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Peter F. Nardulli: Popular Efficacy in the Democratic Era

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Chapter One

Democracy, Popular Efficacy, and the Electoral Arena

> As mankind approaches the end of the millennium, the twin crises of authoritarianism and socialist central planning have left only one competitor standing in the ring as an ideology of potential universal validity: liberal democracy, the doctrine of individual freedom and popular sovereignty. Two hundred years after they first animated the French and American revolutions, the principles of liberty and equality have proven not just durable, but resurgent.
>
> —Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*

> The founders of representative government expected that the formal arrangements they advocated would somehow induce government to act in the interest of the people, but they did not know precisely why it would be so. Neither do we, after two hundred years.
>
> —Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*

The world experienced an extraordinary amount of societal change in the latter third of the twentieth century. Colonial empires all but disappeared, and transnational organizations emerged for the purpose of ensuring world order and furthering social welfare. Unprecedented levels of international cooperation occurred across a number of areas (arms control, trade, health, environmental protection, etc.) and international conflicts were largely restricted to proxy wars and regional conflicts. In many nations expectations for human rights were heightened and gender roles transformed. The electronics revolution and fundamental changes in modes of communication and transportation contributed to the globalization of economic activity, which generated dramatic increases in affluence—as well as increased disparities in wealth across and within nations. Also significant was the widespread diffusion of liberal democratic governments and free enterprise economies.

Many have considered the emergence of liberal democracies and free market economies so significant that they attributed the increased pace of societal change and social progress to them. Indeed, Fukuyama (1992: 48) argues that the allure of these systems is so great, and the forces behind the liberal revolution so fundamental, that a "common evolutionary pattern" is emerging, one that will result in the widespread diffusion of liberal orders (representative democracy and free enterprise economics). Many proponents of the liberal revolution do not agree with Fukuyama's analysis. Most, however, would agree that liberal orders are uniquely capable of providing for the structure, stability, and dynamism needed to harness human, societal, and natural resources for the realization of broad societal interests. In contrast to its "competitors," the processes used by liberal orders to produce goods and services are tied much more closely to the preferences of individuals. On a *theoretical* level, they provide unparalleled opportunities for (1) individuals to develop, express, and enforce their preferences on matters affecting their welfare and (2) entrepreneurs to engage in activities aimed at satisfying the demands that flow from those individual preferences.

The appeal of liberal orders rests on a foundation of both value judgments and empirical assumptions. These value judgments took centuries to develop; they gained widespread acceptance in Western societies only after substantial changes were made in the initial formulations of both democracy and capitalism (direct democracy and laissez-faire capitalism). In contrast to the broad consensus that these value judgments currently enjoy, there is a good deal of skepticism about the empirics: Do they work the way they are supposed to work? Do they achieve what they are intended to achieve? This is especially true in the case of representative democracy.

The contemporary allure of representative democracy is based on its potential to make government responsive to the needs, interests, and desires of ordinary citizens, as opposed to those of political and social elites or specialized interest groups. Governmental responsiveness to broad societal interests has been a timeless concern, which is why democracy's "third wave" has achieved such acclaim. At a theoretical level, democracy appears more responsive than its competitors or its predecessors. But the uncertainties expressed in the epigraph to this chapter underscore the widespread concerns over how, or if, democratic political orders "induce government to act in the interest of the people." Uncertainties about *democratic responsiveness* such as those expressed by Przeworski and his collaborators feed the concerns of democratic skeptics.

These skeptics do not deny the dramatic increases in the standard of living experienced in Western democracies over the past century. Nor do they deny the ability of democracies to live in harmony with themselves

and other democratic nations. Or their relative stability. Instead, they attribute these accomplishments to cultural and/or geophysical factors rather than political ones. Democratic skeptics are driven to seek alternative explanations because they doubt that the distinguishing features of democratic political orders can account for their accomplishments. That is, they are skeptical about the force of popular influences within representative democracies, what I term popular efficacy.

Popular efficacy can be understood as the capacity of citizens to drive, guide, and constrain the behavior of political elites. Popular efficacy is what makes democratic governance more responsive to broad societal interests than other forms of governance. The stronger the force of popular influences within a democracy, the greater its responsiveness to broader societal interests. Within representative democracies, popular efficacy derives principally, but not exclusively, from mechanisms that provide for electoral accountability.

