

Introduction

Since the 1950s, New Hampshire has gained a level of political notoriety and media attention greatly disproportionate to the size of its population and to the modest four votes it holds in the Electoral College. On paper, at least, these facts, filtered through a first-past-the-post electoral system, should ensure the 'Granite State' receives little serious attention from the major parties in presidential elections, except in extremely close races where voter intentions are fluid and nominees must scramble for every vote. The state is also comparatively low yield in terms of convention delegates and, until recently, had a longstanding reputation for rock-ribbed Republicanism, with the GOP dominating executive offices, the state legislature and national congressional delegations. Combined, these factors make it all the more surprising that the voting intentions and political culture of a small, conservative New England state have been national talking points for years. In the early twenty-first century, New Hampshire continues to fascinate reporters and political scientists, not only for its controversial 'first-in-the-nation' primary but also for an apparent marked change in its partisan make-up, which has converted it into a key 'swing state' in presidential elections.

New Hampshire has occupied a unique position in electoral politics since 1952. Changes to the rules governing presidential nomination contests, combined with the rapid growth of media coverage of those contests, propelled it into the political limelight. In the pre-reform nomination system, where closed caucuses and behind-the-scenes bargaining determined convention outcomes, New Hampshire's early position in the primary calendar meant little, other than allowing presidential hopefuls such as Franklin Roosevelt to test public opinion and state party activists without serious long-term risk. First place in the nomination calendar became a positive advantage in the early 1970s, after the Democratic Party's McGovern-Fraser and Mikulski rules commissions produced a new, primary-dominated system reliant on volunteer armies, incessant polling and saturation media coverage. New Hampshire's verdict

became crucial as candidates sought to convert early wins or unexpectedly strong showings into ‘momentum’. New Hampshire, already renowned as a graveyard for the White House ambitions of established figures such as Robert Taft, Harry Truman, Nelson Rockefeller and Lyndon Johnson, now also became a beacon of hope for under-funded longshots such as Eugene McCarthy, George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, Gary Hart and John McCain. The news media responded predictably. New Hampshire’s political culture was analysed far more than larger states whose delegate yields were greater but whose later position in the calendar reduced their ability to significantly influence the nomination race. Under this magnification, a stereotypical image of the state and its voters started to emerge as reporters, hoping for ‘shock’ primary results, sought a re-usable narrative framework for them. Although some of the more famous New Hampshire results, particularly those of 1952, 1968, 1976, 1984 and 1996, reflected the national political or economic mood and thus *confirmed*, rather than upset, conventional media wisdom, journalists often treated the political culture and libertarian outlook of New Hampshire as factors of equal or greater importance. The comparative absence of major urban centers, the noticeable lack of ethnic diversity, the lack of a statewide sales or income tax, the unusually large size of the state legislature and the twin state cults of ‘citizen-legislators’ and ‘retail politics’ were key components in the entertainingly ‘quaint’ Granite State image served up to audiences. New Hampshire voters were depicted as stereotypical conservative Yankees – cynical, monosyllabic Calvin Coolidge clones as immovable as the White Mountains- delighting state politicians and media, who played the role for all it was worth.

For some years, the image of the state as a bucolic backwater has helped disguise the changes which were occurring by the 1970s in the economic, social and political nature of the state. By the end of the century, these changes hardly seemed to matter as front-loading and soaring campaign costs seemed about to end New Hampshire’s ability to boost underdogs or upset

frontrunners. Ironically, however, as critics of the 'first in the nation' primary eagerly awaited its demise, New Hampshire's transition from 'red state' to 'swing state' brought it fresh attention from reporters and campaign strategists and looked set to keep it in the political limelight for years to come.

Era of Republican Dominance

The Republican Party's dominance in New Hampshire state politics began shortly after the party was formed. Despite claims that the Republican Party was founded in Ripon, Wisconsin, some Granite Staters argue that Amos Tuck, a New Hampshire congressman elected as a Free-Soiler, founded the party at a meeting of fourteen politicians of different parties at Major Blake's Hotel in Exeter, N.H. on 12 October 1853.¹ (Gregg and Gardner 2003, 22).

60 of the 81 New Hampshire governors since the Declaration of Independence have been Republican. The party held the governorship for almost the entire period 1857 to 1963 with only short Democratic interregnums – in 1871-2 and 1874-5 and in 1913-14 and 1923-4. During that period, Republicans also dominated the state legislature. The melting of the Republican ice-sheet in New Hampshire appears to start in 1992 but a closer look at state election outcomes shows that Democrats were already growing more electorally competitive in gubernatorial and congressional elections in the 1960s and 1970s. Democratic Governor John King, elected in 1962, held office for three consecutive terms, a feat no Democrat had achieved before. Elected the same year, Senator Thomas McIntyre was the first Democrat sent to the Senate by New Hampshire voters in thirty years, holding the seat until 1979. Democrat John Durkin held the state's other Senate seat from 1975 to 1980 while Norm D'Amours represented the first House district from 1975 to 1985. Though the party finally lost McIntyre's seat in 1979, Hugh Gallen picked up the governorship in the same year. The end of this wave of competitiveness coincided with the weakening of the New Deal coalition

and Ronald Reagan's landslide election in 1980, which renewed the GOP's grip on the state. Clearly, however, New Hampshire's Democrats had competitive potential.

New England was considered safe Republican territory in the pre-New Deal era. In 1916, the GOP carried all but one state in the region (New Hampshire), swept the board in 1920 and 1924, took five of the seven states in 1928 and still won four in 1932 in the depths of the Depression. Regional partisan voting patterns were temporarily reordered by depression and world war, enabling Roosevelt's Democrats to eat into Republican support. Famously, only Maine and Vermont withstood the New Deal coalition which had more or less emerged by 1936, repeating the feat in 1940 and 1944. By 1948, however, with Roosevelt dead and immediate emergencies no longer driving the electoral process, the GOP quickly returned to what Kevin Phillips called the party's "Yankee Era." (Phillips 1969,7). Until the 1960s, Maine elected only eight Democratic governors, as opposed to thirty-five Republicans. Vermont returned only Republican governors from 1854 to 1961 and even Massachusetts only occasionally strayed to the Democrats before the 1930s. The party relied for its success on small town voters. Andrew Taylor points out that less-populated, rural states tended to vote Republican since the conservative social and economic views characteristic of small towns and villages were not counter-balanced by the more cosmopolitan outlook of larger urban populations (Taylor 2005, 20).

