its usefulness to a victorious party. Something we might call strategic wisdom matters, too. If the victors adopt an empirically unsupportable electoral interpretation but can still make it work for them strategically—that is, if they can use it to help them achieve their most important goals—then accuracy may not matter. Ronald Reagan in 1980 would be a case in point. In strategy as well as accuracy, however, the Republican post-election interpretation of 1994 was faulty.

If, as I think was the case, the party’s most important long-run goal was to bring about a unified Republican government, the Republicans should have interpreted the election as an invitation to take some carefully selected first steps toward the accomplishment of that goal.

Since 1980, the Republican-conservative movement had held an intellectual advantage in the national policy debate over the performance of big government; and it had capitalized on that intellectual advantage to capture, for varying lengths of time, both the Presidency and the Senate. But never the House. Viewed strategically, therefore, the Republican’s 1994 capture of the House was a long-awaited and necessary step toward the eventual achievement of a unified conservative government—of the sort that Margaret Thatcher enjoyed for 12 years in Great Britain. But the 1994 election hardly signaled the completion of that journey. In which case, the overriding task of the Republican 104th Congress was to keep building toward the capture of the 105th Congress and, most importantly, the Presidency in 1996. To contemplate, much less proclaim, a "revolution" without having captured the Presidency as well, was pure fantasy.

An electoral interpretation that emphasized the incremental and instrumental nature of their governing opportunity would have constrained them to be cautious and selective in setting their legislative agenda. In the longer run, what they most needed to
accomplish was to retain their control over the terms of the national policy debate while also convincing an uncertain electorate that the country would function safely and smoothly in their hands. There was, in short, a huge difference between "passing the Contract through the House in 100 days" and "governing the country." A more modest, more provisional electoral interpretation would have encouraged the new majority to appreciate that difference—and to subordinate the former to the latter.

It is perfectly understandable, however, why the Republicans did not see the difference and why they chose the Contract-centered electoral interpretation they did. For one thing, they had never before had to interpret an election victory. And the absence of relevant past decisions created uncertainty. For another thing, forty years out of power had left them with a short fuse and a short time horizon. They had built up a massive backlog of frustration and energy. They had waited long enough. They were anxious to seize the day and press their case as it was expressed in the Contract. Their inexperience plus their impatience—both products of 40 years in the minority—blinded them to the government-wide stakes and the long-run governing opportunities that had flowed from their electoral victory.

The Majority-Minority Relationship

Which brings us to the question of the majority-minority relationship in the House. What does it mean and what is it like to be in the minority in the House? Political scientists who study the two parties inside the legislature have found a great deal of structure and predictability in the majority-minority relationship. Based on the rules and practices of the House, certain recognizable and stable patterns of expectation, strategy and behavior have developed. And they, as a bundle, define the majority-party-minority party relationship. Forty years of one party rule in the House produced a recognizable, institutionally supported Democratic-Republican party relationship. An equilibrium had been established—one unfavorable to the Republicans, but stable nonetheless. For forty years, House Democrats learned only how to be a majority party; and House Republicans learned only how to be a minority party.

The two crucial structural features of the majority-minority relationship are: first, that the majority party organizes and runs the House; and second, that the minority party adapts to the governing majority. When the out-going Democratic majority leader, Dick Gephardt, handed the gavel to the incoming Speaker, Newt Gingrich, on opening day January 1995, he said, "I hereby end 40 years of Democratic rule of this House."3 "Rule" was the correct word. All of our research tells us that for 40 years, the majority party Democrats dominated the House floor and dominated the House committees.
With respect to majority party control of the House floor, consider these sentences from Barbara Sinclair's authoritative studies of Democratic "rule." "Consultation between the minority-majority parties on scheduling is rare in the House." "The majority party leadership will structure (floor) rules so as to advantage the outcome its party members favor rather than that favored by the opposition party." "On major legislation--meaningful participation in shaping the legislation and amassing support takes place [there] in the majority party."

The majority party also controls committee activity--selecting leaders, shaping jurisdictions, assigning bills, setting committee size and majority-minority membership ratios, allocating staff resources and establishing internal procedures. In a book that describes the majority party as "a legislative cartel," Gary Cox and Matt McCubbins conclude that, "The legislative process in general--and the committee system in particular--is stacked in favor of majority party interests..." For 40 years, whenever the House worked to reform its committee system, reforms were enacted by the majority party for the majority party--as repeated partisan struggles over minority staff resources and proxy voting will attest.

In short, the Republicans had little doubt about who organized and ran the House for forty years--and who did not. As one of their former leaders put it in 1994, "Congress belonged to the Democrats and they acted like it."

More than that, the Democrats acted like Congress would belong to them for as far into the future as anyone could see. And indeed, that was the commonly held expectation throughout the period--that there was no alternation in power in sight. Political science studies of incumbency advantages, retirement ratios, the career ambitions and the strategic behavior of politicians all pointed to continued Democratic hegemony. National surveys repeatedly showed that a majority of voters preferred Democrats to Republicans when voting for Congress. And twenty consecutive election defeats kept ratifying these assumptions.

Accordingly, students of Republican party politics became increasingly pessimistic about the chances of a take-over. In his studies during the 1960's and 1970's, Charles Jones found that many Republicans were adopting a "minority mentality"--"accepting minority status as a fact of life and accommodating themselves to their fate." And he maintained that their chances of becoming a majority "do not appear very bright." In their 1994 book entitled Congress' Permanent Minority?, William Connelly and John Pitney concluded that, "As of the early 1990's, serious thoughts of a GOP Speakership are premature." Many safe and talented minority party members accepted this growing judgment and, despairing of their chances for attaining majority status, left the House.

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The widely shared expectation of continued Democratic party control affected the structure of incentives inside the chamber. The idea here is that when both parties expect to alternate in power, the party temporarily in the majority has an incentive to consult, cooperate and compromise with the party temporarily in the minority. A majority that expects one day to be in the minority is most likely to temper majority rule with a prudent respect for minority opinion. Under these circumstances, a sense of reciprocity develops between the two parties. On the other hand, goes the argument, when the majority party has not experienced minority status in the past, and does not expect to be in the minority any day soon, the incentive for taking the minority into account is substantially reduced; and a sense of reciprocity or comity is less likely to develop and persist. And that is what happened during 40 years without any partisan alternation in power.

We can sense Democratic arrogance in such comments as these: from the Majority Leader, "Republicans are just going to have to get it through their heads that they are not going to write legislation." From the Majority Whip, "What difference does it make what the Republicans think?" From the Rules Committee Chairman, "Hey, we've got the votes. Let's vote. Screw you." From a top Education Committee staffer, "We rolled the Republicans every time. We had no fairness. We just screwed them."

Webster defines "frustration" as "a rendering vain or ineffectual all efforts however feeble or vigorous." And we can sense minority party frustration in such comments as these: from the Chairman of the Republican Policy Committee,

(The Speaker) will do anything he can to win at any price including ignoring the rules, bending the rules, writing rules, denying the House to work its will. It brings disrespect to the House itself. There's no sense of comity left. Why should you, if you are a Republican and given the way Republicans are treated, think of a Democrat as a colleague? They aren't colleagues.

Or from the Minority Leader,

Thirty five years of uninterrupted power can act like a corrosive acid on the restraints of civility and comity. Those who have been kings of the hill for so long, may forget that majority status is not a divine right--and that minority status is not a permanent condition.

Forty years of one party rule--past, present and projected--fostered a pattern of arrogance on one side and frustration on the other side of the majority-minority relationship in the House.
The Minority Adapts

If, as I have said, the first feature of the majority-minority relationship is that the majority governs, the second feature is that the minority adapts. As Connelly and Pitney put it in their book, "while majority party members must debate how to govern the country, minority members must debate how to cope with their lowly place in the House." For 40 years, the Republicans carried on an internal debate about the appropriate strategy of adaptation to the majority.

On one side were the institutional partisans who advocated accommodation and cooperation with the majority, who worked within the existing rules of the House to get whatever they could by way of bipartisan or cross partisan policy adjustment. On the other side were the confrontational partisans who advocated an aggressive in-your-face approach to the majority, who cared little about legislative responsibility and whose only goal was to drive the Democrats from power. In the beginning, the institutional partisans won some legislative battles and they prevailed inside the party. But the 40-year overall trend in the adaptation debate moved gradually--with each influx of Republican newcomers--away from a strategy of institutional partisanship and toward a strategy of confrontational partisanship.

Among political scientists studying recent Congresses, their central theme has been the steady increase in partisanship inside the House--"the resurgence of partisanship," in David Rohde's words. If we study this "resurgence," from the majority party's perspective, the increase in partisanship is explained by a gradually more cohesive, more ideologically homogeneous, better organized and more decisively led Democratic party. But if we write the 40-year story from the minority party's perspective, that same increase in partisanship is explained by the gradual change in Republican adaptation strategy--as institutional partisans got replaced by confrontational partisans. The shift in that internal balance was finally completed when the leader of the confrontational partisans was elected as both the leader of his party and as Speaker of the House.

