

THE VANDERBILT POLITICAL REVIEW

We've got



problems

(and some say it's the 1%)

Fall 2011 | Policy. Polarization. Politics.

THE VANDERBILT POLITICAL REVIEW

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letter from the EDITOR

Choosing the Occupy Wall Street movement as our Fall 2011 cover topic was a conscious decision. The movement itself is a timely representation of the attitudes of many Americans. It represents a unique paradox, serving as a historical marker of the uprising against the corporate juggernaut, rising antipathy towards Wall Street, and the effects of economic volatility in the 21st century. At the same time, the movement lacks strong leaders, concrete demands, and a readily identifiable structure. How, then, will this protest be contextualized in American history? While the answer remains to be seen, it is clear that Wall Street has returned as the iconic American villain, and this time, the American public is taking no prisoners.

It has been a long time since a protest movement has impacted the Vanderbilt undergraduate community with such force, and as a result, it is important for us to evaluate its potential consequences. Will this movement continue to gain momentum, and what will be the long-term effects of this growing anti-establishment sentiment? As 2011 draws to a close and a new presidential election season begins, America stands at a political crossroads largely centered on today's economic problems, with high levels of unemployment, domestic and foreign debt crises, and increased economic inequality on the minds of many of our fellow citizens. The Occupy Wall Street movement on the cover, which represents a grassroots protest effort directed at the wealthiest 1% of Americans, is just one manifestation of the American public's fixation on the economic issues facing our country and the world today.

This edition of the Vanderbilt Political Review attempts to highlight some of these economic concerns, their causes, and perhaps most importantly, their effects on American and international politics. Essays will explore, among other things, the Occupy Wall Street protest, the end of the NASA space shuttle program, and the Republican presidential primary field. Written by Vanderbilt students and faculty, these essays reflect the current state of affairs of our political and economic system from the perspective of the Vanderbilt population, and we look forward to sharing them with you in this publication.

This journal is the result of the hard work and dedication of the VPR staff, who are committed to producing a publication that engages political discourse within the Vanderbilt community. Now in its fourth year of publication, the Vanderbilt Political Review has bifurcated from a biannual undergraduate political journal to a meaningful student organization made up of three branches: the Vanderbilt Political Review, VPR online, and the LEAD events team. Our organization is always looking for new staff members and participants, so if you are interested in getting involved, please feel free to contact us at vanderbiltpoliticalreview@gmail.com.

As we continue to showcase perspectives on current events from Vanderbilt students, alumni, and faculty, VPR will continue to evolve to better serve the Vanderbilt community from which it is generated. We believe that this Fall 2011 edition of the Vanderbilt Political Review is our best yet, and we hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Libby Marden
Editor-in-Chief



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Over & Out

A look at how the end to our country's shuttle program will affect the U.S. both internationally and at home.

//LIESELBURKS

On Thursday, July 21st, 2011, the Atlantis space shuttle landed smoothly at Florida's Kennedy Space Center. Mission Commander Chris Ferguson's voice, shaken with emotion, rang loud and clear in Mission Control: "Atlantis is finally home. We were honored to be a part of this...but it [ultimately] is everyone who has worked on the shuttle program—although we got to take the ride, we sure hope that everybody who has ever worked... touched...looked at...admired a space shuttle was able to take just a little part of the journey with us."

And with that sentimental finish for the 135th space shuttle mission, the 30-year shuttle program officially came to a close. The space shuttle made the United States (and the world) a better place—hundreds of astronauts have traveled to space, medical and scientific

research innovations have been discovered, and America's leadership in space has been dominant for the past half-century. From 1981 until this past July, NASA's space shuttle (part of the official Space Transportation System) was the United States government's manned launch vehicle and the only winged spacecraft to achieve orbit and landing, as well as being the only reusable space vehicle that has ever made multiple flights into orbit.

With the door closed on this chapter of NASA's space flight history the question remains: What's next? Although President Obama has recently unveiled a plan for the future of American space flight, involving revamping the Orion crew capsule to eventually carry astronauts into deep space, the NASA administration is facing the realities of the termination of the shuttle program, the cancellation of existing rocket launcher and

spacecraft programs, the layoffs of thousands of aerospace workers, and the overall outlook of American space activity—all signs pointing to the federal government's belief that the space program is "too costly" to keep funding in this economic crisis. Unfortunately, the termination of NASA's space shuttle program will produce negative consequences for the United States internationally as well as domestically.

How and why did the United States get involved in the space program in the first place? In the midst of a power war with the Soviet Union, this nation was determined to gain an "edge" on our Eastern European rival. The space race began, and the United States claimed the victory when Neil Armstrong completed his moonwalk in July 1969. Following the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs, the United States continued to improve space travel, culminating in the development (and completion) of the International Space Station (ISS.) We can see, from the inception of the space program, that the United States has been motivated by a desire to "beat out the competition" and reign supreme in this highly international and technological arena. The United States achieved incredible success over the past fifty years, and our absence from continued space program development may symbolize a decline in America's leadership—in the future, American astronauts will now have to "hitch a ride" in Russian space vehicles in order to get to the ISS. Without a clear future path for NASA, the United States does not hold as much valuable "weight" in the space industry.

There is already a fear growing among political scientists that China will

eventually overtake the United States as the dominant world power. Although this power transition may not happen anytime soon, there is evidence to suggest that our decline in focus on manned space flight may be playing a part in speeding up this transition. The United States education program's steady decline in an emphasis on math and science education for children provides a stark contrast to China's strong math and science requirements for university education and employment by foreign corporations. Students from Asia and India now dominate many of the technical programs in top-ranked American universities. The space exploration stimulation that sparked young American students' interests in science and engineering is no longer present. Will American leadership in the space program be a thing of the past? Only time will tell.

Furthermore, the end of NASA's space shuttle program has economic and social repercussions on the domestic front as well. As previously mentioned, space exploration has always served as inspiration for children over the past generations—many children claimed their dream jobs as astronauts, engineers, and scientists. Astronauts have been

idolized as America's true superheroes. No other technological advancement can preach the belief that the sky is literally no limit to what can be achieved with ambition and disciplined commitment. What will drive the future innovation and progress for our na-

"By researching the causes...I will show how our quick "ending" of the space shuttle program negatively affects our standing in today's international world."

tion? In addition, NASA has acknowledged the effects of economic cuts to the American space program. Although Joseph Dyer, chairman of NASA's Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, praises NASA for doing an "excellent job" in planning for the shuttle's retirement, there is no doubt that the "Team B" effect has

plagued the organization. "The good guys see the end coming and leave," said Albert D. Wheelon, former aerospace executive and Central Intelligence Agency official, "The best and brightest often head for the doors... and you're left with the B students."

This issue hits home for me, because my dad has worked for the past 20 years as a project manager for the ISS in its Huntsville's branch. For the Atlantis launch, my family had the opportunity to travel to Cape Canaveral, Florida to honor my dad's work as well as receive a quality view of this final step in NASA's program. As Atlantis glided across the sky in this bittersweet moment, tears filled the eyes of those surrounding me, for these people had given their lives to watch America send a man into space.