For most of the second half of the century New Hampshire was more loyally Republican than any other New England state. As Table 1 shows, it tops the table in choosing Republican presidential candidates in eleven of the seventeen elections since 1948, with Democrats taking the state on just six occasions. Vermont is the next most consistently Republican state, with ten GOP victories to seven for the Democrats. During this period, the Democrats performed strongest in the niches they had carved out in Massachusetts and Rhode Island,

notching up thirteen wins to the GOP's four in both states. Over four and a half decades, Democrats could only draw level with Republicans in terms of states won in any election year. The exceptions were 1964 and 1968. In these two cycles, however, Republicans' ability to reach out to moderate and independent voters, as well as some conservative Democrats was compromised by right-wing radicalism (the nomination of Barry Goldwater and George Wallace's southern insurgency). Both campaigns disrupted normal patterns of conservative voter behaviour across the country by distorting 'traditional' conservative messages, resulting in a lop-sided Democratic victory in 1964 and a near-win in 1968. As with the earlier Roosevelt and later Reagan eras, the presence on the ballot of a phenomenally popular president tended, in New England, to result in a wipe-out for the opposition. The Democrats lost all of New England in 1952, 1956 and 1984 and only narrowly avoided the same fate in 1972 by holding on to Massachusetts. The Republicans, by contrast, drew a regional blank only once - in 1964. A Republican lock on the region was acknowledged by *The American Voter* in 1960, which noted, "The Northeast, including New England and the Middle Atlantic states... is now the strongest Republican area of the country." (Campbell et al. 1980, 152) This makes the appearance of a pro-Democrat fault-line in 1992 all the more interesting. By 2012, the GOP had lost every New England state in five out of six presidential elections.

Table 1: New England Presidential Election Voting, 1948-2012

Year	CN	MN	MS	NH	RI	VT
1948	R	R	D	R	D	R
1952	R	R	R	R	R	R
1956	R	R	R	R	R	R
1960	D	R	D	R	D	R
1964	D	D	D	D	D	D
1968	D	D	D	R	D	R
1972	R	R	D	R	R	R
1976	R	R	D	R	D	R
1980	R	R	R	R	D	R
1984	R	R	R	R	R	R
1988	R	R	D	R	D	R
1992	D	D	D	D	D	D

1996	D	D	D	D	D	D
2000	D	D	D	R	D	D
2004	D	D	D	D	D	D
2008	D	D	D	D	D	D
2012	D	D	D	D	D	D

The presence of an incumbent president on the ballot cannot account for this sudden change in voter behaviour. Both Clinton in 1996 and Barack Obama in 2012 were recovering from bruising first terms in which economic growth had been relatively weak, deficits had risen and their parties lost control of one or both houses of Congress. While both retained some popularity, neither was as unassailable as FDR in 1936, Eisenhower in 1956 or Reagan in 1984 and neither president had the advantages of Johnson in 1964 or Nixon in 1972 of running against flawed and ideologically polarizing opponents. The extent of the Democratic surge, covering all states in New England, points to a major realignment, with long-term implications for both major parties.

Election results for New Hampshire's counties show the depth of the shift in voter behaviour which occurred during the 1990s. As with the broader New England data, Republican hegemony is more or less complete throughout the period 1972-1992. A sharp disconnect then appears in 1992, after which GOP dominance at county level is either fractured or disappears entirely. Importantly, though, the picture which emerges from New Hampshire's counties is *not* one of unchallenged Democratic hegemony, but a more complex picture in which Democratic performance improves dramatically but Republicans remain competitive.

Table 2: New Hampshire voting in presidential elections by county, 1976-2012

County	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012
Belknap	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	R
Carroll	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	D	R
Cheshire	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D
Coos	D	R	R	R	D	D	R	D	D	D
Grafton	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D
Hillsborough	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	R	D	D

Merrimack	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D
Rockingham	R	R	R	R	R	D	R	R	D	R
Strafford	R	R	R	R	D	D	D	D	D	D
Sullivan	R	R	R	R	D	D	R	D	D	D

Source: Office of the Secretary of State. New Hampshire. Elections Division.

From Table 2 we see that a majority of New Hampshire counties have moved from a position of solid support for the GOP to solid, or almost solid, support for the Democrats. The counties of Strafford and Cheshire to the south, Merrimack in the heartland (containing New Hampshire’s largest city, Manchester) and Grafton further to the north had voted Republican in every presidential year from 1972 but moved into the Democratic column from 1992.

Sullivan, in the southeast of the state, and Coos, the most northerly county, have followed almost the same pattern. Though both broke away in 2000 to support the Bush-Cheney ticket, some analysts believe this to be an aberration caused by Ralph Nader’s third-party challenge and the Gore campaign’s failure to target New Hampshire as a battleground state. Both counties returned to the Democrats from 2004. In Rockingham and Hillsborough, the Democratic surge weakens. Republicans have kept a 4-2 edge over the Democrats in Rockingham since 1992 while the parties are level in Hillsborough. Both sets of results, however, are still modest improvements for the Democrats. Only Belknap and Carroll have remained loyal to the GOP, with the Democrats managing victory only once in either county since 1972 – in 2008, the year of Barack Obama’s first New England sweep.

Of New Hampshire’s ten counties, four have been reliably Democratic for 20 years, while another two only strayed once. Republicans can realistically count upon only two. 1992 was thus, in retrospect, a watershed year in which a long cycle of GOP dominance in presidential elections came to an end in New Hampshire, as well as across New England. Before 1992, Democratic victories in the Granite State were comparatively rare. From 1992, they became commonplace. By 2008, the party was even in a position to inflict on Republicans the same

humiliating wipe-out which it had itself suffered three times during the Reagan era. The loosening of the Republicans' grip has enabled Democrats to repeatedly deliver a majority of counties for the national ticket and improve their electoral performances at state and local levels, particularly in the central and southern regions, where much of the population is concentrated.