Which brings us to the one "personality" we cannot avoid--Newt Gingrich. For he was the architect, the leader, the articulator and the symbol of the minority party's confrontational adaptation strategy in coping with the majority. In my story, his ideas and his activities are not personality matters. They are institutional matters. From the time he came to Congress in 1978, he thought about the House in institutional terms, that is, in terms of the majority party-minority party relationship. His overriding goal was to make the Republicans the majority party in the House. His instrumental goal was to change the party's adaptation strategy from accommodation to confrontation.
Six months into his House career, he began criticizing his party's strategy of accommodation. "For a great part of its minority life," he said, "the Republican party has allowed itself to become coopted as an arm of the government. Too often, it has allowed itself to be cajoled into providing the necessary votes for the majority party to win."26 "When I first came here," he later recalled, "the majority of the Republican caucus preferred passively accepting Democratic dominance and fighting them within a framework which Democrats and the establishment created."27 "It was," he said, "the whole psychology of master and servant."28 "I am interested," he said,

in breaking up the Democratic monopoly of power... the current one-sided rigging of the Rules Committee, the current rigging of the rules, the current liberal domination of scheduling and the current one-sided stamping on behalf of the Democrats.29

And he vowed, "I will do almost anything to win a Republican majority in Congress."30 From 1978 to 1994, he fought that battle. And its rationale was more institutional than personal.

He battled, first, by working to undermine two successive minority leaders, because he deemed them to be insufficiently confrontational. He and his soulmates pressured first John Rhodes31 and then Bob Michel32 to be more aggressive in fighting Democrats than they wanted to be. And that pressure contributed mightily both to the premature resignation of Rhodes and the premature retirement of Michel from their position as Minority Leader.33

He battled, secondly, by leading a sweeping attack on House Democrats. He attacked and humiliated Speaker Tip O'Neill for overstepping his bounds as presiding officer of the House.34 He attacked Speaker Jim Wright for using his public position to enrich himself; and, in his greatest triumph, drove Speaker Wright from the House. "I am engaged in a long-term struggle," he explained. "The House is sick and Wright is the symbol."35

He battled, thirdly, by attacking the House as an institution. When criticized for his personal attacks on Democratic leaders, he replied that his target was the institution itself. "This is about systemic, institutional corruption, not personality," he declared.36 And he charged that, "The Democrats have run the House for 30 years. They've gotten sloppy. The House is a corrupt institution in the Lord Acton sense."37

In November 1994, the pursuit of this confrontational strategy produced the Republican majority he had so single-mindedly sought. It was an incredible success story. But success carried with it some serious costs as the new majority took up its governing tasks.
First, by attacking a generation of his own party’s institutional partisans, he was attacking, in effect, the established set of inter-party relationships which had given definition and stability to the House as an institution for four decades. More than that, he seemed to be ruling out accommodation as an acceptable mode of cross-party behavior in the future. If so, he left it very unclear what new kind of majority-minority equilibrium he intended to put in its place. He said vaguely that he wanted to bring about "a big, long-term cultural change" from a "collegial" institution to a "professional" one. If what he wanted was less collegiality in the 104th Congress, he surely got it. "(I think) in all my years in Congress," said one twenty-four year House Democrat in 1996, "I have never seen such bitter feelings between the minority and the majority." And he added, "(The Republicans) don’t know how to run the place."

Second, the scope and severity of Gingrich’s partisan attacks earned him, personally, an implacable legacy of ill will from the Democrats. In 1991, he admitted to being "the most hated man on Capitol Hill." And, as one of his soulmates in the Conservative Opportunity Society put it, "it is not good or useful to be hated in this institution." When asked to explain the "polarized and embittered" House in 1995, respected Republican veteran Henry Hyde cited "the absolutely pathological hatred of Newt Gingrich" by the Democrats. Their persistent payback harassment of Speaker Gingrich continues, to this day, to inhibit cross-party cooperation.

Finally, by couching his attacks in the language of "institutional corruption," and the personal abuse of power (that is, "in the Lord Acton sense"), Gingrich deliberately manipulated and exacerbated a widespread public cynicism and lack of confidence in the nation’s most important representative institution. In attacking majority party arrogance, he was certainly on target. But it was impossible to listen or to read his yearly litany of indictments and to think well of the Congress as an institution. In working to take control of the House, he had also undermined and weakened it in the public eye.

Newt Gingrich and his confrontational style, I would argue, were the predictable results of 40 years in the minority. If it had not been him, it would have been a confrontational partisan like him. Had there been an occasional alternation in power, and had the Republicans of the 104th Congress been able to know and to reap the rewards and responsibilities of running the institution earlier, they would, I believe, have settled on a more accommodationist leadership style. The act of trading places occasionally would necessarily have introduced constraints on their partisanship. Alternation would also have produced a strong incentive to protect the existing institutional framework, placing greater emphasis on cross-party comity and reciprocity. The explanation for Newt Gingrich’s rise to party leadership and for his subsequent...
leadership performance depends heavily, I would argue, on the extraordinary length of time his party had had to endure the deprivations and frustrations of an out-party minority.\textsuperscript{44}

**Governing**

Which brings us to the governing performance of the 104th Congress. The good news was that the Republican party had been given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The bad news was that the Republican party had been given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! It was 40 years since they had been in a position to govern. They were, arguably, the least experienced House majority in 100 years. And it showed.

The party’s new leader produced a torrent of rhetoric about governing. "This is a genuine revolution," said Gingrich. "We’re going to rethink every element of the federal government. We’re going to close down several federal departments."\textsuperscript{45} But he had no idea how to do any of it. He was, after all, just a smart, articulate, visionary college professor! Governing was going to be a totally experimental adventure for him.

Again, there is nothing surprising about this state of affairs. The governing expertise the Republicans lacked was precisely the kind which can only be acquired—in trial and error fashion—by those who have held power. The governing expertise of which I speak is not subject matter expertise—which minority members can acquire in their committees. It is expertise about the business of legislating. That business involves a practical grasp of lawmaking as a lengthy, incremental, multi-level, coalition-building process. And it involves a seasoned strategic sense in matters such as the establishment of priorities, the negotiation of outcomes across the separated institutions of government and the calculations that must be made concerning feasibilities, trade offs and timing at every decision-making juncture. In short, successful governing takes a lot of practice and the Republicans hadn’t had any.

When the victorious Republicans huddled after the election—under the influence of their "we-won-it-and-we-got-a-sweeping-mandate" interpretation of the election results—they decided to take the document they had crafted for electioneering purposes—the Contract With America—and adopt it wholesale as their legislative agenda. The decision had the virtue of giving instant focus, organization and work to a new, inexperienced and impatient majority. But, its conception of the governing process was every bit as faulty as the faulty electoral interpretation on which it rested.

First, because it had been packaged for electoral purposes, the Contract lacked any sense for legislative priorities. It was a laundry list of ten vote-getting proposals, each placed on the same footing as every other one by the promise that all would be brought to a vote in the House within 100 days. Yet they were a very mixed

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Some were broadly institutional, even constitutional, in content and impact; others were more narrowly programmatic. They commanded varying support patterns; and their future prospects were uneven.

By prescribing an equality of effort and an identical time line for all items, the Republicans substituted inflexibility for subtlety. They deprived themselves of a chance to think about their legislative agenda in terms of trade-offs, or to make distinctions between what they would like to get and what they really had to get. Participants in the legislative process typically have to settle for less than they might want. It is very important to know when to declare victory, when to take something for now and return for more later. The animating spirit of the 100 days was, in the words of Policy Chairman Christopher Cox, that "Revolutions have a very short half life. If you don't ask for it, you don't get it." That spirit was inadequate preparation for life in the legislative lane. Indeed, when they discovered, late in the day, that the Contract left many priorities untouched, they started piling lots of normal legislation directly onto their appropriations bills—a hasty improvisation that misused the appropriations process, bogged down the flow of money bills, opened up jurisdictional battles inside the party and brought embarrassing defeats on the House floor.46

In the second place, the Contract conveyed no sense of a long run strategy for actually enacting any of its proposals into law. It focussed only on action inside the House. It took no account of the broader legislative context which lay beyond, a context of separated institutions, sharing responsibility and power. It took no cognizance of the Senate with its distinctive procedures and its different ideological make-up, nor did it comprehend the President with his veto power and his bully pulpit. This neglect of the larger context helped blind them to certain structural limitations on their power—for example, their very slim working majority of 14 votes—a majority that would become vulnerable under external pressure and was not even close to being veto-proof.