The end of America's shuttle program not only signifies a potential end to America's leadership in space, but also goes much further in representing an end to the way of life for those who have, are, and will continue to inspire America's children for generations to come. Unfortunately, if no further steps are taken, this present-day inspiration will only grow to be pure history.



not just for ASTRONAUTS

A closer look at how the space shuttle affected our lives in unexpected ways.

ID politics
Politicians' opinions on space...



CONGRESSWOMAN SUZANNE KOSMAS

"Without working towards a specific vehicle and without having American access to the International Space Station, we risk losing our supremacy in space."

by the NUMBERS
A statistical look at the United States' space statistics (CBS News)



play time
shuttles are international "toys"

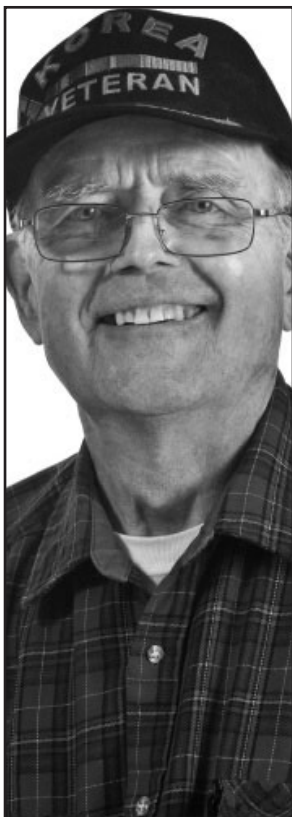
A model of a space shuttle flies during the exhibition for Model Building, Model Railways, Creative Arts and Play in Leipzig, central Germany, on Saturday, Oct. 1, 2011. The fair is one of the largest of its kind and is opened from Sept. 30 until Oct. 3, 2011, in Leipzig.
//AP PHOTO JENS MEYER

museums
shuttles are now in the past

Los Angeles businessman Steve Soboroff...watches as a student from the science center elementary school adds his signature at the ceremonial signing of documents transferring title of the retired space shuttle Endeavour to the California Science Center Foundation.
//AP PHOTO REED SAXON

education
we learned about the shuttle

Charlene Pittmanof the NASA Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Ala., looks in on students in the space shuttle which students have constructed at Cesar Chavez Elementary School, in Oklahoma City.. Third to sixth grade students spent the past week constructing the facilities.
//AP PHOTO SUE OGRICKI



//BRADSHERMAN.HOUSE.GOV



//WWW.NH.GOV

DIVIDING to CONQUER

The new voting registration law has little to do with preventing voter fraud but effectively has implemented a modern day poll tax that is intended to ultimately suppress predominately Democratic-leaning voters.



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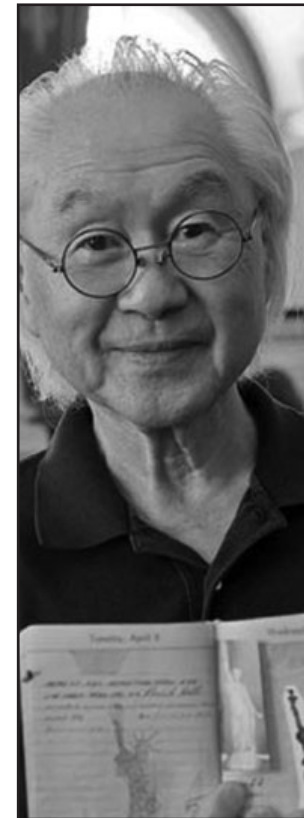
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//WWW.LOC.GOV



//WWW.DOT.STATE.IL.US

//AUSTIN BROWN

On September 13th, 2011, 96-year-old Dorothy Cooper waited patiently for over an hour at the DMV station in Chattanooga, TN to get her now mandatory state-issued photo ID. An active citizen, Cooper has missed only one election since 1933, and desired only to continue to exercise her fundamental right to vote. Stepping up to the clerk on duty, she presented one of her recent rent receipts, a copy of her lease, her voter registration card and her birth certificate, only to be informed that, due to the presence of her maiden name on her birth certificate, she did not have the proper paperwork required to redeem a "free" voter ID.

With similar Republican blitzes on voter laws occurring in many states across the country, many will meet the same fate as Cooper. Though proponents claim that these new stipulations are necessary to purify democracy, they are sure to disproportionately affect the less fortunate and less able, as well as disenfranchise economic and ethnic minorities.

"...Proponents claim that these new stipulations are necessary to purify democracy, they are sure to disproportionately affect the less fortunate and less able..."

The new Tennessee bill, signed into law by Republican Governor Bill Haslam, has little to do with preventing voter fraud; it has instead effectively implemented a modern day barrier to voting that is solely intended to ultimately suppress predominantly Democratic-leaning voters.

Although the 24th Amendment to the United States Constitution outlawed the use of a poll tax, Tennessee's Tea Party conservative politi-

cians, who, lest we forget, love to reference their beloved Constitution (that is, as long as it supports their argument) have implemented just that. No, they are not stipulating a fee to enter the voting booth per se, but for some Tennessee residents living in rural areas, nothing would be more taxing than driving three counties over to the nearest DMV station in order to redeem their "free" Voter ID.

The ramifications of the new law affect not only the poor and elderly, but also another predominately Democratic-leaning constituency: students. In past elections, student ID's from the state's universities have been accepted as a valid form of identification at polling locations, but not anymore. Now, in order to make their voices heard, students will be forced to obtain another ID that lists their new college residence or complete absentee ballot requisitions through their home county's election administrator in hopes of qualifying, by meeting convoluted timing deadlines, varying from county to county, for an absentee ballot. In

hopes of discouraging demographics that tend to vote for their opponents, the Republican Party has assumed a position on yet another issue that is detrimental to most people, excluding the privileged.

Sure, if voter fraud was an actual issue in Tennessee's voting system, then we should be looking for ways to combat such a problem, but it is not. The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law published these findings regarding the voter fraud myth. "Fraud by individual voters is both irrational and extremely rare, occurring .0009 percent of the time and less. The National Weather Service data shows Americans are struck and killed by lightning about as often. Voter fraud is most often invoked as a substantial problem in order to justify particular election policies. Chief among these is the proposal that

"Sure, if voter fraud was an actual issue in Tennessee's voting system, then we should be looking for ways to combat such a problem, but it is not."

individuals be required to show photo identification in order to vote — a policy that disenfranchises up to 10 percent of eligible citizens." In Tennessee, where, according to The Election Project, voter participation ranks 49th out of 50 states, elected officials should be looking for ways in which to increase the number of citizens voting, not effectively disqualify 10 percent from doing so.

The legislature claims to preserve voting integrity, but with the evidence clearly showing how regressive and counter-intuitive the law actually is, we must ask ourselves the question: Is the Republican party attempting to make the voting system in America more democratic or less democratic?