Significantly, however, these changes have been neither uniform nor entirely in accordance with standard theories of geographical distribution of partisan support. For example, in the less densely-populated counties to the north, which include many small towns but few cities and incorporate the White Mountains and the heavily-forested Great North Woods areas, we might expect to see stronger GOP performances. This is not always the case in New Hampshire. Grafton is highly rural and has only one major city –Lebanon –with a population of roughly 13,000 (U.S. Census, 2010). Yet it has been one of the four most reliable Democratic counties since 1992. In 2014, 21 of the 27 members it sent to the New Hampshire House of Representatives were Democrats. Similarly, Coos, on the U.S.-Canada border, has one small city of just over 10,000 people, Berlin, in a region where population density is 20 people per square mile (contrasted to 773.2 people per square mile in the Greater Nashua region in the south). Nevertheless, Coos has voted Democratic in every national election except 2000. By comparison, Rockingham, further to the south, contains Derry, Londonderry and Salem, all of which have populations in excess of 24,000 and shares a border with Massachusetts. It might be expected that the county's ideological make-up would become increasingly liberal due to its higher level of urbanisation and proximity to the Bay State. Yet Republicans currently hold the seats for Derry, Londonderry and Salem in the state Senate and 64 of the 90 members the county elects to the House of Representatives are also currently Republican (with two seats currently vacant). This is in contrast to Nashua, in neighbouring Hillsborough county. One of the biggest cities in northern New England, also close to the

Massachusetts border, it has 27 seats in the state House of Representatives, of which Democrats currently occupy 24.

If the new electoral vitality of the Democrats produces varied results from county to county, or from town to town, it is also the case that these variations derive from a number of different factors, both internal and external, which have influenced the state's political culture. The economic downturn of the early 1990s almost certainly played a catalysing role, helping Bill Clinton to attract moderates and independents in 1992 with 'New Democrat' policies which combined fiscal conservatism with more liberal proposals on healthcare and infrastructure investment. Clinton survived allegations of scandal and ran a strong second to Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas in the 1992 New Hampshire primary because his focus on job creation, investment and law and order gave voters disillusioned with 'Reaganomics' but distrustful of liberal Democrats' economic competence a reason to switch parties. As a short-term formula for winning votes, this proved effective but it is not sufficient explanation for the longer-term decline in the national Republican Party's influence. Nor does it account for the Democrats' continuing strength after the end of the Clinton era. National events, such as the unpopular Iraq war, a series of sex and ethics scandals in the Republican-controlled Congress and the near-collapse of the financial sector – all taking place during the 2001-09 Bush administration – would also have taken their toll on the competitive strength of New Hampshire's Republicans. The most fundamental and long-term driver, however, is demographic change – a key characteristic of realignment phases throughout electoral history.

In the early 1930s, the last 'critical realignment' was sparked by the Great Depression and subsequent collapse of voter confidence in Republican economic and social policies but the seeds of the change were sown much earlier, in the labor migrations from South to North and the waves of immigration in the first years of the century. These created urban power centers

for Democrats in many of the largest cities in the North, where Democratic party machines busily converted newcomers to their cause. Population shifts were also at the root of the next identified realignment at the end of the 1960s, when the decline of traditional heavy industries in the Northeast and Midwest caused a labor migration to the West and South. Richard Nixon's 1968 'southern strategy' capitalized on increasing southern resentment of the centralizing and liberalizing policies of the New Deal and Great Society programs and by the mid-1980s, the 'Solid South', a bulwark of Democrat power for decades, had disappeared. Problematically, radical changes in voter behaviour do not always manifest themselves over one presidential election cycle, nor are they necessarily national in their impact. Karl Rove claimed that the 2000 and 2004 elections would, like the McKinley realignment election of 1896, confirm Republican dominance for a generation, this time by uniting southern and Midwestern conservatives and mobilizing a permanently angry Christian voter base. At the same moment, however, the desertion of the West coast of the United States and the entire New England region *en bloc* to the Democrats was already underway. While the changes wrought by one realignment are still working themselves out, the roots of its successor are often already spreading, barely-noticed, across the country. Rove's anticipated WASP coalition was vulnerable to higher turnout rates among female, black, Hispanic and young voters and the shrinkage, through desertion and ageing, of the GOP's voter base. Beginning around 2006, when Democrats recaptured Congress, a consensus formed among many analysts that the 'Republican realignment' had reached its end. John Judis and Ruy Teixeira claimed a new, center-left realignment was emerging, with the east and west coasts placed beyond Republicans' reach and Democratic inroads forecast in Arizona, Texas, Florida and parts of the Rocky Mountain west. They argued that rapid changes in lifestyle and demography would mobilize a new cohort of well-educated and comfortably-off voters in favor of the Democrats via the growing influence of the 'ideopolis'

– flourishing metropolitan areas within the western, southwestern, and upper Midwestern states and also parts of the Northeast. Citizens of the ideopolis are mainly professionals employed in ‘post-industrial’ occupations including media, law, education, design, leisure and, especially, information technology. Proximity to one or more centers of excellence in education, usually a large university, and access to a major transport hub are also key characteristics. Voters in these areas are more likely to be career-oriented, habitual users of sports and health facilities and café-bookstores. Though predominantly white, the ideopolis was receptive to racial and ethnic diversity, particularly in the lower-paid employment strata. (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 70). Ideologically, neither party can completely monopolise the loyalty of these voters, who do not march in lockstep with any party machine or doctrine but the popularity of liberal (or modified libertarian) social values combined with fiscal conservatism makes it a “breeding ground for the new Democratic majority.” (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 71).