To be sure, the party did bring all ten Contract items to a vote in the House and they did pass nine of them there. They displayed an extraordinary diligence and discipline in doing so. When it was over, however, they talked and acted as if they had mastered the legislative process. Not only had they not understood the difference between passing the Contract and governing the country, but what was worse, they had mistaken one for the other! They took the view that they had passed the key performance test and were now ready for public judgment. "We did what we said we would do," they said. And they tirelessly repeated their slogan, "promises made, promises kept." It conveyed a far broader sense of accomplishment than was warranted.

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Their performance on the Contract had, in fact, been a short-run, narrowly-focussed, inward-looking legislative performance. It had been, at best, a preliminary test of their governing ability—at the beginning of a lengthy, more complicated and longer lasting legislative effort.

**Outcome**

Of all the governing tests that lay beyond the House and beyond the 100 days, the most consequential for House Republicans was the passage of their balanced budget. Passing the Contract was not synonymous with governing the country, but passing the balanced budget was. It contained, in dollars and cents language, the sum and substance of their smaller government conservatism. It was a test that finally forced them to contemplate the separation of powers and to cope with the conflicting budgetary views, interests and strategies of other legislative players—especially the President of the United States.

If my argument is correct, they were woefully ill-equipped for that encounter. Both their early post-election assumption that the voters had called for a "push hard and get it all now" mission, and their later post-Contract assumption that they knew how to work the legislative process, ran contrary to the evidence. Both assumptions reflected the inexperience—and the frustration—of a party that had never been in a position to govern. And both had already led to ill-advised strategies. Nonetheless, in the mistaken belief that they commanded both public support for their revolution and the capacity to make the revolution happen, they decided to force the President to accept their budgetary blueprint in its entirety—by shutting down the federal government.

This posture, confident and militant, was the external manifestation of Newt Gingrich's career-long internal strategy of confrontational partisanship. And it reflected the same uncompromising spirit. On election night, Gingrich prefigured the eventual confrontation with the President. "If you are going to operate with his veto being the ultimate weapon..." he said, "you have to find a trump to match his trump. And the right not to pass money bills is the only trump that is equally strong."48

Very early in constructing a balanced budget bill, he set a tone of inflexibility by formally binding his leadership group to a seven year timetable that would be "etched in stone."49 When the government first closed for lack of money, he defined the moment in portentous terms. "If we cave," he said, "it'll be clear to this country that the best chance we've had in a generation to balance the budget will have failed—not postponed—failed."50 He had no doubt that the President would "cave," and would accept the terms of the Republican balanced budget. And he stipulated in public, what the President had to do to win Republican approval.51 "I know the smell and rhythm of this city, and I am confident we are going
to get it." The public, he believed, stood behind their presumed electoral mandate. "They are counting on us keeping our word," he said, "because they actually believe we are different."

When the President refused to sign a continuing resolution to keep money flowing to the departments and agencies—because he would not accept an extraneous rider changing Medicare—a large part of the government had to close. Gingrich predicted that the shutdown could "easily last 90 days." And, typically, he portrayed the budget dispute in all-or-nothing, apocalyptic terms. "It will decide for a generation who we are. This is not a game of political chicken... This is a serious, historic debate and a serious historic power struggle." When public opinion registered on the shutdown, however, their disapproval of Republican congressional behavior stood at a whopping 71%.

Even so, after a brief reopening, the Republicans once again shut off the money and shut down the government. For three weeks, off and on, legislative-executive negotiations continued. Finally, under pressure from the Senate, some Republican House members and, ultimately, the public, the Republicans backed down, abandoned their goal of a balanced budget and negotiated with the President to fund the government. Gingrich admitted to the President's negotiator, Leon Panetta, "Our strategy has not worked. We thought we could break you... We've got a failed strategy on our hands."

Their unsuccessful budget confrontation with the President demonstrated, beyond any doubt, how little the new majority knew about the legislative process—about its inevitable incrementalism, its trade offs, its compromises, its negotiations and its public resonances. For one thing, budget politics is always incremental politics. It is never apocalyptic politics. You can't possibly run a revolution through the budget process! But you can use budget increments to demonstrate that you have taken some steps to change the direction of government, and the terms of public debate. You can then declare victory on that account—and take an overall record of forward motion to the electorate.

With the slightest bit of strategic sense, they could have done this by declaring victory at several junctures during the budget negotiations. Indeed, numerous observers claimed victory on their behalf. When the President made obvious concessions, however, it was the White House that commanded the interpretative spin. Despite their victories, therefore, the Republicans lost the opportunity to control the public dialogue and take the offensive in claiming progress.

In the end, their pressure did cause the President to submit a balanced budget, to make large reductions in Medicare, to set a seven year timetable and to permit CBO participation. When the government reopened, the President offered a budget that had moved closer to the Republicans than anyone thought possible. Even
then, they could have gotten a balanced budget and maintained control of the agenda and the debate—by celebrating each of these presidential concessions as a small step toward the making of a conservative government. But they declined to negotiate further. To do so, Gingrich maintained, would be to have "sold out all the values we came to Washington to promote (for) one more phony Washington deal." It was the last call for House Republicans. Having taken the wrong path in the beginning, they seemed to be determined to stay on it.

Bob Dole, the more experienced, more sure-footed leader of the slower-moving Senate, advocated just such a series of small steps and small claims. For him, legislation is always work in progress. "You get something this year," he advised, "and you get more next year." And he insistently pressed his House counterparts with the question, "What's your end game?" But, as the President's budget negotiator knew, Gingrich had given no thought to what, in the end, he might settle for or what he could deliver. Said Leon Panetta, "he came to the table not to negotiate, but to dictate the terms of surrender." In the end, however, under pressure from Dole's Senate, it was the House Republicans who surrendered.

From the beginning, their electoral interpretation had pointed the Republicans toward a narrow, short-run "promises made, promises kept" view of governing. And because of that view, they were not positioned to settle for—and take credit for—incremental steps that would gradually alter the public agenda and the public debate, thus moving them toward a goal of a unified Republican government. What a party can effectively claim in governing is commensurate with the expectations it sets; and the Republicans' electoral interpretation set expectations that effectively ruled out incrementalist and gradualist governing claims.

In the immediate sense, the Republicans failed because they never got any balanced budget agreement in the 104th Congress. In the long run, however, they failed because they did something few people thought could be done when they took over the Congress—they reelected Bill Clinton to a second term.

When the budget process got underway, the President was adrift in the post-election doldrums—personally dispirited, politically down in the polls, on the losing side of the public debate, leader of a disorganized party, and widely thought to be a lame duck. Recent disclosures of the money-raising frenzy gripping the President and the White House in early 1995 are fresh reminders of his parlous condition. By the time his budget confrontation with the Republicans had run its course, however, he had been recharged with energy, he had reached his highest ever level in the polls, he had taken command of the political center, reshaped the public dialogue, revived the hopes of his party and had become a heavy favorite for reelection. The scope of that political transformation is mind boggling and virtually impossible to pull

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off. But the Republicans had done it.

In his "near-death condition," the President had needed some outside event to give him an opportunity to reassert himself. Republican all-or-nothing intransigence gave him that opportunity. And he took it. He vetoed some continuing resolutions; he picked popular budget priorities and threatened to veto any budget that compromised them; he spoke repeatedly of the need for "common ground"; he blamed the Republicans for the misery of the shutdown. And in the process, he discovered a political label more politically punishing even than the label "liberal." That label was "extremist." By April, his approval rating stood at 56%, 21 points higher than that of the Congress.

As the President rode the train to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, one reporter wrote, "Yesterday, repeatedly and adamantly, Clinton bragged about his stand-off with Republicans over the budget." A couple of days later, Al Gore brought a roaring convention to its feet. "They passed this reckless plan and they demanded that President Clinton sign it," he said.

They shut the government down--twice, because they thought Bill Clinton would buckle under the pressure, wither in the face of attacks, cave in to their demands ... (But) President Clinton took Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senator Bob Dole into the oval office. I was there, I remember. And he said, 'As long as I occupy this office, you will never enact this plan because as long as I am President, I will not let you.'

The Republicans had helped him find a presidential voice. And that voice would keep him in office. After the Presidential election, Bob Dole's communications director acknowledged that "except for a few days of euphoria following the Republican convention, nothing ever changed from the day the Republicans closed down the government." And as the President himself put it after his reelection, "The budget fight was a turning point."

For the Republicans, the shutdown strategy was a certifiable catastrophe. Their long term goal of a unified conservative government, a Republican Congress and a Republican President, had been pushed further away than it had been two years before. That failure, I would argue, can be traced back--in considerable part--to their 40 years in the minority and out of power in the House.

Gingrich's own postmortem confession illuminated the problem nicely. "I feel like a good Triple A player," he said, "who can't hit major league pitching." His confrontational strategy was admirably suited to running an insurgency and leading the Republicans out of the political wilderness. But in the 104th Congress, neither he nor his fellow partisans had a good grasp of what to do next--how to interpret their victory or how to govern the country.