Skepticism about popular efficacy is rooted in (1) institutional complexities and interdependencies and (2) the demanding normative expectations it places on democratic citizens, processes, and structures. Representative democracies are complex systems involving many players, institutions, norms, and processes. In order for ordinary citizens to play an efficacious role, the various players (citizens, legislators, judges, bureaucrats, political parties, etc.) must have the capacity, and the commitment, to fulfill democratic role expectations. Moreover, political institutions and processes must be structured to reflect democratic norms and values. Finally, popular efficacy requires a set of systemic interdependencies; the various components of democracy must work in harmony in order to insure governmental responsiveness. Deficiencies in any aspect of the system—disinterested citizens, insulated legislators, autonomous bureaucrats, unfair elections, restrictions on civil and political liberties, and the like—can dilute the force of popular influences.

These interdependencies make "real" democracy (i.e., responsive democracy) a highly vulnerable, fragile form of government—some would say an unattainable form of government: little more than a myth constructed by political elites to justify their control over the levers of societal power.

The skepticism about popular efficacy rooted in institutional and normative concerns has been reinforced by the work of empiricists who have studied the political behavior of ordinary citizens. Empirical democratic theorists have expressed concerns about citizens' cognitive limitations, the ability of political elites to mold and manipulate their political views, and the difficulties diffuse publics have penetrating and mobilizing complex institutional networks. In *The Responsible Electorate*, V. O. Key articulated the prevailing conventional wisdom concerning democratic citi-

zens: the image of voters as "*manageable fools*." Key observed, in his imitable way, that

> By and large, the picture of the voter that emerges from a combination of the folklore of practical politics and the findings of the new electoral studies is not a pretty one. It is not a portrait of citizens moving to a considered decision as they play their solemn role of making and unmaking governments. The older tradition from practical politics may regard the voter as an erratic and irrational fellow susceptible to manipulation by skilled humbugs. One need not live through many campaigns to observe politicians, even successful politicians, who act as though they regarded the people as manageable fools. Nor does a heroic conception of the voter emerge from the new analyses of electoral behavior. They can be added up to a conception of voting not as a civic decision but as an almost purely deterministic act. Given knowledge of certain characteristics of a voter—his occupation, his residence, his national origin, and perhaps certain of his attitudes—one can predict with a high probability the direction of his vote. The actions of persons are made to appear to be only predictable and automatic responses to campaign stimuli. (1966: 5)

This image is rooted in empirical observations derived from a century's worth of experience with mass suffrage in industrial democracies.[1] Since Key wrote, a half-century of research conducted within the individual-level survey research paradigm has documented the durability of the image of voters as "manageable fools," as chapter 2 will document. This image is quite different from that embedded in most treatises on democratic theory, particularly utilitarian conceptions that underlie representative democracies. The problematic theoretical implications of the "manageable fools" caricature reinforce the normative and institutional concerns expressed above.

The problematic implications of institutional factors for popular efficacy are particularly true in the United States, which is the empirical focus of this study. The circumstances that led many of the original colonists to settle in America bred a disdain for unchecked concentrations of governmental power. That disdain was reinforced by the colonial experience, manifested itself in the complex constitutional design of governments in the United States, and has been an integral part of American political

[1] Political scholars have been studying citizens and making empirically based inferences about popular efficacy in large-scale industrial democracies since the latter part of the nineteenth century. The earliest assessments emerged from the insightful, but fairly unstructured, observations of scholars such as Mosca, Michels, Pareto, Bryce, Ostrogorski, Weber, and Schumpeter. This early body of work was followed by the early- and mid-twentieth-century work of empirical democratic theorists, most of whom used data derived from survey research.

culture for over two centuries. The institutional legacy of this disdain for unchecked power is the existence of diverse channels of influence and many veto points in American government. The implications of this institutional legacy for democracy have been compounded by the course of American political development. The pluralistic nature of American society, combined with its liberal underpinnings, has led to the emergence of a multitude of diverse, highly organized interest groups.

The confluence of these developments has led many to conclude that these groups have overwhelmed the role and concerns of ordinary citizens in American governance. Thus, American politics has been characterized as being dominated by cumbersome institutional structures and policy processes that serve and protect the interests of well-organized, upper-class groups. It is viewed as being capable of generating only incremental change and being largely unresponsive to the vaguely articulated needs of ordinary citizens. As such, it hardly seems capable of harnessing human, societal, and natural resources in a way that maximizes the welfare of ordinary citizens.