Alongside demographic and societal change, sudden economic and/or political crises that break established voting coalitions and fundamentally alter the core language and assumptions of political debate can be drivers of realignment. Critical realignments result from larger-than-normal changes in the size of a key element of the voting population leading to a permanent rebalancing of normal patterns of partisanship (Darmofal and Nardulli 2010, 256). Darmofal and Nardulli argue that ‘conversion’ is frequently the main driver of the realignment process, where part of the electorate ‘converts’ to a different party, though an unexpected increase in participation rates can also trigger change (the ‘mobilization’ thesis). Less frequently, ‘demobilization’, involving the disengagement of a key voting group can affect change. Mobilization and demobilization, they argue, contribute less motive energy to electoral change. Conversion contributes the most.

Table 3. Eligible Voter Turnout Across New England: Presidential Elections, 1980-2012

Area	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012
U.S.	54.2	55.2	52.8	58.1	51.7	54.2	60.1	61.6	58.2
CT	63.9	63.8	59.0	68.6	59.6	61.9	65.0	66.6	60.9
MN	65.4	65.8	62.5	74.3	65.2	67.2	73.8	70.6	68.1
MS	61.4	59.9	60.0	63.8	58.4	59.9	64.2	66.8	66.3
NH	58.1	54.1	56.4	66.1	58.3	63.9	70.9	71.7	70.1
RI	61.6	58.8	56.1	62.8	54.4	54.2	58.5	61.8	58.0
VT	58.7	61.5	60.1	69.0	59.3	54.0	66.3	67.3	60.4

Source: McDonald, Michael P., *United States Election Project*. George Mason University. 2014.

In New Hampshire's case, a long-term change in the party balance is evidenced in the Electoral College but not precisely mirrored by results at state level or in elections for the U.S. Congress, where Republicans remain successful and highly competitive. While different possible causes exist for the increasing strength of the Democratic Party, voter mobilization cannot be discounted as a factor. Table 3 charts fluctuations in voter turnout across New England (with comparative figures for the United States as a whole) in the nine presidential elections between 1980 and 2012. Data is calculated using the method employed by the George Mason University Presidential Elections Project of recording estimated turnout among voting-eligible citizens in elections for highest office (the presidency, Congress or governorships, dependent upon the year being a presidential or midterm cycle). Voting-eligible turnout, as Michael McDonald argues, serves as a more reliable indicator than voting-age turnout, particularly as the size of ineligible voter populations varies widely from state to state (McDonald, 2014). Immediately noticeable is the gradient of the rise in New Hampshire voter turnout. Grouping the data into a series of three-election cycles, Granite State turnout averages only 56.2 percent during the 1980s, but climbs to 62.7 percent in the 1990s (including 2000) and then to 70.9 percent during the first three elections of this century. This sharp upward curve is unmatched by any other New England state. New Hampshire, of course, started from a lower point than its neighbours. In the 1980s cycle, for example, Maine turnout already averaged 64.5 percent, 8.3 percent above New Hampshire.

Nevertheless, New Hampshire voting rates jumped 14 percentage points from 1980 while those of Massachusetts rose only 5.3 percent and Maine only 6.3 percent during the same period. Rhode Island rates remained sluggish throughout while Vermont's climbed only 4.5 percent to a peak of 64.6 percent. Further, New Hampshire produced the second-highest turnout in New England in both 2004 and 2008 and topped the table in 2012 – a marked change from 1980 and 1984, when it recorded the lowest levels, and 1988 when it was second-lowest. The turnout spike in New Hampshire, therefore, has been more noticeable and (so far) more sustained than in any other state in the region, possibly a sign that voter mobilization has been a driver for realignment in the state. During the period in which the Democrats have held a lock on New Hampshire's four electoral votes, a substantially higher proportion of the state's eligible voters have been turning out in presidential elections. Voter registration drives are a possible contributory factor but New Hampshire's unique profile offers another, more unusual, explanation. The saturation media coverage given to its 'first-in-the-nation' primary may well have helped stimulate turnout. News organizations poured a disproportionate amount of time and resources into coverage of New Hampshire and the Iowa caucuses simply because they had been starved of 'hard' election news for four years. The knock-on effect, at least in New Hampshire, was to galvanize not only the activist bases of both parties but also ordinary voters who were often flattered (or bemused) by the excessive media speculation about their views of national issues and their voting intentions. Although reporters and candidates tended to target southern tier cities and towns such as Derry, Goffstown, Exeter and Portsmouth, together with Concord and Manchester, communities in the less densely-populated north, such as Berlin, Lincoln or Conway, still received more attention per voter than their equivalents in other states. As far back as 1980, *New York Times* columnist E.J. Dionne speculated that New Hampshire primary voters "had received a

political education from the campaign, displaying far greater knowledge of the issue positions of the candidates.” (*New York Times* 1980/03/02).

Another likely reason for increased turnout is that New Hampshire’s relatively recent move to ‘competitive’ status prompts candidate organizations and national party strategists to focus more intensively upon it. As Gimpel et al note, small states considered ‘competitive’ in 2004 – including New Hampshire (also New Mexico, Iowa and Nevada) received significantly higher degrees of candidate and advertising attention than “simplistic mathematical models” would have predicted (Gimpel et. al. 2007. 795). Both the George W. Bush and John Kerry camps in 2004 identified New Hampshire as a key state – for Kerry strategists, a potential win; for Bush strategists, a state that was picked up in 2000 but was now ‘vulnerable’. Daron Shaw reveals that while both parties increased their focus on New Hampshire in 2004, more personal appearances were built into the campaign schedules of Kerry and vice-presidential nominee John Edwardes than in those of Bush or Vice President Dick Cheney. Additionally, Democrat targeting of an influential media market stretching across from Boston, across New Hampshire and into Vermont increased during the campaign, while GOP advertising investment in the same market decreased over the last weeks of the campaign (Shaw 2006, 55). In 2012, both President Obama and Mitt Romney devoted some of their last critical days of campaigning to rallies in Manchester and in the state capital, Concord. Such degrees of late attention to New Hampshire would have been unthinkable (and electorally irrational) before 1992.