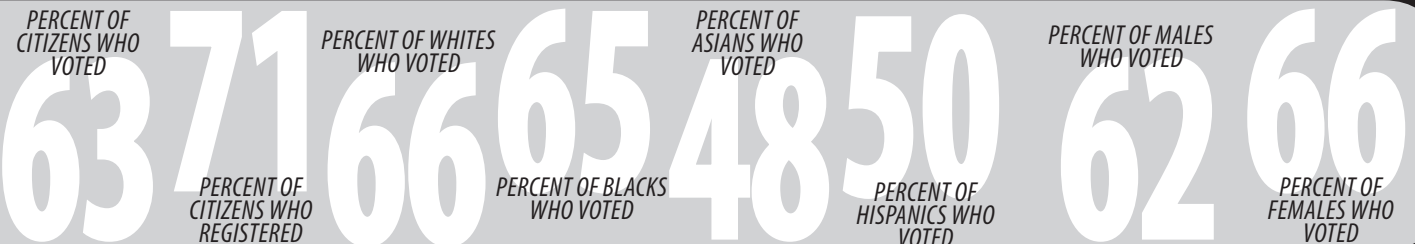


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//HARKIN.SENATE.GOV

by the NUMB3RS
A statistical look at voting statistics from the United States 2008 census



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(why) THEY OCCUPY

A philosophical view of the Occupy Movement

//AMBERVAN HOUTEN
GUEST WRITER

If asked what the current atmosphere of the United States has in common with that of Brazil in 1960, when the country was under an authoritarian regime, very few people could make a connection. A connection does exist, however, particularly in the growing disparity between the rich and the poor in the United States and the increasing sentiment

of oppression in the lower classes. Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire states in his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that when the humanization of a people "is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, [and] oppression," they yearn for freedom and justice and the desire to "recover their lost humanity." When these people "critically recognize" the causes of their oppression, they often resort to "transforming action" through which "they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity." The Occupy Movement that is currently sweeping the United States can be seen as an attempt at a "transforming action." The Occupy Movement is representative of how "99% of the nation's economic spectrum united against the 1% of the richest individuals and corporations." They want a new order, or at least a revised one, that allows them to pursue "a fuller humanity" and stop living day-to-day. Due to this sentiment, the movement, which started off as peaceful, was classified by some

as "jealousy" on the part of the lower classes. However, the movement is not predicated on jealousy, but rather by a sense of helplessness and oppression. The 99% are simply fed up.

Paulo Freire warns that too much disparity and unfair treatment within a uniform nation will cause dissent and rebellion. Although he was referring to a political situation in Brazil where the majority of the lower class was illiterate and uneducated, the principle is still applicable to the current situation in the U.S. In the United States, all children enroll in school and are made, at the very least, literate; at the same time, however, they can be considered uneducated in the way that the "real world" actually works. Children are filled with dreams of a capitalist system in which "anyone can make it," and then ushered out in the world to encounter the stark reality of job scarcity and the ever-rising cost of living. They are taught if they work hard, they will succeed, but often they find themselves being worked into the ground to no avail.

Even worse, with the rising unemployment rates, high school, technical school, and college graduates are finding themselves perpetually employed in minimum wage jobs regardless of their educational distinctions. These are the people, coupled with some of the nation's "most highly educated middle class" that are making up the Occupy Movement. They "are feeling the results of a system that saw all the growth of the last three decades go to the top 1 percent."

Currently, the result of these sentiments have been largely peaceful protests (with a few exceptions) that purport the need for change in a system that puts so many people at a disadvantage and supports the interests of the 1%. However, as Paulo Freire notes in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, if the oppressors do not work with the oppressed to rectify the unbalanced situation, the oppressed will resort to more violent means of achieving liberation. What does this imply? It implies that instead of regarding this movement as one motivated by jealousy,

the government and the media should look to the force behind the movement, and recognize the problem. They will see that there is a high rate of unemployment in this nation; that there are large numbers of highly educated individuals who are reduced to working in the most menial positions, and that - despite the beliefs of some -- these problems are not caused by laziness. The United States has departed from the founding belief that everyone has an equal right to pursue happiness. There is a disparity, and it must be rectified. Otherwise, as Freire implies, the repercussions could be entirely unfavorable. A society in which the majority of the citizens feel oppressed is, in essence, no society at all.

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(how) IT ALL counts

by the NUMB3RS

Results from the Wall Street Journal's survey of the Occupy Wall Street Protestors (October 2011)

98 PERCENT WOULD SUPPORT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

31 PERCENT WOULD SUPPORT VIOLENCE TO ADVANCE THEIR AGENDA

48 PERCENT WILL VOTE TO RE-ELECT OBAMA (51 PERCENT DISAPPROVE OF OBAMA)

25 PERCENT WILL NOT VOTE IN THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

77 PERCENT SAY THAT THEY SUPPORT RAISING TAXES ON THE WEALTHIEST AMERICANS

58 PERCENT SAY THAT THEY OPPOSE RAISING TAXES ON EVERY AMERICAN

65 PERCENT BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO GUARANTEE AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE, A COLLEGE EDUCATION, AND SECURE RETIREMENT TO EVERY AMERICAN - NO MATTER THE COST



ID vandy

JESSICA BRUNELLE
"The greatest strength of the Occupy Movement is the number of people who feel strongly about the issues at hand: corporate personhood and the strength of Wallstreet..."



(what) WE believe

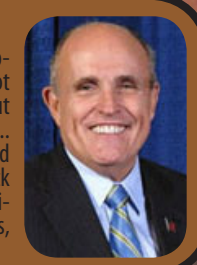
ID politics

PRESIDENT OBAMA
"...Both on the left and the right, I think people feel separated from their government. They feel that their institutions aren't looking out for them." (Devin Dwyer, ABC News)



ID politics

RUDY GIULIANI
"It would not have happened, it would not have happened but for his class warfare... the millstone around Barack Obama's neck that will take his presidency down." (Dan Collins, Huffington Post)



a professor's PERSPECTIVE

Candidate characteristics and the 2012 election



Dr. Suzanne Globetti

*Vanderbilt University
Assistant Professor of
Political Science*

Political scientists have consistently identified a handful of important voting criteria in presidential elections. Time and again, they find that party identification, performance retrospections, issues, and candidate characteristics are the key ingredients in voters' decision-making calculi. First among these, by a mile, is party identification. As much as the media relish analyzing the potential impact of every campaign move, Americans, as a general rule, pay little attention to the drama unfolding around them. Busy with their own lives, they are content to let party identification be their guide. So, for example, political scientist Steve Finkel finds that the majority of voters have already made up their minds for whom to vote before the general election campaign even begins. So much for campaigns mattering.

The situation is much different, however, in primary elections. Since primary fights pit members of the same party against each other, party essentially becomes irrelevant. What criterion can take up the slack left by party's disappearance? Much research suggests that voters assess the state of the national economy when voting. If the economy has improved over the president's term, they reward him by

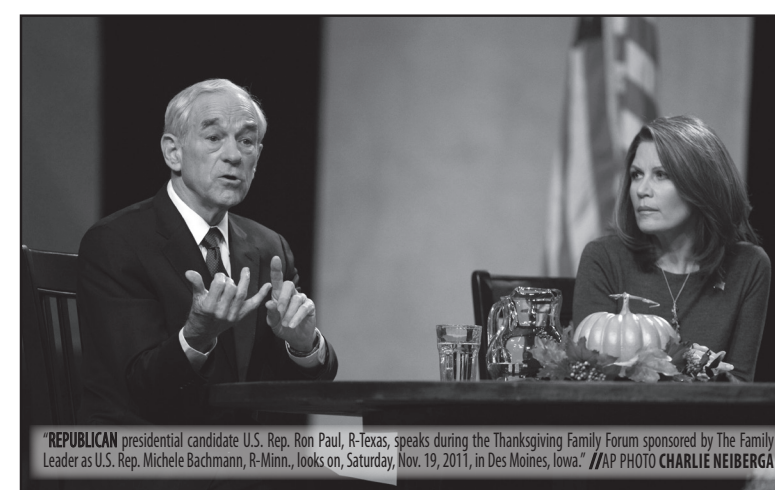
returning him to office; if the economy has deteriorated, they send him packing. Since incumbent presidents rarely invite challenges within their own party, however, presidential primaries rarely turn on such performance-based criteria.