If institutional factors blunt, negate, or dilute the force of vaguely articulated sentiments emanating from a malleable and inattentive public, utilitarian accounts of democratic responsiveness are implausible. This dilemma has led various scholars to offer reconceptualizations of what democracy is and how it works. Some of the theoretical efforts to reconceive representative democracy have led to formulations (the elitist model, pluralism) in which the role of the *demos* is considerably less central than in nineteenth-century utilitarianism. These empirically based reformulations of mass-elite linkages within democracy have loosened the conceptual ties between the preferences of individuals and governmental outputs. At a theoretical level these revisions have made democracy less distinctively responsive to broad societal interests than its competitors, a development that has profound implications for how we understand, and normatively evaluate, democratic governance.

Popular Efficacy, Electoral Accountability, and Democratic Responsiveness

Despite the durability of the "manageable fools" image, the late-twentieth-century wave of democratization makes conducting research bearing on democratic responsiveness more important today than when Key wrote. Thus, this work joins the long tradition of research on mass-elite linkages in democratic regimes. Its principal objective is to determine whether there is a theoretically viable and empirically supportable basis for "bringing the people back in" to our understanding of how represen-

tative democracy works. This work builds on the retrospective voting tradition pioneered by Key and Fiorina. But it differs from earlier approaches to understanding mass elite-linkages by examining a different set of political dynamics to generate fresh empirical insights into democratic responsiveness.

Traditional studies of mass-elite linkages have been characterized by a primary focus on the actions of political elites (party platforms, legislative enactments, policy positions, administrative actions) and how they correspond to the ideological leanings and policy preferences of their constituents. These studies draw inferences about popular efficacy by examining the capacity of citizens to maintain and act upon stable, cohesive ideologies, which are held to vary across individuals. From this perspective, stable and cohesive ideologies, joined with information on the actions and views of elected officials, are what make representative democracies uniquely responsive. The inability of most voters to sustain cohesive ideologies, or to relate information on elite actions to their own preferences and manifest them in their votes, led to dismal conclusions about popular efficacy. More recent research on mass-elite linkages identifies elites as sources of political information. This has led many to draw the causal arrows *from elites to masses*, further undermining utilitarian conceptions of democratic responsiveness.

In contrast, the approach offered here focuses on (1) exogenous events, which are largely outside the control of political elites, (2) citizens' core political desires, which are largely invariant across individuals, and (3) political elites' core political interests, their desire for electoral success. It draws inferences about popular efficacy by examining the capacity of voters to react electorally to exogenous events whose radiated effects impinge upon their core political desires. The radiated effects of these exogenous events can initiate intense episodes of information processing that lead citizens to update their political cognitions and deviate from their normal voting behavior, thereby impinging on the core political interests of elites.

McCubbins and Schwartz's "1984" distinction between how police and fire departments function can provide some insights into the conception of mass-elite linkages offered here. Citizens do not constantly monitor political matters to determine whether political stewards are acting in ways that comport with citizens' preconceived and ideologically constrained conceptions. Rather, citizens' attention to political matters is activated by fire alarms—politically salient exogenous events. These fire alarms can cause individuals to deviate from their normal voting behavior. If widespread enough, these deviations will generate electoral jolts that will affect political elites' prospects for electoral success.

If voters (i.e., principals) regularly demonstrate their capacity to produce disequilibrating electoral jolts, political elites (i.e., agents) will be

taught that it is in their interests to be attentive to the core political desires of citizens. Within this conception of mass-elite linkages, the capacity of voters to discipline elites electorally, joined with elites' rational anticipation of electoral rebukes, provides a political dynamic that makes representative democracy uniquely responsive to broad societal interests.

This posited dynamic, if empirically supportable, has the potential to provide unique and valuable insights into popular efficacy and democratic governance. The thrust of most extant research on mass-elite linkages notwithstanding, examining this dynamic empirically is not a fool's errand. My efforts in developing and empirically examining these theoretical dynamics are motivated by two considerations. One is the disjuncture between the image of voters that has emerged from academic research and the behavior of political stewards—what I term the "paradox of elected officials." The second is my belief that most scholarly efforts to understand popular efficacy have been handicapped by self-imposed conceptual and methodological limitations.

The next section introduces the paradox of elected officials and offers a metaphor to convey the approach to the study of popular efficacy driving this research. Then I develop the implications of this metaphor for the study of popular efficacy and the structure of the empirical analyses. Finally, I outline the methodological approach I use to conduct the empirical analyses.