Finally, higher turnout rates are linked to demographic change. As is illustrated in the next section, high rates of immigration and a high birth rate affected New Hampshire’s political environment. Beginning in the 1960s, the state experienced an immigration tide unmatched by any other New England state. Many of the newcomers were well-educated and earning salaries in the middle-upper income quartile, making it likely they would also be politically

educated and active. The cumulative effect was not felt for some years. By the 1990s, however, the influence of these new New Hampshire residents and their children at the ballot box was undermining Republican dominance (Smith 2014).

Impacts of Demographic Change

Population movement in and around New Hampshire has been the main force driving change in the state's partisan loyalties and political culture. Between 1960 and 1975, the population increased by 33%. By 1990, the rate of increase was 50%, making New Hampshire the second fastest-growing state east of the Mississippi (Palmer 1997, 37). Much of the influx consisted of young and, in later years, middle-aged, baby-boomers from Massachusetts whose motivations for relocating ranged from escaping the Bay State's tax system to exchanging the bustle of the Boston metropolitan area for a small town or rural environment. These waves affected political and social attitudes across the state's central and southern tiers, which contain more than sixty percent of Granite State residents (Johnson 2012). Massachusetts businesses often relocated or expanded across the border to cut their tax burden whilst other companies were attracted to the Granite State by the lack of a strongly-unionized workforce and the potential opportunities for entrepreneurship. After the decline of its textile manufacturing industry, New Hampshire had diversified in the 1960s and 1970s, specializing particularly in electrical components, communications technology, plastics and industrial tools. This contributed to an economic boom during the Reagan era which raised New Hampshire's average per capita personal income to eighth-highest in the U.S. State economic growth rate rocketed from an average of 54.4% in the 1970s to 75.2% during the 1980s (Center for Policy Studies 2014, 9). The economic downturn of the early 1990s hit business hard, with state GDP falling by 25% and failure rates second only to those of California (Palmer 1997, 38-9). Continued immigration and a strong birth rate ensured that

the state economy recovered quickly and continued to expand, albeit at reduced levels, until a combination of factors – slowing birth and immigration rates and the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession, brought the boom years to an end. In the twenty first century, state growth rates have been among the lowest in the United States. “Creative well-educated people have driven a lot of what happened in New Hampshire, and most of those people have come from outside of the state,” Dennis Delay, in charge of New Hampshire economic forecasting for the New England Economic Partnership, told the Manchester *Union Leader* in October 2014. “If that is not going to happen... then that’s a source of economic growth that’s no longer available to us” (*Union Leader* 2014/10/08).

The partisan political implications of the Massachusetts influx are not as obvious as they might first appear. Teixeira and Judis consider the proximity of Boston, MIT, Harvard and Route 128 (locally dubbed “America’s Technology Highway”) to New Hampshire’s borders as a key liberalizing influence upon the state’s cultural and political development. The movement of workers and their families, especially into the ‘Golden Triangle’ area of Manchester, Salem and Nashua, injected left-of-center views on state spending and intervention into New Hampshire’s political discourse, amplified by the Boston media market into which the state’s southern tier feeds. New Hampshire, they note, “was developing a high-tech corridor whose voters, like professionals elsewhere, were beginning to prefer moderate Democrats” (Judis and Teixeira 2002, 95). The potential for Democrats to achieve dominance-by- ideopolis in New Hampshire was offset, however, by Bay State business influence. Business migrants attracted by the weaker regulatory climate and lower taxes contributed to the Republicans’ electoral sweep of New Hampshire counties between 1972 and 1988, during which they took every county in every election except Coos, which defected to Jimmy Carter in 1976. In 2014, Republicans still tend to monopolise political power in towns and cities close to the border. If the power of new liberal migrants had been as great as

many expected, New Hampshire's unique brand of fiscal conservatism would almost certainly have been undermined. Instead, the obsession with low taxes continues to box liberal officeholders and candidates into a corner. Most Democrats running for state office take 'The Pledge' not to enact broad-based taxes before Republicans even have a chance to confront them with it.

Massachusetts migration is only partly responsible for recent Democratic election successes. Independent or liberal migrants from other New England states and from outside the region have also helped close the gap with Republicans. As mentioned earlier, increased participation by younger voters since the 1990s has advantaged the Democrats. In New Hampshire, the sons and daughters of the big immigration waves form large and politically active student populations, particularly in college towns such as Keene, Hanover and Durham, which often trend liberal (*New York Times* 2012/06/24). Taken together, these factors tended to dilute the impact of the economic exodus from Massachusetts by increasing voter receptivity to 'progressive' social policies. The 1992 Clinton victory, therefore, may have come at precisely the right moment for state Democrats who were demoralised by years of Republican dominance. Clinton's acceptance of much of the conservative economic agenda enabled him to reach out to independents and moderates and softened the edges of his more liberal social policies. Once state Democrats began to follow the 'New Democrat' example they were able to fully capitalise on demographic change. Like the national party, they found voters more, rather than less, receptive to their messages as the economy slowed and the Bush administration tarnished the GOP brand.

Research suggests that while the heavy migration had ended by 2006, its impact will be felt until at least mid-century. The median age of New Hampshire's population is not as high as in some neighbouring states but it will rise fairly steeply. This carries implications for its future. Large numbers of 'boomers' already reaching or past retirement age, will seek better

leisure, health and care facilities. These “amenity migrants” have settled in central and northern areas such as Carroll County, while younger families with children have clustered around the seacoast area and along the Massachusetts border. Both regions, Kenneth Johnson of the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies suggests, will confront difficult choices over how best to raise and spend enough revenue to meet the demands of the “silver Tsunami” and the needs of parents with school-age children (Center for Policy Studies 2014, 9). Healthcare has already become a major concern for state legislators, with insurance premiums for families 6% above the national average and 12% higher for individuals. Pressures on the state budget may increase exponentially and the impact on state political dialogue and partisanship may be profound. Republicans are already treading carefully on the issue of Obama’s 2010 Affordable Care Act, which proved deeply unpopular in many red states. In New Hampshire, over 40,000 people have signed up to the government scheme, sixth-highest rate in the nation (Center for Policy Studies 2014, 27-30).