Having ruled out two of the most potent voting heuristics, we are left with issue positions and candidate characteristics as potential guides. Even in a historically intense primary race, turnout is very low. Indeed, the wildly exciting 2008 Democratic primary broke a record for Super Tuesday turnout – a whopping 27% made it to the polls. We know that primaries and caucuses tend to bring out the most motivated and dedicated members of their party. Those who do vote therefore tend to be at the ideological extremes of their party. Aware of this, primary candidates do not leave much daylight between their positions and those of their opponents. Again, think of the spirited primary fight between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama in 2008. The two principals' positions essentially mirrored each other.

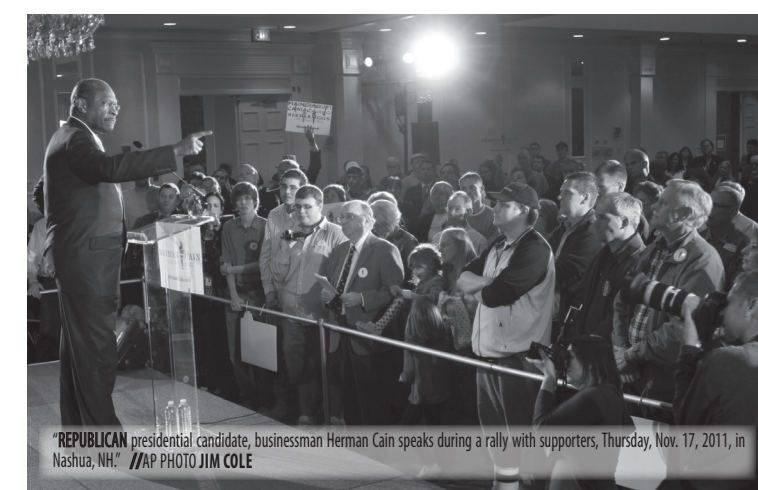
To be sure, this year's Republican contenders do vary ideologically more than that. Governor Romney's previous ties to liberal Massachu-

setts and to Obamacare certainly belie a more moderate past, as does Jon Huntsman's service as an ambassador in the Obama Administration. However, as the moderates in Congress have all but disappeared, moderate or liberal Republicans are less likely to exist, much less run for president. Moderate or conservative Democrats are also an increasingly rare breed. Coupling this elite polarizing turn with the greater ideology of primary electorates, it becomes difficult to find any one substantive issue that Republican candidates meaningfully disagree on. Interest group ratings appear to back this up. Michele Bachmann has a 100% lifetime rating from the interest group American Conservative Union. Ron Paul stands lifetime at 84%, while former senator Rick Santorum tallied 92% in the 2004-2005 term. This is variation, to be sure, but not wild variation.

While issues may play some role, candidate characteristics will probably rush to fill the void. Indeed, the most recent Marist poll, in the field November 8th – 10th, asked Republican and Republican-leaning respondents the key to their vote. 33% said that a candidate who shares their values is the key; 27% said experience is most important, and 23% said



"REPUBLICAN presidential candidate U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, speaks during the Thanksgiving Family Forum sponsored by The Family Leader as U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., looks on, Saturday, Nov. 19, 2011, in Des Moines, Iowa." //AP PHOTO CHARLIE NEIBERGALL



"REPUBLICAN presidential candidate, businessman Herman Cain speaks during a rally with supporters, Thursday, Nov. 17, 2011, in Nashua, N.H." //AP PHOTO JIM COLE

a candidate who is closest to them on the issues is most important. Electability was the choice of only 13%. Presidential primaries are media-driven affairs, and the media prefer to talk about personality more than issues. As Thomas Patterson details in his book *Out of Order*, the same beat reporter is sent to cover a candidate day-in and day-out. The disciplined candidate stays on message, giving the same stump speech over and over again. To the beat reporter, this is not news. Instead, what is news is the unusual speech setting (a meat locker, in the case of Bachmann) or the hyper-animated, seemingly inebriated delivery (Perry). Lost amid the snickers of Perry's strangely delivered, instantly viral speech were the policy details he had rolled out that week. Earlier in the week, Perry had announced his own tax plan to compete with Herman Cain's catchy 9-9-9 plan. Perry suggested that doing taxes under his flat tax plan would be no harder than filling out and mailing a USPS postcard. Unfortunately for Perry the style of the speech, not the substance, carried the day.

The media strive to provide voters with a personal narrative for the candidates. Perhaps nowhere was this more evident than in the CNN introduction to one of the early Republican debates. In a reality TV style format, an ominous-sounding announcer kicked off the debate by introducing us to the candidates: the Front-runner (Romney), the Newcomer (Perry), the firebrand (Bachmann), the Diplomat (Huntsman), the Libertarian (Paul), the Fighter (Santorum), the Businessman (Cain), and the Big Thinker (Gingrich). In calling Bachmann a firebrand, CNN treated her more kindly than did Newsweek, which ran a cover of her with otherworldly eyes. This attempt to brand the candidates on the basis of their personal characteristics suggests the power of personality in the campaign process. When personality is so dominant, issues are necessarily crowded out. But should we really choose our candidates on the basis of how they look, whether they can think quickly during a debate, or on the basis of their religious orientation?