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That is my story of the 104th Congress. It is by no means the only story or the whole story. I will add to it tomorrow. In concluding, for now, I want to return to a larger question. To the degree that the problems and mistakes of the new majority party can be explained by their 40 years out of power, does this story suggest any normative judgments about 40 years of one-party control of the House?

If we judge on purely partisan grounds, the answer is easy. If, however, we judge on institutional grounds, on the overall performance of a representative system of government, the answer is more complicated. My own earliest reactions to the 1994 congressional election was that it was the best thing that could have happened to this country in terms of the health of a representative system of government. On policy grounds, an occasional injection of new ideas into the system--the kind that comes with partisan turnover--seems to me to be a good thing. It also seemed to me that on institutional grounds, it is a good thing to give representatives of both parties some experience in governing and some sense for the responsibility and the accountability that comes with governing.

I did not foresee the ineptitude of the Republicans--which is one reason their problems fascinate me. I guess I thought that if they could win the election, they could probably govern. As it turned out, they couldn't--couldn't interpret their victory or govern the country--not effectively anyway. I underestimated what I now argue is the very large impact that 40 years out of power had on the incoming party. Patience, moderation and accommodation are likely to be the last things on their minds. But that argument only strengthens my original conviction that an occasional alternation in party control is beneficial, while adding my updated conviction that 40 years between such occasions is much too long for the system to reap those benefits.

For any new incoming majority, it may be that one term is just not enough time to recover from the effects of so many years in the minority. If that is true, then the newly empowered Republicans faced overwhelming odds; and we should be more sympathetic toward them than I have been. But it is not a matter of sympathy. It is a matter of institutional maintenance and institutional performance. The House, as an institution, neither looks well nor works well under the circumstances I have described.

One of the great potential benefits from an alternation in party policy and party accountability in our most representative political institution, is the opportunity it brings to refresh, enliven and enhance our civic culture. In the 104th Congress, this didn't happen. We got, if anything, an acceleration of partisan confrontation inside the institution and an acceleration of public distrust of Congress outside the institution. In my story, this outcome, too, is substantially due to the extreme length of time
between changes in party control. Forty years of one party rule was very detrimental to our civic culture. And that impact could not be overcome easily or quickly.

We can certainly conclude that forty years without an alternation in party control of the House did not make it easy for the Republicans. But we might also conclude that 40 years without an alternation in party control of that institution has not made it easy for the country either. From a normative standpoint, this second conclusion is a good deal more important than the first. And we ought not to wait for another 40 years before we begin to worry about it.
ENDNOTES


9. Mickey Edwards, "A Tale of Two Reps: Study in Contrasts," Boston Herald, January 10, 1995. "As a Democrat, Gephardt set agendas; as a Republican, I reacted to them. As a Democrat, Gephardt helped to set the terms for debate, deciding what, if any, amendments would be considered when legislation reached the House floor; as a Republican, I pleaded with the Rules Committee for a chance to offer alternatives. As Democrats, Gephardt and his party's committee chairmen decided who would be allowed to testify before congressional committees and on what bills; as a Republican, I had to fight to get conservative views heard."


20. Quoted in Barry, p. 482. For a theory about when and why a majority party "tightens the screws" on the minority party, see Douglas Dion, "Tightening the Screws."

21. Quoted in Connelly and Pitney, p. 86.


23. Rohde, Chapter One.
24. The struggles and the changes can be traced in Connelly and Pitney, Congress' Permanent Minority; Jones, Party and Policy Making; Rohde, Parties and Leaders in the Post Reform Congress; Sinclair, Legislators, Leaders and Lawmaking; and in the running record of Newt Gingrich's public comments.


29. Connelly and Pitney, p. 27.


33. He even applied the same debilitating pressure to his party's topmost leader, President George Bush. Dan Balz and Serge Kovaleski, "Dividing the GOP, Conquering the Agenda," Washington Post Weekly, January 1-7, 1996.


41. Osterlund, "A Capitol Chameleon." See also, Rohde, Parties and Leaders, p. 129.

42. Connelly and Pitney, p. 160.


44. A different, more extensively developed and very helpful view of Gingrich is: Ronald Peters, "The Republican Speakership," paper prepared for delivery at the American Political Science Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, August 1996.


47. John Aldrich and David Rohde, "The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee," paper prepared for delivery at annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Atlanta, Georgia, November 7-9, 1996; David Cloud


49. Maraniss and Weiskopf, p. 38.


53. Calmes, "Fight Over the Balanced Budget..."

54. Hager, "Budget Battle..."


56. Cloud and Koszczuk, "GOP's All-or-Nothing Approach ..."


59. Maraniss and Weiskopf, Chapter Eleven.


62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
The House in the 104th Congress II: A Membership View

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The Edward Douglas White Lectures on Citizenship
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Introduction

In yesterday's lecture, I presented a fairly general picture of the 104th Congress, a picture that focussed on the Republican House of Representatives and on the impact of 40 years of continuous Democratic party rule which preceded it. I took the institutionalized majority party/minority party relationship as the basis for examining the performance of a newly empowered, but uniquely inexperienced, majority party. I argued that their inexperience led them to misinterpret their electoral victory and to mishandle their governing opportunity. And I further argued that these two misadventures helped to reelect a Democratic President, thus undermining the long-term pursuit of a unified Republican government.

With the exception of Newt Gingrich, yesterday's talk lumped the members of the new majority into a single category. It did not differentiate among them; and it did not allow any of them to speak for themselves. And yet, whatever the Republican party did or did not do in the House surely depended on the predispositions, energies and actions of its individual members. If the most fascinating thing about the House was the sheer novelty of its Republican majority, and if the second most fascinating thing was the ascendency of Newt Gingrich as the leader of that majority, then surely the third most fascinating phenomenon was the presence of 73 newcomers in the majority party. In my view, it is not possible to understand the House in the 104th Congress, and what happened there, without paying special attention to the 73 Republican freshmen. That is what I propose to do; first, by looking at them as a group and, second, by allowing a couple of them to speak for themselves.

The Freshmen Class

They are a fascinating subject of analysis for two reasons. First, they enjoyed an unusually large potential for influence within the new majority party. Second, if inexperience was a hallmark of the Republicans, then the freshmen class would likely be the best example of it.

When political scientists estimate the influence potential of legislative parties or party groupings, we pay special attention to their size and to their cohesion on policy matters. In both of these respects, the freshmen Republicans had a great potential for influence. They were the second largest group of newcomers, in either party, since World War II; and they made up one-third of their party's majority. They wore buttons that said, "Majority Maker;" and they relished the prospect of their pivotal decision-
making power inside the Republican caucus. They were not only an unusually large group, they were an unusually cohesive group. As some long-time observers put it, "They arrived on Capitol Hill with a sense of common purpose that has rarely been seen in any incoming class of congressmen." And, "(they) developed an unusually strong sense of class cohesion." They shared a short-run commitment to the Contract With America; and they shared a long-run determination to transform their conservative policy preferences into a new pattern of government. Conservative commentators exulted in their presence.

Any large turnover in House membership is likely to be a source of new ideas; and the 1994 turnover certainly qualified as large. Even more relevant to their potential for policy influence was the fact that 65 of the 73 newcomers--90% of them--came from constituencies that had been represented by Democrats in the previous 103rd Congress. Students of the linkage between elections and public policy have found that these switched-seat newcomers--fresh from a victory over the opposing party--are the most potent carriers of new policy ideas. Historically, when there is an extra large influx of these switched-seat newcomers into the majority party in Congress, major policy changes follow. Sixty-five switched-seat Republican freshmen certainly qualified as "an extra large influx." And they certainly had a missionary spirit when it came to changes in policy direction. As they frequently explained their zeal for change, "That's what I came here for."

There were, of course, plenty of differences within the group. And we should not forget that fact. But because of their unusual potential for influence, they quickly came to be viewed by others as a group. The media paid them an inordinate amount of attention. Headlines read: "A Class of New Warriors," "The GOP's Young Turks," "73 Mr. Smiths, of the GOP, Go To Washington," "The Transformers," "Freshmen: New Powerful Voice." All 73 were lumped together and described, variously, as the "shock troops," "the ideological firebrands," "the giant killers," "the red guards" of the new majority, and as "the 800 pound gorilla of Washington politics."

They were not at all bashful about accepting these descriptions, since they, too, thought of themselves as a collective force. "(I am) not meaningful," said one member, "but the word 'freshmen' is meaningful." Accordingly, they spoke of themselves regularly as the freshmen class. Listen to some of their self-characterizations--each from a different member:

The freshmen class is the best representation of an absolute commitment to change.

The difference between the freshmen class and the people who have been here for a while is that we're closer to the people. We're more responsive to what they want to do.
The freshmen class is prepared to go to the wall for what we believe in.\textsuperscript{11}

This freshmen class has shown that we have the courage to stand up to this institution, even to our own leadership.\textsuperscript{12}

We're solid as a rock. There's no quit in this freshmen class. We're going to keep pushing.\textsuperscript{13}

Self-consciously and self-confidently they thought of themselves as a force to be reckoned with in the 104th Congress. As one freshman said to me, "The freshmen class is a real thing."