Religion

Until the third quarter of the twentieth century, white Protestants made up nearly half of the New England electorate. This helped entrench Republican regional dominance but was contingent upon the party remaining essentially moderate in its conservatism, since it was non-evangelical whites, Earl and Merle Black note, who generally “set the partisan and ideological tone of Northeastern Protestantism” (Black and Black 2007, 104). During the 1970s, the Nixon administration’s failure to actively help evangelicals trying to reverse Supreme Court decisions on abortion and school prayer was instrumental in bringing southern conservative anger with the party’s ‘Wall Street’ wing to boiling point. New Hampshire nevertheless supported Nixon in 1972 and opted for Gerald Ford over the ‘born-again’ Christian, Jimmy Carter, in 1976, despite the legacy of Watergate and Ford’s pardon of Nixon. Reagan’s failure to do much more than scratch the surface of the Christian Right’s

moral agenda had no impact on his popularity in New Hampshire. State citizens have generally been secular in their views on church-state relations and dislike the more aggressive Christian moralism of Southern evangelicals. This is partly explained by the high concentration of Catholics across the northeast, who comprise 28 percent of the population compared to only 10 percent for evangelical Protestants (Pew Forum 2008, 74). While Catholics are most concentrated in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, they also make up 29 percent of New Hampshire's population (Pew Forum 2008, 99). The hardline theology and tactlessness of the GOP's evangelical activists tends to stoke the concerns of Catholic voters, who often help more moderate Protestants to undermine evangelical candidates such as Pat Robertson (1988) and Rick Santorum (2012) in the presidential primary. The comparative weakness of evangelism's political appeal in the Granite State was evident in the 2008 Republican primary. Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, after gaining 34.4 percent of the vote in the Iowa caucus, made no headway in New Hampshire. Despite the normal media blizzard surrounding the Iowa winner, Huckabee acknowledged the uphill battle he faced against John McCain in New Hampshire, joking to reporters, "We've got to convert a lot more people in New Hampshire in the next five days. We're going to have a big tent revival out on the grounds of the Concord State Capitol, get them all converted to evangelical faith, then we'll win" (*Washington Post* 2008/01/04. 4). He won just 11.2 percent of the vote, 26 points behind McCain (*New York Times* 2008). In Iowa, 60 percent of caucus attenders had identified themselves as 'evangelical Christian', of whom 46 percent voted for Huckabee (Smidt et.al. 2010, 84). In New Hampshire, over one-third of McCain supporters told pollsters they never went to church. "New Hampshire," Smidt et.al. observe, "is no Iowa in religious terms" (Smidt et.al. 2010, 85). In 2012, Santorum and Mitt Romney tied for first place in Iowa but Santorum took 32% of the evangelical Christian vote to Romney's 14 percent (Pew Forum 2008). In the New Hampshire primary which followed,

Romney's broader appeal helped him to victory. He secured 31 percent of the evangelical vote to Santorum's 23 percent with Santorum finishing in fifth place overall (Pew Forum 2012). Both the 2008 and 2012 contests could be seen to support Adkins and Dowdle's contention that New Hampshire primary results (despite occasional aberrations such as the victories of John McCain in 2000 or Hillary Clinton in 2008) are still more likely than those of Iowa to foreshadow the outcome of nomination and election cycles. Where Iowa's voters are more receptive to evangelical messages and its caucus process more vulnerable to manipulation by a disproportionately right-wing Christian activist base, New Hampshire's more open primary process and the pragmatic inclinations of many of its voters usually subordinates religious or ideological purity to the priority of electability cycles (Adkins and Dowdle 2001, 436).ⁱⁱ This tendency is only likely to increase, both in primary and general election contests, as demographic shifts continue to erode white Protestant Republican dominance across the northeast. As the numbers of *non*-WASP racial and ethnic groups and secular white voters have increased, the old conservative white Protestant bloc has been slowly shrinking. This presents difficulties for a party that has, since the 1980s, been increasingly motivated by religious or ideological radicalism. As Black and Black indicate, however, while these changes "greatly facilitate Democratic dominance" across the northeast they have not yet delivered a stable Democratic majority. At the state level in New Hampshire, "close partisan divisions" rather than outright Democratic dominance have resulted from this process, partly due to a simultaneous decline in the traditional *Democratic* advantage among white Catholic voters since the 1970s (Black and Black 2007, 99). This decline may have been driven by Democrats' more liberal policies on social issues, particularly abortion, contraception and homosexuality, leading not to Democratic dominance but to a rise in the number of genuinely competitive races for state and national office.

Demographic change aside, the conflating of the national Republican Party message with Bible-fuelled declarations of hostility to abortion, contraception and gay marriage, combined with confrontational tactics over immigration and the debt ceiling have harmed the party's competitive strength across the northeast. While it is harder to quantify the impact, it is likely that the party's loss of New England, like the Democrats' loss of the white South, is linked to more than population movements. On paper, both John McCain and Mitt Romney should have performed well in New Hampshire. McCain was extremely popular with mainstream GOP and independent voters while Romney's emphasis on fiscal conservatism and his Massachusetts links should have provided a strong support base. Neither could be credibly linked to the GOP's radical wing. As Bonnie Johnson notes, however, mainstream and social media convert arguments and policies presented by candidates in state and even local campaigns into *national* messages, regardless of whether the message was intentionally tailored to appeal to a narrow voting group in one particular state (Johnson 2005, 354). Since, as Miller and Schofield observe, it is grassroots activists "who give the Party its image to the nation" McCain and Romney often struggled to disassociate themselves from controversial congressional candidates without alienating a conservative base with which they were obviously uncomfortable (Miller & Schofield 2008, 446; 433-50).