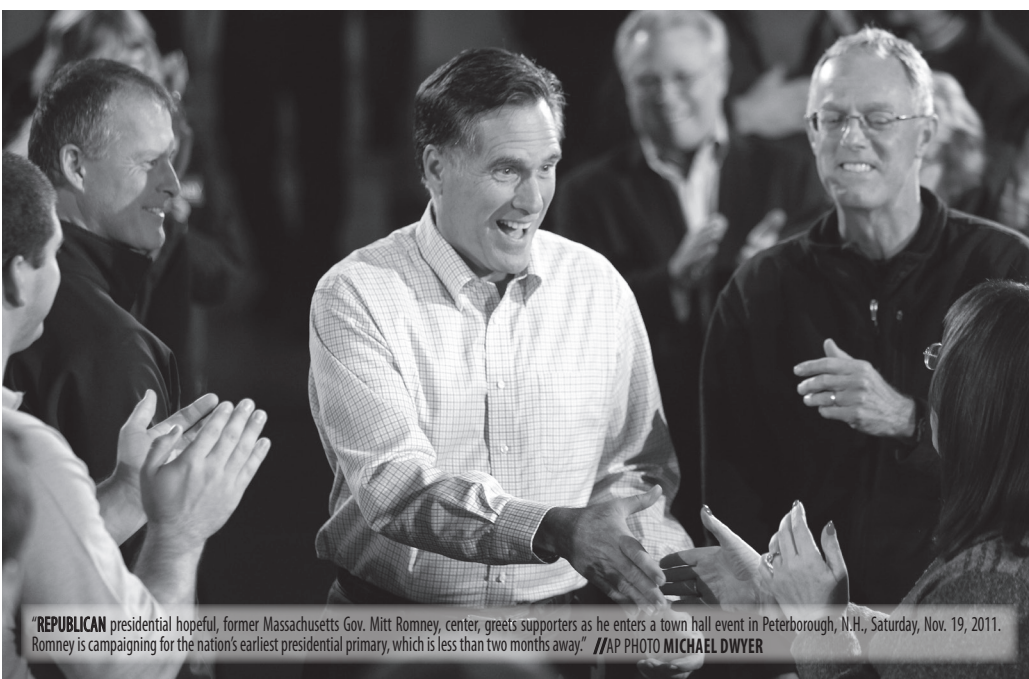
"REPUBLICAN presidential candidates, from left, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, and Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, stand together before a Republican presidential candidate debate at the Reagan Library Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2011..." //AP PHOTO CHRIS CARLSON

So far, Republican voters have been a fickle lot. Every few weeks, a candidate makes a splash, then settles back into the fold. There have been gaffes, as well as much more serious scandals – such as the most recent allegations of sexual harassment against Herman Cain. Throughout it all, the Republicans have remained lukewarm about Mitt Romney. This does have to do with his record as a moderate Republican, but it also stems in part from the perception that Romney is a flip-flopper – in the words of George Will a “pretzel” or, in the words of opponent Huntsman “perfectly lubricated weather vane.” Rick Perry's conservative credentials and tough guy persona made him popular for a time, but later debate miscues have greatly eroded his support. Cain has soared to the front, but is slowly feeling the fallout of the sexual harassment scandal. The latest rising star is Newt Gingrich; how long he lasts is anyone's guess.

Some observers argue that this emphasis on candidate personality is not nearly as pernicious as others would have us believe. It is important that we find out the transgressions of candidates that might disqualify them from office. Absent serious transgressions, it is still important to go through a vetting process. Some argue that how a candidate weathers the grueling primary season – a season now essentially spanning two years – is a good indicator

“Since primary fights pit members of the same party against each other, party essentially becomes irrelevant. What criterion can take up the slack left by party's disappearance?”

of his or her fitness for office. Following this line of reasoning, if a candidate can't handle the heat of a primary race, how can he or she possibly handle the fiery environs of the White House? In this way, some argue that how a candidate holds up under the stress and strain of a primary suggests much about his or her personal motivation and drive. Does freezing during a debate translate into freezing during a critical foreign policy moment? Does the primary season weed out those not ready for primetime? It's ultimately up to primary voters to decide.



"REPUBLICAN presidential hopeful, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, center, greets supporters as he enters a town hall event in Peterborough, N.H., Saturday, Nov. 19, 2011. Romney is campaigning for the nation's earliest presidential primary, which is less than two months away." //AP PHOTO MICHAEL DWYER



"REPUBLICAN presidential candidate Michele Bachmann, Minnesota's Rep., speaks at the CBS News/National Journal foreign policy debate at the Benjamin Johnson Arena, Saturday, Nov. 12, 2011 in Spartanburg. Bachmann said she would continue to hold terror suspects at the military prison at Guantanamo." //AP PHOTO RICHARD SHIRO

INTERNATIONAL *lens*

Student perspectives on world events

Russia's Power Swap

//NICHOLASVANCE

For months, Russian citizens and leaders were unsure about who would become the next leader of the nation. In a public address, sitting Russian President Dmitry Medvedev urged the people to support current Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, for the post of President in the upcoming elections. Putin has previously served as President of Russia, but was forced to step down as he had reached his consecutive term limit cap. In response, Putin stated that he would name Medvedev his Prime Minister if their power is secured in the election.

Putin has stayed in authority in post-Soviet Russia by playing on the fears of the citizens, stating frequently that the nation could go back to economic ruin if only a few wrong steps are made. Although Putin and Medvedev both represent conservative ideologies within Russia, perhaps the nation's top leadership needs more diverging points of view. By keeping the highest offices on essentially a rotation schedule for two men with similar principles, Russia may have trouble strengthening the democratic institutions necessary for the nation to grow.

The Soviet era is still a fresh memory for much of the Russian citizenry, so selecting the strong-armed candidates who enforce conservative principles by playing on fear is familiar and comfortable. Although Putin and Medvedev have both done much to expand democratic functions under their administrations, much of the Western world looks at Russia's leaders with a heavy-handed skepticism. Putin's leadership along with Medvedev's apparent willingness to go along with whatever Putin decides is worrisome because, for a nation with such a young democracy and an extremely communistic background, relying on a few dynamic and controlling leaders for too long could lead the nation back from whence it came.

Anwar al-Awlaki

//JAMIEDAVIDSON

Coming five months after the death of Osama bin Laden, the killing of Anwar al-Awlaki, an influential but less recognizable member of Al-Qaeda, might not seem very controversial. What makes al-Awlaki special, however, is his American citizenship. Al-Awlaki was killed on September 31st after U.S. drones struck his car as it was traveling across North Yemen, and U.S. officials were thrilled to have finally taken out an operative they'd been after for years. President Obama said he was "the leader of external operations for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula" and officials had tied him to several terrorist plots including the attempts to blow up a Detroit-bound airliner back in December of 2009. Officials also cited his internet lectures and sermons as highly influential and inspiring for would-be terrorists.

Al-Awlaki's American citizenship,

however, has caused some to criticize his killing as a violation of his rights as an American citizen. Many prominent civil libertarians including Ron Paul and the ACLU have condemned Awlaki's death, citing the Bill of Rights, an executive order banning assassinations, and federal law. Indeed, there was an internal debate to this effect within the Obama administration before Awlaki was placed on the "kill list" last year. The Justice Department drafted a memo justifying the decision at that time, however, that argues Awlaki's killing to be justified given his role as a leader of Al-Qaeda and Congress' authorization for the use of military force against the organization following 9/11. It also cites past cases in which American citizens who had joined forces with American enemies were treated as noncitizens. Given the strong views on both sides of the argument, this controversy is sure to remain hotly debated.

State of Saudi Arabian-Iranian Relations

//JAMIEDAVIDSON

On October 11th, the Justice Department announced it had discovered a plot to kill the Saudi Ambassador to the United States. According to Attorney General Eric Holder, the plot was "directed and approved by elements of the Iranian government and, specifically, senior members of the Quds Force." (The United States has considered the Quds Force a terrorist organization since 2007.) Iran denies the allegations but at his press conference, Holder declared the United States "is committed to holding Iran accountable for its actions" although he did not specify exactly what measures the

U.S. would be taking to do so. On November 3rd, matters were further complicated when reports surfaced that Israel might be considering a military strike against Iran. According to the New York Times, Israeli leaders are weighing "whether and when to strike a uranium enrichment facility at Natanz, the centerpiece of Iran's known nuclear-fuel production, and related sites across the country." Obviously, an Israeli attack on Iran would further destabilize an already volatile region. Furthermore, if war broke out between Iran and Israel, the United States might be forced to defend its Israeli allies.