As a group, therefore, the freshmen were long on size and cohesion. They were also long on conviction and confidence. But they were short on another major attribute of legislative influence—experience. Less than half of the freshmen (35) had prior electoral experience. Of that group, less than half—only 17—had any experience in a state legislature; and of that group, less than half—seven—had any experience as a member of the majority party in a state legislature. All told, therefore, only seven of the 73 Republican newcomers had any governing experience as a member of a legislative majority—which was, of course, the situation that faced them in the 104th Congress. In an inexperienced majority party, they were the least experienced of all.

As far as I can tell, however, they did not think their lack of governing experience diminished their potential for influence. Some even wore this deficiency as a badge of distinction. "Our class symbol should be the bumble bee," said one. "Aeronautical engineers say the bumble bee can't fly because there's not enough wing size to carry its weight. But the bumble bee flies because he never studied aeronautical engineering."\textsuperscript{14} Many of his classmates shared that cavalier attitude toward political experience.

They thought of themselves, instead, as "citizen legislators," for whom it was precisely their non-political experience that would be their most important contribution to the business of governing. Because they were coming from the non-political, work-a-day world, they saw themselves as bringing the real life experiences of ordinary people to bear on the work of an insulated Congress. They associated extended governing experience with a corrupting, self-aggrandizing careerism that produced professional politicians, who were out of touch with every day reality. Central to their self-image was a devotion to term limits. As citizen legislators, many of them had put a limit on their temporary assignment in Washington and had promised to return—in a foreseeable future—to the every day life of the country from which they had come. They were prepared to get their legislative experience on the job. But they had short-run career horizons. So they were not prepared to wait to get their experience before they tried to make a difference. Their enthusiasm, coupled with their short-run career horizons,
fueled an attitude of "let's get it all, and get it all now."

**Interpreting the Election: the Contract**

The first set of decisions on which they had the chance to make a difference were those involving the interpretation of their electoral victory. Since only seven of them had ever been involved in this kind of decision before, they had little independent judgment to offer. Not surprisingly, they totally embraced the sweeping mandate interpretation—the one that assumed voter approval of a Republican revolution. Because, as candidates, they had introduced themselves most recently to the electorate and now, as House members, had come most recently from the electorate, they were confident that they understood the electoral mandate better than most. If they added anything independently to the interpretive process, therefore, it was a heightened sense of urgency about the party's mission and a desire for a quickened legislative pace. As one of them put it, "The freshmen class is not a do nothing class. This is a do-something-and-do-it-all-right-now-freshmen class."\(^\text{15}\)

Not surprisingly, they seized upon the Contract With America as the authentic expression of their electoral mandate. Most had signed it; many were familiar with it from their campaigns. "The three most important issues for the freshmen class," said one member, "are the Contract, the Contract and the Contract."\(^\text{16}\) Some wore their laminated copies around their necks. Others kept it with them always, in a coat pocket. Some called it "my Bible."\(^\text{17}\) Even the few who had not signed the Contract, gave it top-most priority. Said one such member, "I think the Contract, for the vast majority of the freshmen, is their Bible. We’ve got to sell it and pass it before we do anything else."\(^\text{18}\) While all of them acknowledged Newt Gingrich as their leader, they were quite prepared to hold his feet to the fire where the Contract was involved. As their class president put it, "We intend to keep the pressure on the leadership not to deviate from the Contract."\(^\text{19}\)

The freshmen became the proprietary guardians of the Contract. As each important item passed, they basked in media attention. Wearing buttons that read "Keeping Promises," and amid signs proclaiming "promises made, promises kept," they celebrated ceremoniously, by putting check marks in the appropriate boxes on wall-sized charts and in their personal copies. When it was completed, they held a grand celebratory reprise on the Capitol steps.

The passage in the House, of all but one Contract item in 100 days, was, indeed, a remarkable achievement, one worth celebrating—with one cheer, but not three. It was, as I argued yesterday, a self-contained, narrowly-focused, inward-looking, short-run achievement. It reflected the ability to organize majority party power inside the House. But it rested on a mistaken electoral
interpretation, and a mistaken understanding of the overall governing process in the American political system. To the degree, therefore, that the freshmen class enshrined and enforced the Contract With America--and it surely did--their guardianship only exacerbated the inadequacies of that document--first, as the centerpiece of electoral interpretation and second, as the fulcrum for governing the country. Their devotion to the Contract introduced a big dose of rigidity into the legislative process, and it helped set the party on a governing path from which it would be hard to recover.

We can gain a little perspective on the governing performance of the 1994 class by comparing it with the 1974 class of 75 freshmen Democrats--the so-called "Watergate Babies." The two groups--the largest of the last half century--were equally big and equally self-conscious of themselves as a class. The Class of '74, too, had captured a very large number of seats from the other party--49 out of the 75 or 65%. As switched-seat occupants, they, like their 1994 cousins, were aggressive advocates of institutional and policy change. And, in the end, both groups had a measurable impact on the governing activities of their respective partisan majorities.

But a big difference was this: that the liberal freshmen Democrats of 1974 were joining a long-standing, and well-organized majority party that had been in power, running the House for 20 years, whereas the conservative freshmen Republicans of 1994 were joining a brand new majority party that had not known power for 40 years. One group was constrained by entrenched power; the other group was not.

Because their party was enjoying power in the House, the 1974 freshmen Democrats campaigned without broadside attacks on the institution, and they were prepared to govern within the constraints of established power relationships. The Speaker they had to deal with, Carl Albert, was attached to the status quo. He was, writes Ronald Peters, "closely tied to the committee system and the barons who ran it... (he) and the freshmen Democrats talked past each other as if they were speaking different dialects." And he had a 73 vote majority. The freshmen, therefore, had to adopt an incremental reform strategy, one designed to free up the ordinary member from the constraints of hierarchy and seniority--as they put it, to give rank and file members "a piece of the action." The 1974 freshmen class became the essential catalyst in launching a gradual decentralization of party and committee decision structures and a gradual diffusion of influence inside the chamber.

The 1994 class, by contrast, faced few settled partisan routines and established party hierarchies. The Speaker they dealt with was openly and deeply in their debt. "When I see a freshman," said Newt Gingrich, "I see the majority. They had a huge influence. I wouldn't be Speaker if they weren't here." The freshmen
Republicans, therefore, began with an expansive, almost open-ended, sense for the possibilities of change and for their own participatory opportunities. They were a lot less concerned about getting "a piece of the action" than they were about facilitating the revolution. They accepted the view that if the party was to change Washington, power would have to be centralized inside the party. They accepted, therefore, a non-incremental reform strategy--precisely the opposite course from their 1974 counterparts. And, in the beginning at least, they fully acquiesced in the largest concentration of majority party power in a century.

Their willingness to support radical internal change was affected, too, by the marked anti-institutional bias of the Contract. Whether they actually campaigned on the Contract or not, the freshmen overwhelmingly campaigned in favor of its central elements--terms limits, the balanced budget amendment and the line item veto. Singly or in combination, these items represented an attack on the performance of the Congress as a political institution. In one sense, that was nothing new. In the 1970's, I found incumbent House members "running for Congress by running against Congress." But they did so in a retail fashion, with language customized by individual members to fit their individual constituencies. Their criticisms did not cumulate in a way that would generate new governing strategies. In 1994, however, the anti-congressional message of the freshmen candidates was the same nearly everywhere in the country. It was a coordinated, wholesale, frontal attack on the institution, promising three major changes in the power of Congress within the American political system. That was something very new. A large group of legislators had come to power on a platform that--to an unprecedented degree--denigrated and attacked the very institution through which they proposed to govern. To say the least, they were without any strong preference for existing organizational forms.

The Speaker and the Freshmen

More than anything else about the Republican take-over in 1994, the radical recentralization of majority party power has drawn the attention of political scientists. The organization of power inside the House was one thing Newt Gingrich did understand and it was something he had been planning for, well in advance of the '94 election. The underlying condition that made party recentralization possible was, of course, this: that the party had been out of power for 40 years. As former Speaker Tom Foley explained,

I don't think any Democratic Speaker would be in quite the same situation as Speaker Gingrich... There have been no Republican committee chairmen for over 40 years... So he's had a blank slate on which to write and that has given him a great deal of influence.