In 2013, the *Republican Growth and Opportunity Report* urged party members to adopt more considerate and welcoming tones, particularly toward voter groups such as gays and racial and ethnic minorities which, Reince Preibus' RNC admitted, had been alienated by aggressive party rhetoric. The report also urged state and local parties to confront the party's longstanding problem in attracting support from single, young and career-oriented women. (*GOP Report*, 2013). In the 113th Congress, 82 Representatives and 20 Senators were women. 63 of the House's female cohort were Democrats while the party accounted for 16 of the 20 women in the Senate. It would not have escaped the attention of Republican leaders that

women have been at the forefront of the Democratic Party's resurgence in one of the nation's most competitive states. In 2012, New Hampshire became the first state in American history to return an all-female delegation to Congress. At the start of the 113th Congress in January 2013, three of New Hampshire's four congressional seats were occupied by Democrats (former governor Jeane Shaheen, Ann McLane Kuster and Carol Shea-Porter) and one by a Republican (Kelly Ayotte). In the same election, Democratic candidate Maggie Hassan defeated Republican Ovide Lamontagne for the governorship, winning every county in a twelve-point sweep. Two years earlier, New Hampshire had become the first state to have a legislative chamber with a female majority when 13 women held seats in the state Senate. Demographic changes in New Hampshire have not noticeably altered its racial and ethnic mix, however. The population is 94.2 percent white. Hispanics make up 3.2 percent, Asian-Americans 2.4 percent and black Americans 1.5 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). This profile is heavily out of step with the rest of the United States where black Americans account for 13.2 percent and Hispanic Americans for 17.1 percent. The lack of racial and ethnic diversity somewhat disadvantages Democrats, who traditionally do well among such groups.

State Politics: Flexible Response

Party control of the New Hampshire legislature has switched three times in the past four election cycles (from Republican to Democrat and back again) providing further evidence that while the Democrats may be back in the game, neither they nor the Republicans have achieved complete electoral dominance. Since the 1990s, voters have mostly preferred pragmatism to radicalism. GOP right-wingers Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum and Rick Perry all fared poorly in New Hampshire's 2012 primary while the more libertarian and thoughtful Ron Paul and Jon Huntsman took second and third spots after Romney. The results did not

surprise state party veterans. The state motto, “Live Free Or Die” portrays an electorate perennially receptive to political messages centered upon small government and unintrusive social policies though, ironically, Congress members in Washington have worked hard to secure federal ‘pork’. According to ‘Citizens Against Government Waste’, New Hampshire received more government grants than every state except Alaska and Hawaii (Taylor 2005, 19). In GOP presidential primaries since the nomination reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, only Patrick Buchanan’s 1996 win could be seen as a victory for the radical right. Other winners (Nixon, Ford, Bush Sr., McCain and Romney) have come from the party mainstream, despite the tendency for more ideologically-driven party activists to influence primary outcomes. George Bush Jr., the party’s most committed evangelical nominee of the modern era, lost to John McCain in 2000. Ronald Reagan’s status is more complex. By 2014, definitions of ‘radical conservative’ had shifted from their 1980 equivalent and the ‘movement’ itself was more organized and aggressive. Moreover, Reagan was a familiar figure, a closet pragmatist and not a practitioner of the train wreck politics later espoused by the Tea Party.

The large numbers of voters describing themselves as ‘moderate’ ensures that both major parties must continually tailor their policies and cultural messages for a broader audience. The impression that New Hampshire’s new ‘swing’ status derives from an unusually high number of independent voters, is misleading, according to David Moore and Andrew Smith, who point out that changes to state registration laws have allowed large numbers of voters to stay ‘undeclared’ until Election Day, registering as Republicans or Democrats only at polling stations and then immediately reverting to ‘undeclared’ status before they leave. As a result, ‘undeclared’ voters accounted for 42-44 percent of the state electorate between 2006 and 2014, with 33 percent for Republicans and 29 percent for Democrats (Moore and Smith 2015, 7.18). Problematically for pollsters, many ‘undeclareds’ were simply Republicans or

Democrats who chose not to reveal their party loyalties, perhaps from a merely temporary dissatisfaction with their party's performance at state or national level.

On the Democratic side, polls suggest party voters' liberal self-identification has increased slightly in the last decade but their successes at the gubernatorial and congressional levels have come with strings attached. Democrat candidates have mostly appealed across the ideological divide. Long-serving Governor John Lynch (2005-13) won four terms in office after taking 'The Pledge' and took conservative positions on issues such as the death penalty and parental notification in abortion cases involving minors. He signed the gay marriage law of June 2009 but stated his personal opposition to it. Governor Jeane Shaheen, Lynch's Democratic predecessor (1997-2003), also took 'The Pledge' but in 2000 she refused to renew it and tried, unsuccessfully, to enact a sales tax. Her reelection margin dropped dramatically at the next election. As early as the 1950s, political scientist Duane Lockard had observed that Granite State politicians tended to "convert *all* policy to questions of economy in government" (Lockard 1959, 47). Governor Hugh Gallen (1979-82) was unseated by Republican John H. Sununu on the issue and Democratic nominee Mark Fernald lost his 2002 race against Republican Craig Benson after arguing for a broad-based tax to fund infrastructure investment. Winning Democrats, such as Maggie Hassan, have neutralized Republican exploitation of the issue only by defending what journalist Neil Peirce once called a "jerry-built" budget structure based on property taxes, revenue from tourism and from 'sin taxes' on alcohol, cigarettes, hotel rooms and gambling (Palmer 1997, 44). In other policy areas, Democratic officeholders at national and state levels have sometimes avoided endorsing legislation which might appear 'too liberal' for voters' taste. Shortly before the 2014 midterms, Hassan vetoed a bill tackling workplace bullying and discrimination, to the anger of union officials (*Concord Monitor* 2014-09-17). The veto did not prevent her reelection in November 2014. Hassan, defeating Republican candidate Walt Havenstein.