Gaddafi's End and a Renewed Libya

//NICHOLASVANCE

After decades of a brutal regime, which harmed its own citizens and tore at relations with the West, Muammar Gaddafi's reign of power is over. In February 2011, Libyans took to the streets to take part in the Arab Spring and protested the long-term abuses taken by Gaddafi and his counterparts. Through strong rebel resistance and international intervention, the National Transition-

al Council, now the de-facto Libyan government, confirmed on October 20th that rebel forces found the vicious authoritarian and executed him. Despite fierce and desperate attempts to maintain a hold on his control, Muammar Gaddafi could not overcome the outcries of his people during the Arab Spring and is now dead.

This new era in the Middle East will be shaped by the outcries for democracy that resonated throughout the world over the past year. How will these newly gained values be implemented? Interestingly, in recent Tunisian elections, an Islamic party won majorities. This victory shows that although

the people moved for freedom, they do not necessarily want a system similar to the United States. These newly formed democracies may very well create different types of government than many expect - ones tied to conservative Islamic principles instead of pure representational democracy.

Whatever systems are set up, they will surely be more responsive and open than the regimes of Gaddafi's Libya. Through the Arab Spring, the protestors demonstrated their ability to alter the nature of government in the Middle East - a lesson that will not quickly be forgotten.



A woman waves a pre-Gadhafi flag during a celebration of the capture of Seif al-Islam Gadhafi in Tripoli, Libya, Saturday, Nov. 19, 2011. Seif al-Islam Gadhafi, considered Moammar Gadhafi's heir apparent, long drew Western favor by touting himself as a liberalizing reformer but then staunchly backed his father in his brutal crackdown on rebels in the regime's final days. //AP PHOTO ABDEL MAGID AL-FERGANY

flash back & fast forward

A look at Reagan's popularity and progress in the past and his relationship to the upcoming 2012 Presidential Election

//MARKCHERRY

Earlier this year, a Gallup Poll asked Americans which US president they regarded as the greatest. Ronald Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, was atop the list with 19% of those polled calling him the greatest president America has ever seen, a full 5% points above Abraham Lincoln. Reagan's honorific place in the minds of many Americans is indisputable, and seems to only be waxing with time. Often invoked as the patron saint of conservatives, Reagan has been held as the poster boy of the Tea Party movement and the Republican Party alike. Interestingly, however, times have changed greatly since 1988, when Reagan completed his second term as President, with both political parties becoming more polarized than they have been since The Restoration. To be sure, the modern Republican Party has different ideological demands of its presidential candidates than in 1980, when Reagan secured the Republican nomination. Taking into account the actual policies that Reagan

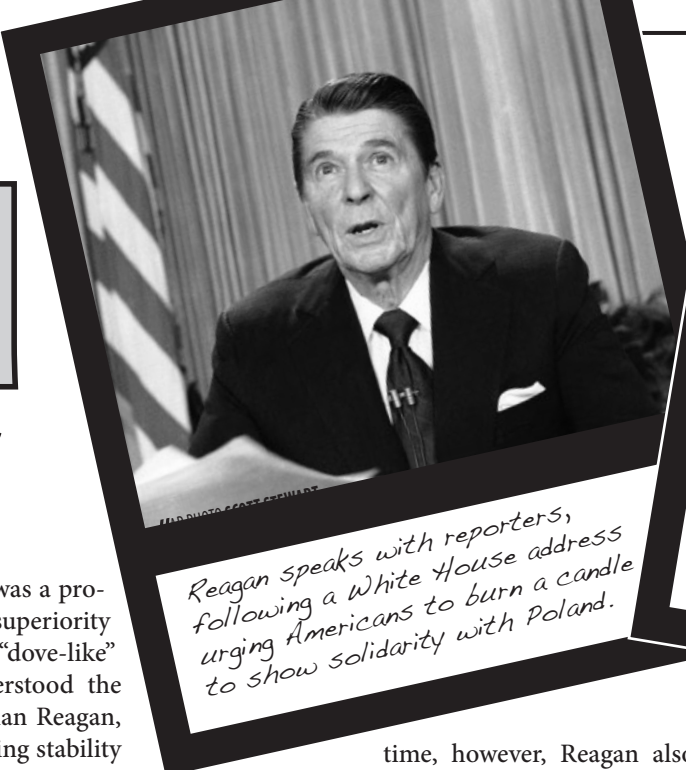
championed during his time as President, would he be able to earn the 2012 Republican presidential nomination? To speculate on this topic with any accuracy, Reagan's aspirations as well as his results must be compared with the demands the Republican Party is making of current candidates for the nomination.

Reagan is largely considered one of the more conservative presidents in our nation's history. His policies included slashing government regulation of the private sector, increasing military spending, slowing the rate at which government grew, and several steep tax cuts. The benefits reaped during the Reagan years were tangible: the faltering U.S. economy recovered after a stubborn recession, unemployment dropped from 7.6% in 1980 to 5.5% in 1988, and U.S.-Soviet relations took a turn, a major factor in the end of the Cold War just a few years later. It is these very accomplishments that have earned Reagan an enduring legacy in the minds of the Tea Party, the broader Republican Party, and indeed the American population as a whole.

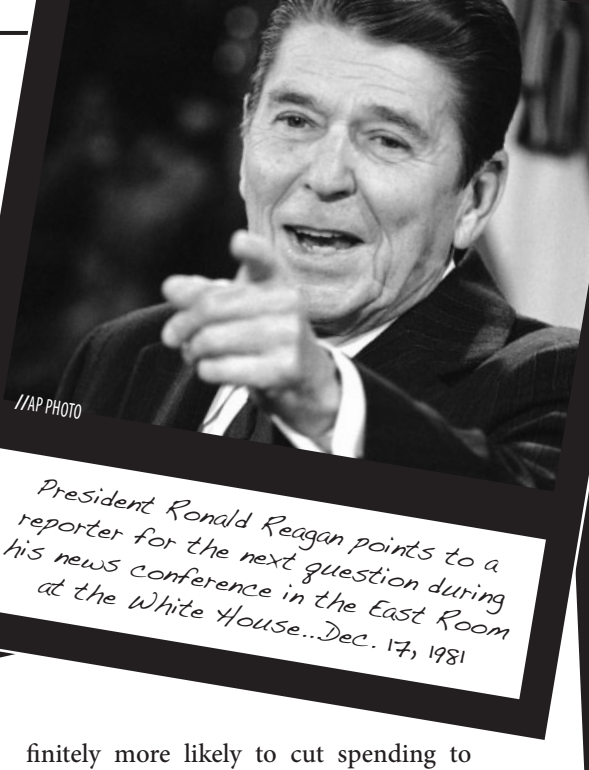
But would the modern GOP have agreed with all of the policies Reagan employed to reach these goals? The answer

is, without a doubt, no. While he was a proponent of assuring the military superiority of the United States, he had a few "dove-like" tendencies as well. No one understood the dangers of the Cold War better than Reagan, and he took the challenge of bringing stability to the situation very seriously. One method he hoped to use to bring this stability was complete nuclear disarmament. Reagan's goal of eliminating nuclear weapons was obviously never accomplished, but a much more moderate disarmament actually did occur between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. How would modern Republicans feel about a candidate who preached U.S. disarmament as a strategy to achieve peace? To answer this, one need go no further than 2010, when President Obama faced harsh criticism from the GOP for signing a treaty with Russia that ushered in a new round of disarmament. Republican critics were concerned with the message that this would send to nations like Iran, who may someday serve as a nuclear threat. Surely, Reagan would find little support within the modern GOP for his disarmament aspirations.