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Several colleagues have drawn, for us, a full and fascinating picture of his American adaptation of a prime-minister in a party government.\textsuperscript{25}

Gingrich's reform efforts in the 104th Congress focused on making committee power subordinate to party leadership power--by abolishing some committees and subcommittees, appointing the committee chairmen, extracting loyalty pledges from committee leaders, controlling committee staff, selecting committee members, creating and staffing ad hoc task forces to circumvent committees, setting committee priorities and monitoring committee compliance. He did all this with the approval of the Republican caucus; but he did it with such efficient dispatch--in concert with a small advisory group--that there were few opportunities for dissent. The freshmen simply went along. What the Democratic Speaker had resisted in 1974--the diminution of committee power--the Republican Speaker had spearheaded in 1994. And the product was a Speaker more powerful than anyone in 1974 could have dreamed of--and a decision-making system without the deliberative and incremental pacing that a committee-centered system provides.

The new Speaker faced the unusual task of organizing a new system of party government, and at the same time absorbing 73 inexperienced newcomers into the governing party. Experience had taught him a lot about freshmen. Every two years for 14 years, he had welcomed, socialized, organized and energized each incoming Republican class. They became the building blocks of his new confrontational majority. "My strategy," he said, "was always (that)... you would capture 70 to 80\% of the incoming freshmen every two years and at some point, you would have transformed the whole structure."\textsuperscript{26} Which he did in 1994.

He dealt with the final 1994 freshmen building block generously. He gave them an unprecedented number of assignments (24) to the five blue ribbon House committees.\textsuperscript{27} He involved them in the unusually important work of task forces that he used to bypass committees. He met with them in weekly luncheons; he talked with them constantly; and he kept their noses to the grindstone.\textsuperscript{28} In this latter respect, the Contract was a success--a huge success. For 100 days, it focused, harnessed, preempted and preoccupied the time and energies of a very ideological, very impatient freshmen class. Who knows how they might have busied themselves had they not been kept preoccupied with passing the Contract.

As the Speaker quickly learned, governing with the freshmen was a dicey enterprise. With a slim 14 vote partisan margin, he needed all of them. A dozen or so recalcitrant freshmen (or any others) meant big trouble. Most of the time they were his allies. Freshmen support for the leadership on roll call voting outpaced that of the rest of the Republicans.\textsuperscript{29} Still, the relationship was one of mutual dependence, and required fairly constant monitoring and bargaining. As he described it, "I am the leader of a broad
coalition. I'm not a dictator. We have 73 freshmen. You don't get them marching in a line. You get them sort of saying, 'Maybe I'll be with you. Call back in an hour.' As freshmen members described the relationship: "Some of the time Gingrich uses us because he agrees with us. And some of the time he doesn't have a choice." Or, "On some issues, we run him and on other issues, he runs us." Of all the groups he had to deal with in the majority, the freshmen were the biggest and most consequential. At one point, he even called them "a third party."

The complexity of the Speaker-freshmen bargaining relationship became evident during the fateful conflict over the budget. In that conflict, the freshmen--styling themselves as "the conscience of the congressional Republicans"--crippled the Speaker in his negotiations and seriously compounded the governing problems of the Republican majority. Again, they injected inflexibility into the process. It was they who insisted, to the end, on CBO scoring and the seven-year timetable. Here again, the Contract with America had a perverse effect. At the time of the budget confrontation, freshmen experience with the Contract was the only governing experience they had. It left them, after 100 days of success, with a heady, but false sense of their power and a false sense of their accomplishment. They came to the budget conflict with an exaggerated idea of their capacity, as a class, to shape outcomes, with an unrealistic idea of how much they could win through a refusal to compromise, and with an underdeveloped idea of what the business of governing looked like in the world beyond the House.

Listen to three of the ringleaders describe their view of the impending conflict: "We're not going to give in. If there has to be a train wreck, there will be a train wreck." "We're going to stand for principle. The consequences be damned." "Maybe not all 73, but 50 to 55 of us don't care if we're reelected if we fold on the balanced budget." As he listened to this sort of posturing, a conservative senator commented, "I'd feel a lot more confident about the outcome of the revolution if I were convinced all of these guys had taken high school civics."

At the climactic moment, freshmen intransigence forced the Speaker to admit to executive branch negotiators that he could not deliver on any agreement they might reach. Then, they forced him in effect, to put his Speakership to a vote in the Caucus before they agreed to reopen the government. Throughout the budget conflict, the freshmen displayed a preference for blocking rather than building. They could not recognize victory when they saw it. And they failed to appreciate the paramount need to win broad public confidence in their ability to govern the country. In the end, they bore the heaviest responsibility for the government shutdown and for the long-run repercussions that followed.

Not only did they give aid and comfort to presidential candidate Bill Clinton, but the freshmen were a handicap to their own...
candidate Bob Dole. The very anti-congressional, anti-negotiation rhetoric they had used to win and to govern was picked up by Dole's Republican primary opponents--Lamar Alexander and Pat Buchanan--who blasted the negotiation-minded Senate majority leader as being the very epitome of everything wrong with the party. They, in turn, were blasted for what he called "calamitous political immaturity" by conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer, with the comment that "Republicans seem unable to realize they are no longer the party of protest, but the party of governance." The Democrats took up the welcome Republican gift by linking Dole with "Newt Gingrich and the House freshmen class." "Dole's real problem in the election," wrote one analyst, is that "he got into the boat with Newt Gingrich and all those young congressmen." For fear of their negative impact on Dole's image, the freshmen class was kept conspicuously under wraps at the Republican National Convention. From beginning to end, the freshmen class was both a big part of the solution and a big part of the problem for the new governing majority.

Two Freshmen

1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the 1994 election, and again during the 1996 campaign, I journeyed to the districts of two members of the class: Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and David McIntosh of Indiana. I make no claim that they are representative members of the class. Indeed, I came to them as part of a project that had nothing to do with the freshmen class. I talk about them because I know them and because I hope talking about them will enrich our sense of the class and of its performance--first in interpreting the election and second, in governing the country.

Whatever their differences, their similarities suggest the bonds that held the class together and make it possible for us to talk, as I have, about "the freshmen class." Both men were committed conservatives--economic conservatives and social conservatives. Both men were reformers--institutional reformers and policy reformers. Both came to the 104th Congress with the same goal--to change Washington. Both were self-conscious members of a new generation of politicians who distinguished themselves from the members of an "old guard" generation that was wedded to the status quo in the House and in their party. Both men saw themselves as citizen legislators. Both embraced term limits and promised their constituents to serve no more than six terms in the House. Both of them captured switched seat districts--so crucial for policy change. Neither man ever seemed the least bit jaded or cynical about the politics they were engaged in.

Both Graham and McIntosh subscribed to the electoral mandate interpretation of their victory and to the central importance of the Contract With America. And both accepted the Contract-centered

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legislative agenda and timetable. Neither one, however, brought any immediately relevant experience to the business of party organization or legislative planning. Both were 30-something lawyers. Graham had one term of legislative experience in a minority party; McIntosh had no legislative experience. Both acquiesced to the Speaker's centralized organization and to his legislative leadership. Both understood the arithmetic of the 14-vote majority that gave the freshmen class—and elements thereof—a pivotal influence within the new majority. But neither one understood the separation of powers context in which the party worked. Both of them learned about legislative politics on the job and both had developed reservations about their party's governing performance by the time the Congress adjourned in October 1996.

My guess is that in most of these respects, they were pretty typical of the class. If that is so, knowing them may strengthen our notion of a coherent group—while at the same time recognizing that individuals brought to the group differing constellations of personal goals and political contexts.

2. Interpreting the Election

It is indicative of the very strong hold the Contract had on the freshmen class that both men embraced it so wholeheartedly—even though it played virtually no part in either of their campaigns. Both men campaigned almost exclusively against Bill Clinton.

When I first met Lindsey Graham, shortly after the 100 days, he said, "By far the biggest factor in my election was Bill Clinton. People here were against everything he did... When I first heard about the Contract, I was reluctant (to sign). I was not real enthusiastic. I was happy running against Bill Clinton... (But) the Contract gave me an agenda to talk about... (it) nationalized the election. That was its biggest contribution." If, therefore, the Contract had a nationalizing effect, what better vehicle to serve as their defining electoral mandate. Thus, after the election, Graham told a reporter, "If we're going to make the voters feel good about giving Republicans all these seats, the first thing we need to do is implement the Contract."\textsuperscript{44}

A year later, however, in April 1996, I had no sooner gotten into his car than he asked me, "What happened in 1994? Did we win or did they lose?" "I think they lost," I said. "So, did we blow it?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "I think you blew it." It was the right question. But the answer had come too late.

Six months later, he returned to his party's crucial interpretative mistake.

When the Republicans held their very first conference after the election, there was a question I was dying to
ask. And I've been kicking myself in the butt ever since for not asking it. I wanted to ask, 'Did we win or did they lose?' If you think we won, give me five things you think we ought to do. If you think they lost, give me five things you think they should do. You can't figure out where you want to go until you take an inventory of what it was that got you there. The other question I wanted to ask was, 'If you were in their place, what would you do?' We acted like we won. We never asked ourselves what the Democrats would do.