On the Republican side there has tended to be more latitude for officeholders to combine right-wing fiscal policies and inflexible stances on social issues, despite the risk of alienating voters. Some candidates, however, have found it harder than others to strike a workable balance. Ovide Lamontagne, a Catholic social conservative, lost primary races for the U.S. House and Senate in 1992 and 2010, while losing gubernatorial elections to Shaheen (1996) and Hassan (2012). His 2012 campaign stressed the need to pare down the state budget and relax regulations on business but also opposed gay marriage and abortion. Lamontagne stressed he did not support invalidating gay marriages already registered in the state but the qualifier failed to help him beat Hassan (*Wall Street Journal* 2012). By contrast, John E. Sununu, serving as First District Representative to the U.S. House from 1997-2003 and as Senator from 2003-09, was able to match conservative fiscal orthodoxy with more controversial stands against the assault weapons ban and abortion rights. Judd Gregg (Governor, 1989-93; U.S. Senator, 1993-2011) provided a model profile for pragmatic conservatism. The son of a former GOP governor, Gregg was a fiscal conservative but a social moderate who voted against the proposed 2006 Federal Marriage Amendment and supported an assault weapons ban. Gregg's service on the Senate Budget committee earned him the unusual accolade of nomination for Secretary of Commerce by Democratic President-elect Obama in 2008, a post he eventually declined.

In 2006, Thomas F. Schaller observed that northeastern Democrats had performed well in presidential elections but "have made almost no progress expanding their down-ballot control... specifically by eliminating as many as possible moderate Republicans in Congress and electing more Democratic governors" (Schaller 2006, 122). Since 2001, an exodus of moderates out of the GOP has seen Vermont's Jim Jeffords switch to independent status and yield his Senate seat to independent Bernie Sanders, Maine's Olympia Snowe replaced by independent Angus King and Rhode Island's Lincoln Chafee, who became an independent

and later a Democrat as state governor, replaced in the Senate by Democrat Sheldon Whitehouse. Democrats in New Hampshire are now performing well by Schaller's down-ballot measurement but are unlikely to receive the same help from Tea Party radicals. State Republicans are generally playing a canny game to preserve their competitive status and seem to understand their own electorate rather better than their counterparts in other states. During primary races for the 2014 midterm elections, two candidates, Daniel Innis and Marilinda Garcia, mounted challenges to more established party figures which went considerably beyond the now-familiar face-off between Washington 'insider' and Tea Party populist. Innis, the openly-gay and married ex-head of the University of New Hampshire's Paul Business School, campaigned for the first House district seat against ex-Congressman Frank Guinta, a former mayor of Manchester who had won the seat from incumbent Democrat Shea-Porter in 2010, only to lose it to her in 2012. Innis received substantial funding from outside activist groups such as American Unity PAC, an organization donating money to pro-gay marriage Republicans. Innis' support for gay marriage, however, was not the focus of Guinta's campaign, possibly for fear of a backlash among moderates and independents – a problem which Republican candidates in the northeast had encountered as far back as 1998. Fighting for the second district nomination against Gary Lambert, Garcia was conservative on economic and environmental policy but more moderate or nuanced in her stances on immigration and healthcare. This, along with her gender and Spanish and Italian parentage made her a harder candidate to categorise ideologically but “a demographic trifecta for the party” according to Fergus Cullen, a former head of the state GOP (*Washington Post* 2014/09/09). Recognizing the potential advantages for the November campaign against the popular incumbent Democrat, Ann McLane Kuster, the conservative Club For Growth PAC paid out \$500,000 for pro-Garcia television ads (*Concord Monitor* 2014/09/10). With support from high-profile national party figures such as Texas Senator Ted

Cruz and the influential conservative state newspaper, the Manchester *Union Leader*, Garcia won with a 50-27 percent margin over Lambert, a more traditional Republican conservative and former state senator for New Hampshire's 13th district (*Concord Monitor* 2014/09/10) Innis lost a closer race with Guinta in September 2014 by 41 percent to 49 percent. (WMUR-TV 2014)

Conclusion Since 1992, the Democratic Party has moved into a position of either supremacy or rough parity with the GOP in New England, a region once regarded as a Republican bastion. This is partly due to demographic shifts, but also to ideological repositioning by the national parties. From the 1990s, Democrats tended to follow the Clinton 'New Democrat' trend by carefully tailoring messages at the national level to accommodate Reaganite fiscal conservatism and right-of-center positions on small government and law and order. Between 1992 and 2014 the national Republican party moved farther to the right. These developments prompted shifts in voting patterns across the United States. In New Hampshire, the consequence has been a modest increase in liberal identification among voters but a very marked improvement in the electoral performance of state Democrats. This did not mean, however, that Republicans have been 'locked out' of state politics. Rather, they have faced tougher competition at all levels and are now compelled, as Democrats had been during the 1980s, to adjust their policies to suit the new climate. Both parties now contend for support from voters who tend to be, in Bill Clinton's view, more consistently engaged and informed than many state electorates, partly as a consequence of the heavy media attention lavished upon them since the 1950s. This may also partly explain New Hampshire's relatively robust turnout levels in both state and national elections, even in 2014, when turnout levels for the midterm elections plumbed depths not seen since World War II. An unaggressive but pervasive libertarian ethos constitutes a 'glass ceiling' for Democrats with ambitious welfare and spending proposals but voters' lack of sympathy for doctrinal conservatism and Christian

moralism simultaneously restrains more radical Republicans. Both sides try to attract ‘independent’ voters but neither now enjoys an in-built advantage. Since 1992, Republicans have found it increasingly difficult to deliver the Granite State for their party but they continue to be highly competitive in congressional and state races. New Hampshire’s current political environment, while in step with the general movement of New England states to the left, has stopped short of becoming a ‘safe’ Democrat state. The victory of George W. Bush in 2000 and the see-saw results of congressional and state legislature elections since 2006 suggest that the Granite State, unlike some of its neighbours, is still up for grabs. In the 2014 midterms, Democrats Shaheen, Kuster and Hassan were all re-elected but Shea-Porter lost the 1st District seat to Republican Frank Guinta and the GOP once again retook the state House of Representatives.

Rather than changing from a red state to a blue state, New Hampshire has moved, in the words of the *Concord Monitor*, “from ruby-red Republican to a deep shade of purple” (*Concord Monitor* 2012/11/06). As long as both parties remain competitive and state voter registration rules remain unchanged, both Democrats and Republicans will continue to identify New Hampshire as a ‘swing’ state.

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