Reagan's aggressive tax cuts are largely regarded as some of Reagan's most celebrated accomplishments. His Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 and Tax Reform Act of 1986 cut individual and corporate tax rates significantly (one of the main reasons the Tea Party is so enamored with him). At the same



Reagan speaks with reporters, following a White House address urging Americans to burn a candle to show solidarity with Poland.



President Ronald Reagan points to a reporter for the next question during his news conference in the East Room at the White House...Dec. 17, 1981

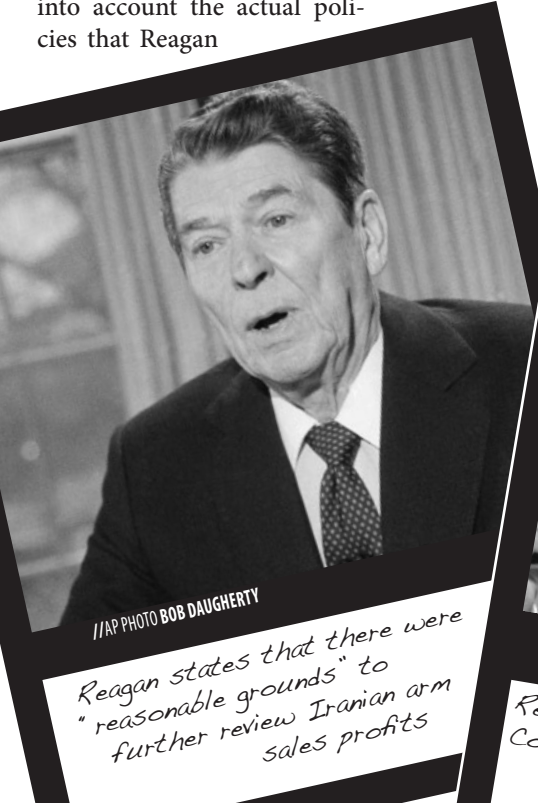


Reagan appears on television, urging Americans to end to all commercial and credit ties with the Poland martial government.

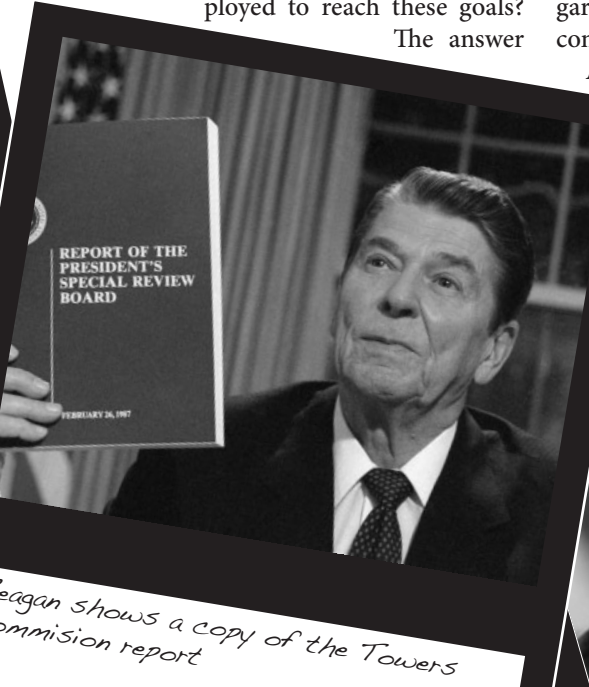
time, however, Reagan also committed what has become an unforgivable sin amongst Republicans: he raised taxes. And it didn't just happen once; Reagan raised taxes eleven different times during his time as President. While these tax increases did not fully wipe out the cuts he made, they did "...eat up about half of it." Furthermore, some of his tax increases were used to pay for Social Security and Medicare, two programs the GOP remains at least somewhat opposed to in the present day. What all of this shows is that Reagan was not just a tax-slashing conservative. Rather, his belief in the necessity of occasional tax increases to pay for government services and to decrease the national debt made him, at least by today's standards, relatively moderate. This belief, of course, would make him virtually unelectable within the Republican Party. If the national debt talks from the past summer have taught us anything, it is that Republicans do not take kindly to the idea of tax increases. Modern Republicans are in-

finitely more likely to cut spending to Social Security than to raise taxes to continue to fund it. Any candidate proposing Reagan's philosophy would find little support within the party. While Reagan was by and large an extremely conservative President, his few moderate stances were on issues that have become central to the Republican Party. In a 2012 Republican Presidential Debate, Reagan would be mercilessly attacked for his disarmament efforts and his multiple tax increases. These two things alone would likely bar him from any chance at the nomination. Reagan himself would not be conservative enough to satisfy the modern GOP, leaving the question: if their own poster boy fails to meet Republican criteria, who can?