Whether or not his reconstruction was accurate, he was learning from experience about the wider political world. And he had come to understand the costs of his party's--and his own--inexperienced rush to electoral interpretation.

The centerpiece of David McIntosh's campaign, too, was his attack on Bill Clinton. He attacked his opponent as "a Clinton clone;" and his TV ads "morphed" his opponent's face into Bill Clinton's face. Yet he eagerly signed the Contract; and when the election was over, he fully embraced the Contract-centered interpretation of his election. His action was based on what he called "the ethics of campaigning." When he signed the Contract, he said, he made a promise; and, once elected, he was committed to fulfill that promise. That is what people expected him to do--pass the Contract, come home and campaign on that basis.

It was a lofty embrace. If politicians hoped to retain public trust, they must maintain this link between campaigning and governing. As he explained in 1995,

George Bush's idea was that the two were separate, that you campaigned on a platform and then governed without regard to it. That view bred cynicism. The new cohort of Republicans is saying, 'hold us accountable.' That puts us on the right path. And I can see a changed ethic in Washington.

For him, there was simply no other intellectual basis for an electoral interpretation than the Contract and its promises. His 1996 campaign headquarters in Muncie was dominated by a huge sign, "Promises made, promises kept." All of his 1996 campaign brochures and his TV ads carried the slogan, "He did what he said he would do," or "he kept his word." If David McIntosh ever saw any problems with the Contract, he never mentioned it. Indeed, this winter he called for "a second Contract." His support was basically philosophical and simply did not allow for a reconsideration of costs and benefits, as Graham's more pragmatic attachment did.
3. Governing the Country

With respect to the majority party's other crucial political problem--governing the country--the two men again display a mix of similarities and differences. As to their conservatism--they were in agreement. According to the roll call ratings that political scientists use to measure ideological and partisan predispositions, they are equally and strongly conservative. On that score, they both fit solidly within the freshmen class--each, its median voter. But they had different backgrounds; they had different approaches to governing; and they chose different paths to the goal of legislative influence.

David McIntosh is, by background, an intellectual and a policy wonk. As a student at the University of Chicago Law School, he founded the philosophically conservative New Federalist Society for Law and Policy. He worked in the Reagan White House and then in Vice President Dan Quayle's office as Director of the Council on Competitiveness--a group dedicated to reducing government regulation. He ended his pre-congressional career as a Fellow at the Hudson Institute--an Indianapolis think tank. He is, philosophically, a Ronald Reagan smaller government, tax-cutting Republican. Because of this policy experience, Newt Gingrich invited him, with six other freshmen, to attend the pivotal post-election leadership meetings that turned the Contract into the party's legislative agenda.

Shortly thereafter, he was elected by the class as one of their two liaison members to the party leadership and hence, to weekly leadership meetings. As he recalls,

I decided I wanted to remain active within our class... (And) I decided that the liaison job was the one I wanted... During orientation, I talked to people about the job. I talked about policy and politics. I said that I had the experience on the other side of the government with my work with Vice President Quayle and that I was familiar with a lot of the policies we would be dealing with. On the political side, I said it was very important for our class to be active and to stick together as a class because we could have unusual influence... and I thought I could help in that way.

No member of the class took the idea of the class more seriously than he. He spoke often of his initial excitement at going to Washington and finding 70 soulmates "who had the same idea about changing Washington and who liked each other."

Back home, he worried out loud about whether he was adequately representing the class. And newspaper editors got in the habit of asking him, "David, how is the freshmen class doing?" Classmates would ask him, "David, why do you worry about keeping the freshmen
class together? We’ll be sophomores soon." His only public row
with Speaker Gingrich came when he stood up for a classmate who had
been summarily removed from a subcommittee assignment by the
leadership. "Everyone in our class saw this as a threat," he said,
"and everyone was in agreement that we could not let it go by."
In matters of governing, he worked easily and closely with the
party leadership. But, it seems, he wanted an independent
identity; and he got a measure of it from his position as a
spokesman and protector of the freshmen class. "It is very
important," he said on the campaign trail in 1996, "that we keep
our (class) presence... as (part of) a reform caucus inside the
Republican party."

McIntosh also won a measure of governing identity and influence
from his position as chairman of a new standing subcommittee, one
of only three freshmen so designated. It was the Subcommittee on
National Economic Growth, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs
of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. Its
jurisdiction--which he helped to define in advance--was wide
ranging; and it was familiar to him from his work with the Vice
President. Its hearings and proposals for regulatory relief,
rollbacks and reforms brought public notice if not laws. And so,
too, did his visible initiatives in other policy areas,
restrictions on government support to liberal advocacy groups and
tax-based alternatives to the minimum wage increase, for example.
His policy activism and his class leadership combined to give him
an unusual newcomer’s policy presence in the party’s governing
activities.

Lindsey Graham’s background, he says, "is what America is all
about." A poor boy, first in his family to go to college, he was
born, raised and practiced law in the up-country South Carolina
district he represents. He was the first Republican to be elected
from that district since Reconstruction. As such, he is one of the
twenty freshmen southerners who gave the Republicans, for the first
time in 100 years, a majority of all southern congressional seats.
He is a part of the sea change which put southern Republicans in
charge of the new majority party.

His conservatism--more practical than intellectual--comes from his
lifetime immersion in his district--described by one aide as "a
rural, low income, family loving, God fearing, gun toting Baptist
district." So does his Republicanism. When he entered politics,
late, in 1992, he said, "I placed my bets. I looked upon it as a
business decision. It’s not rocket science to know that the
Republican party is the party of the future. Any man who wants to
go into politics in the south today will become a Republican."
While he thus joined established power, he is, by background, not
altogether comfortable with established power. "I’m not a country
club Republican," he insists. Besides which, as he says of
himself, "I like a fight... I’m attracted to a fight... When I see
an argument going on, I want to run over and get in on it." And so
he does.

During the freshmen orientation, Graham surfaced as the first newcomer with the temerity to suggest that term limits should be applied to the Speaker. During the early period of the Contract, he was among the leaders in pushing for the most extreme versions of both the balanced budget amendment and the term limits bill. He was opposed to compromise, especially within his own party. "I'm tired of changing our whole program because 25 or 30 moderates object to it. Some of the items in the Contract... were watered down because Newt wanted to compromise. My attitude is, why should the conservatives be the ones to compromise. If they can do it, so can we. We can get 15 or 20 conservatives to hold out. Let's have a vote and if we lose, we lose." "The goal of this Congress," he said, "is not to get every single piece of legislation passed. It is to stay on message and define who is with you and who is not."49

He became one of the more fiesty and rambunctious members of the class--and as such fairly representative of the outspoken freshmen faction that caused the Speaker the most trouble. In 1996, Graham reflected that, "My greatest impact has come from banding together with like-minded freshmen who were not afraid to say 'no' when necessary. I've learned that 15 votes means influence. And I learned it through the school of hard knocks." He became an occasional factional leader and a legislative gadfly. He was, altogether, more of a polarizing force and less of a team player than David Mcintosh. And, not surprisingly, he adds, "I have no interest in moving up in the House. I think Newt likes me," he says. "But I have been an unruly child."

4. The Budget Battle and Its Lessons

Both men recognized the pivotal importance of the budget confrontation with the President; both reflected on their roles in it; and both said they had learned from it. Graham was among the hardest of the hard liners in support of the government shut-down. As he tells his story:

Our poll numbers were dropping (during the shut-down), but I believed they had slipped as far as they were going to go. I was one of the fiery ones saying no, no, don't give in. The President had agreed that we would each put a balanced budget on the table. We had produced ours. He had not produced his. The issue was keeping his word. I went on McNeil Lehrer twice and said that if anyone lied to me like that in private practice, I'd never have anything to do with that person as long as I lived. Then Dole put a continuing resolution through the Senate that provided for opening the government. I lost a lot of respect for Bob Dole right there. When it came to our conference, I was madder than I've ever been in politics.

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I asked Newt, ‘Did you know Dole was going to do this?’ He said he did and I said, ‘Why didn’t you tell us?’ (In conference) He proposed that we compromise by paying the workers even though there was no appropriations to give them anything to work with. I got up and I said, ['How am I going to explain this to the Greenville News when they go to the Forest Service and ask them what they are doing and are told ‘we are doing nothing!’] ‘How am I going to explain to the hard working people of my district that we are paying government workers for not working?’ He listened to me; and he came up with a different compromise.

Gingrich’s compromise passed overwhelmingly on the House floor. And that reopened the government. But Graham was one of 12 freshmen who voted "no."