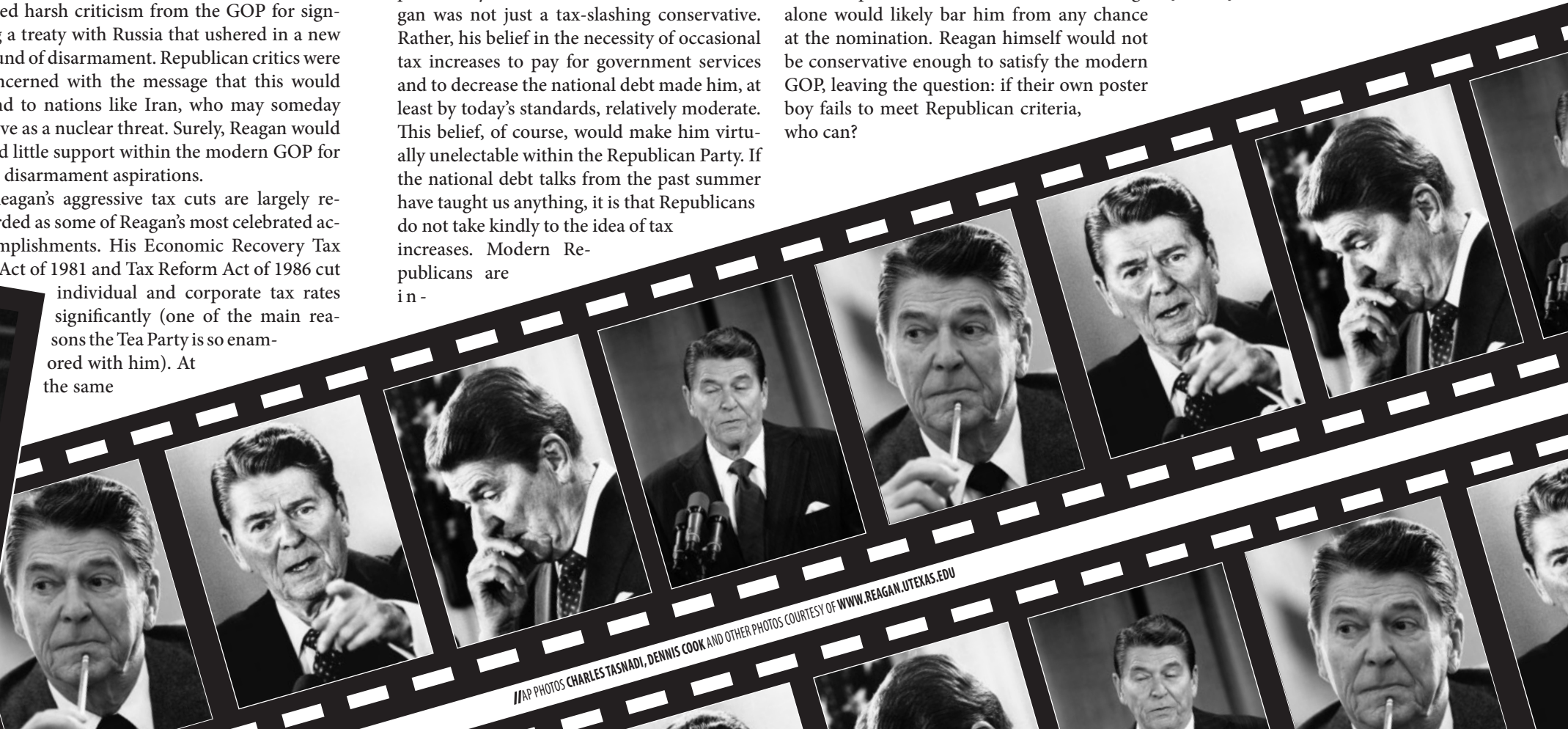
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Reagan states that there were "reasonable grounds" to further review Iranian arm sales profits

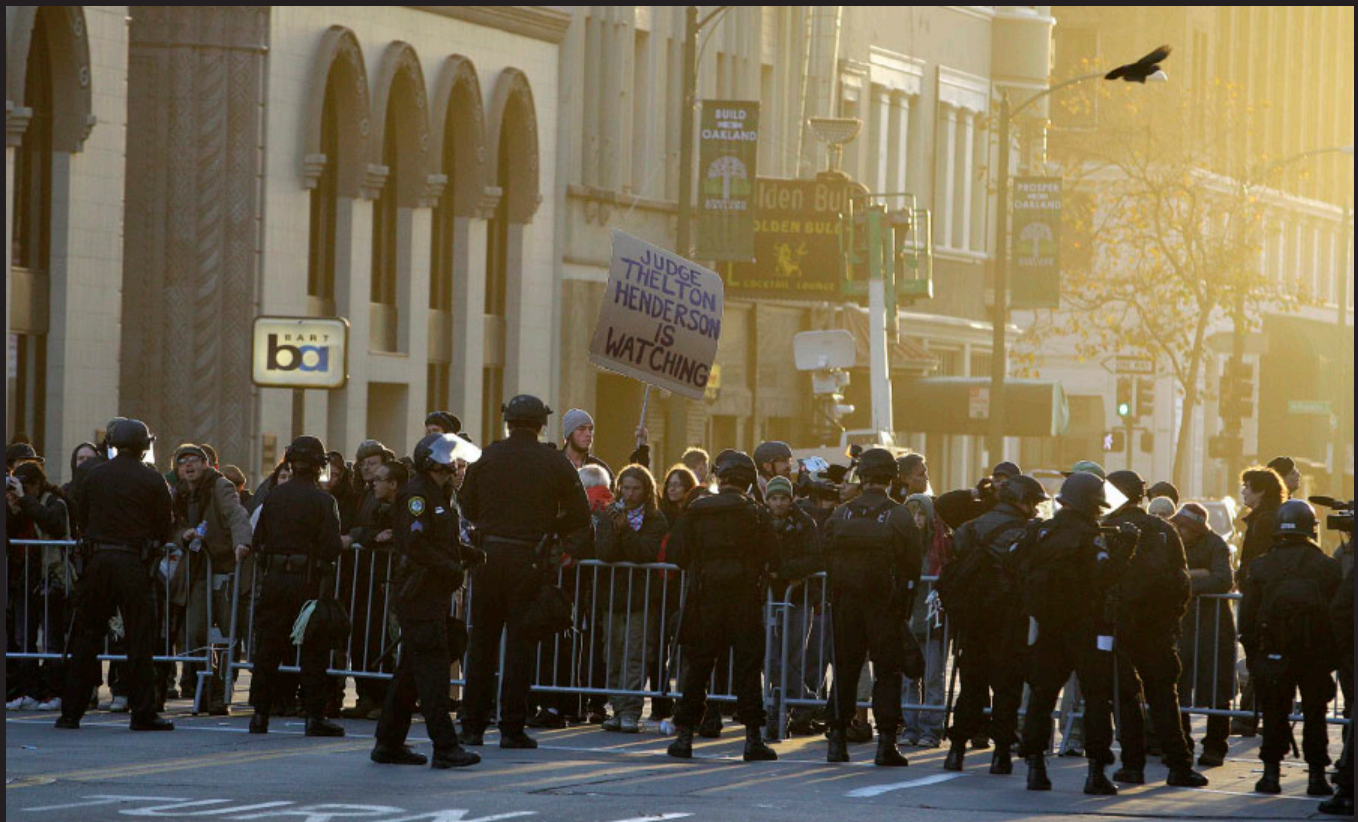


Reagan shows a copy of the Towers Commission report



//AP PHOTOS CHARLES TASNADI, DENNIS COOK AND OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF WWW.REAGAN.UTEXAS.EDU

Occupy the Nation



(ABOVE) "Alameda County Sheriffs and Oakland police barricade protestors from entering Frank Ogawa Plaza where an Occupy Oakland encampment was evicted Monday, Nov. 14, 2011, in Oakland, Calif." //AP PHOTO BEN MARGOT



(RIGHT) "A police officer in riot gear guards an ATM as Occupy protesters marched to several banks in Portland, Ore., Thursday, Nov. 17, 2011. Occupy Wall Street demonstrators held modestly sized, but energetic rallies around the country Thursday to celebrate two months since the movement's birth and signal that they aren't ready to quit yet, despite police raids that have destroyed some of their encampments." //AP PHOTO DON RYAN



(LEFT) "Occupy Oakland protesters march through Oakland, Calif., on Saturday, Nov. 19, 2011. Shortly after, protesters broke through a fence to begin establishing a new encampment." //AP PHOTO NOAH BERGER

(ABOVE) "A demonstrator holds a sign as she walks along K Street, Thursday, Nov. 17, 2011, in Washington. Occupy Wall Street protesters clogged streets and tied up traffic around the U.S. on Thursday to mark two months since the movement's birth and signal they aren't ready to quit, despite the breakup of many of their encampments by police." //AP PHOTO HARAZ N. GHANBARI



//PHOTO ESSAY BY ANDREW MCKITTRICK