McIntosh, like most of the class, voted with Gingrich. He was just as strongly for a balanced budget; but his position and his perspective were different. "I remember," he said,

being warned in August when Alice Rivlin sent me a memo saying, in essence, ‘if you are going to shut the government down, you had better be ready to tell us what programs you want to sacrifice and which ones you want to save.’ That told me that they meant serious business; and I suggested to our leadership that we should be ready with our priorities in case they put the question to us. They said that it wasn’t necessary, that if the government was shut-down, it would not be for long... Several times I said that we should think of Clinton’s budget position as the start of his reelection campaign and deal with it appropriately. The senior guys would say ‘we hear you,’ but they didn’t take it seriously. They thought Clinton wanted a budget deal. They probably thought here was some freshman who hadn’t had any experience. But I had served on the executive branch and I knew how they saw things... I’ve wondered a lot since then whether I should have been more forceful. As liaison to the leadership, I felt I had two roles. One was to act as a conduit from the ideas of the freshmen to the leadership, and the other was to bring my own experience in the executive branch into the leadership. It was a disaster... the momentum of 1994 came to an end... And worst of all, it left us without a plan for the summer.

Accurate or not, his reconstruction reflects his awareness of the separated and shared powers so basic to our system. When asked, back home, what he had learned after 15 months in office, he replied, "I learned the limits of what the House could do by itself." "We overstated what the freshmen could do," he added,
"what with the Senate able to disagree with our ideas and the President able to knock them down." He had learned something basic about strategy—that you have to know, expect and react to what the other players are doing.

Graham had learned a similar lesson—one that emphasized the presence of other players and the necessity of taking them into account. He had learned the hard way that the weak, push-over President he had routed in the campaign context was a much more formidable President in the institutional context. "I guess I underestimated the power of the President to keep the (budget) issue moving around," he said. "The President had smart advisors. They had a budget all the time, but they held it back so long as our numbers were dropping and we were getting the blame. He played us like a fiddle... We had no exit strategy. We knew how to get started, but not how to stop... We had all been saying to ourselves 'This is so neat. Everything is going to work for us,' and we forgot to worry about how the other person was thinking or what the other person might do."

Both Graham and McIntosh were critical of their party's leadership, or lack of it, during the budget confrontation. Both of them also singled out their leaders' ineptness with the media. "We did a terrible job of marketing our position," said Graham. "If we had sold our position better, we could have hung on and won." And McIntosh elaborated, "One area where we failed terribly was communications. If we keep the House, we are going to have a whole new way of communicating with the media. The guy who was in charge of that did a horrible job. The other side demonized Newt and made us into extremists. And we didn't do anything about it."

When the party's leaders found themselves losing the budget battle in the media, they admitted to themselves that the Democrats "were better at it," and they consoled themselves with the idea that "they had been at it longer." Newt's own amazing postmortem comment took a similar tack. "We didn't think we were involved in a public relations game," he said. And this from a master media manipulator in his insurgency phase. These reactions remind us that in the forty years since the Republicans had governed, there had been a revolution in media involvement in the governing process. During those years, it was the majority party Democrats who had the most media contacts and learned most from the experience. Using the media to help support their legislative policy making and to help win public confidence was one more aspect of governing that the inexperienced new majority had not yet incorporated into their governing repertoire.

As they campaigned for reelection back home and looked forward to the 105th Congress, the two freshmen critiqued their own performance, and in so doing, revealed that they had learned something about the legislative process. Said Graham, "As a member of a big class, I can tell you I was excited about the opportunity
we had and I wanted to get everything at once. I thought this was our one big opportunity. Looking back, I think it was a mistake. We didn’t need to get it all in one Congress—not even the balanced budget, the one thing I wanted to achieve more than anything else."

McIntosh reported a similar lesson. "One change in my thinking that I haven’t articulated for the papers is to be more incremental. If Clinton wins and we keep the House, we’ll have to deal with him on his priorities and get what we want in bits and pieces."

The appreciation of these two freshmen for patient, step-by-step negotiation for incremental progress shows they had learned something about governing. But the very elementary nature of their retrospectives also serves to underscore the inexperience that so crippled them during the 104th Congress. They had, indeed, needed some "high school civics lessons."

The 104th Congress and Beyond

With respect to the learning curve of the Republicans, there is a conventional argument that in the closing months of the 104th Congress, they learned how to govern—that they pulled themselves together and helped pass a series of legislative initiatives, thus redeeming themselves and the 104th Congress in the eyes of the public. And, it is said, their late term performance enabled them to preserve their House majority in the 1996 elections. 53

My argument in these lectures leads to a somewhat different spin on these facts. I would emphasize the narrowness of the 1996 victory, the inability of such a narrow victory to overcome the problems that took root in the 104th Congress and the continuing effects of those early problems in the life of the 105th Congress. I have no doubt that the Republicans--individually and collectively--learned something from the 104th Congress. But I do not think they put those lessons together in a way that would help them much in the 105th Congress.

As he approached the new Congress, Gingrich admitted that the radical recentralization he authored inside the House had not worked. "We need," he said, "a slower, broader participatory structure to move toward solving our problems. There will be much less confrontation. And so I think that this kind of open leadership activity will work better than the centralized system." Translation: I’m still experimenting at governing.

The Republicans did hold their majority in 1996--barely, giving them the smallest House majority--nine--in over 40 years. Among the freshmen, 12 lost and 27 others won with less than 55% of the vote. 54 Because they had not focussed upon or highlighted their party record of positive incremental accomplishments--in establishing a new agenda and in reducing the size of government--
they fought the election on the defensive, both individually or collectively. "I am not Newt Gingrich." "We are not extremists." Their governing performance, I believe, had deprived them of the capacity to fight the election as a party on the offensive. While they did hang on to win in 1996, the margin was smaller than they had expected and far less energizing than the possibilities which the 1994 election had put before them. They emerged from the 1996 election with very little self-confidence. In Speaker Gingrich's own words, "the winning team feels defeated."55

Furthermore, their conduct of the election and the narrow victory left them without a positive electoral interpretation to take with them into the 105th Congress. And, to date, they have continued to drift and to quarrel among themselves about what to do and how to do it. They have yet to provide decisiveness in moving to solve the set of pressing national problems that will require cross-party cooperation. As small symptoms of their stalled condition, we find each of our two freshmen continuing along his familiar path. In March, David McIntosh publicly rebuked the Speaker with a spirited, philosophical defense of large tax cuts.56 Lindsey Graham continues as a member of an untamed faction--whose eleven members, earlier this month, unexpectedly torpedoed the party's floor resolution funding House committees.57

At the opening of the 105th Congress, the majority party whip, Tom Delay, declared, "The last Congress is dead."58 It is not that easy. My argument takes the opposite view. The 104th Congress is not dead. It is alive in the 105th Congress. The election of 1996 kept the Republicans in control. But it did not do much else to make them an effective governing party. On the bright side, they learned some valuable lessons to carry forward. On the gloomy side, they also carry with them an accumulated burden of failure. In my argument, the path they are following was set for them in the first 12-15 months of the 104th Congress. And the election of 1996 was not decisive enough to move them off that path.

Not surprisingly, they worry about exactly that fate. Ten days ago, two Wall Street Journal reporters wrote extensively about the House Republicans and their "crisis of confidence." The authors described the 1996 election as "a closer brush with disaster than is commonly realized." And they concluded, "As a result, (House Republicans) wonder whether the ambitious Contract With America that guided them two years ago is the reason they retained power or the reason they almost lost it."59 In my story, the answer to that question is clear. The Contract was a major mistake, and it is part of the reason they "almost lost" power. Indeed, so long as the Republicans look back upon the passage of the Contract as their salad days, they will remain in deep trouble.
Which leaves us with a puzzle. If, as I suggested yesterday, one term is not enough for us to expect a new majority party to take hold after 40 years out of power, then what about two terms? Certainly, Republican party fortunes ought to improve with practice. But how much can they improve if the party is stuck on the path it set for itself early in an ineffective first term? The Republicans have 15 more months to liberate themselves. But that is the future. And that is another story.
ENDNOTES


3. "When and if the leadership blinks, the freshmen class will go on point," said Kate O’Bierne of the Heritage Foundation. See Robin Toner, "73 Mr. Smith’s, of the GOP, Go To Washington," New York Times, January 7, 1995.


8. Ibid.

9. Toner, "73 Mr. Smiths..."


13. Gugliotta, "They Flat Do Not Care."
15. Gray, "Grading GOP Freshmen..."
16. Browning, "The GOP's Young Turks."
17. Toner, "73 Mr. Smiths;" Merida and Cooper, "A Class of Young Warriors."
18. Merida and Cooper, "A Class of Young Warriors."
31. Zuckman, "GOP Freshmen Drive Debate in Washington."
36. Zuckman, "GOP Freshmen Drive Debate in Washington."
37. Gugliotta, "They Flat Do Not Care."
38. Ibid.
Boston Globe, August 16, 1996.


46. On Congressional Quarterly's scorecard, they were within one or two points of each other on all measures.


48. At the end of the 104th Congress, one article said of him that "(he) would be voted, if such a vote were held, the freshmen most likely to be Speaker." Goldberg, "Adventures of a Republican Revolutionary."


50. Lee, "New Courses for GOP Freshmen."


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