The Paradox of Elected Officials

The paradox of elected officials can be stated simply: Why do elected officials seem so preoccupied with popular concerns if citizens are "manageable fools"? Despite the findings of most empirical research on political behavior, elected officials make frequent trips home to measure the pulse of their constituents. They hire pollsters to gauge public opinion. They conduct strategy sessions to develop information campaigns to shape public perceptions. They worry about the timing of economic cycles, the impact of scandals, the effect of policies on their constituencies, and so forth and so on. In short, these officials act as though what the electorate thinks, and how it may act, affects their reelection prospects. This suggests that they may be laboring under an image of the electorate that is not informed by, or consistent with, the gist of the scholarly literature on political behavior.

A theoretically grounded and empirically supported conception of mass-elite linkages that could explain the paradox of elected officials would provide the basis for recentering citizens in our conceptions of democratic governance. To illustrate how such a conception is possible in light of the conventional wisdom generated by decades of research on political behavior, consider a simple culinary metaphor.

Restaurants, like governments, must satisfy the basic needs and desires of their patrons. However, while customers know what tastes good to them (and what does not), most want little more than palatable food at a fair price. The vast majority of customers know little about the intricacies of food preparation in a commercial setting and do not want to spend much time thinking about it. Consequently, they develop habitual patronage patterns that are influenced by those of their family and friends, as well as by their personal experiences with the restaurant. Out-of-towners and children coming of age are influenced by the patterns of those with whom they identify and interact.

Though much depends upon their profit margins and cash reserves, the strength of habitual patronage patterns provide restaurateurs with a good deal of latitude in structuring their day-to-day operations. Consequently, many decisions they make are highly susceptible to influence by those with more immediate interests in the operation of the restaurant (suppliers, cooks, wait staff, etc.) than by their clientele. Despite this there are limits to the autonomy of restaurateurs: being unresponsive to customers' desires entails a certain level of risk for the restaurateur. Moreover, important sources of threats to the restaurateur's grip on his customer base are out of his control.

Consider, for example, meat infected with mad cow disease that was unwittingly used in the preparation of entrees, generating a flurry of illnesses that lead to a major disruption in patronage patterns. This disruption could be exacerbated by revelations about (1) the restaurateur's unconventional choice of suppliers, (2) kickbacks to the restaurant by disreputable wholesalers, and (3) widespread disregard of industry standards in conducting health checks. The developments could lead their regular customers to eat fewer meals at restaurants altogether or to reevaluate their patronage, which could lead to the creation of new patronage patterns. If a sufficiently large number of regular customers departed from their patronage patterns, the restaurateur could experience financial setbacks, if not financial ruin.

In this metaphor, restaurateurs are assumed to be strategic actors motivated by their desire to maximize profits. Their behavior is determined by (1) the extent to which their customers are discriminating consumers and (2) their competitive environment. If the patronage patterns of the restaurant's clientele do not show them to be discriminating consumers, then the costs of the restaurant's indifference to their core desires are minimal. Thus, if the restaurant's customer base does not make large and enduring changes in their patronage patterns after an incident such as the mad cow infestation, over time restaurateurs will learn that they do not have to weigh customer concerns very heavily in determining what goes on in the kitchen. While the preferences of ordinary customers can seldom be

wholly ignored, it may be possible to appease them with a few standby palliatives and an occasional advertising blitz. This is particularly true if consumers have few viable alternatives and the restaurant enjoys healthy profit margins.

A wholly different situation obtains, however, if the restaurant's customers are discriminating consumers. If events such as the mad cow incident result in enduring declines in patronage, then restaurateurs will learn to take seriously customer concerns and desires. They will have a powerful incentive to (1) learn from incidents that generate departures from habitual patronage patterns, (2) translate those lessons into changes in the structure and operation of the restaurant, and (3) anticipate potential problems and engage in preemptive actions designed to forestall future financial setbacks. Because the restaurateur's children aspire to inherit and run the restaurant he will also be motivated to transmit to them what he learned about the importance of being attentive to the core desires of customers. The restaurateur's incentives to act on the basis of market lessons increase when his profit margins are slim and the competition for customers is great.

The Electoral Arena and Democratic Responsiveness

The political implications of this culinary metaphor are straightforward. If citizens are discriminating consumers of public goods, they can be efficacious political actors. The most important resource ordinary citizens have within representative democracies is the vote; their vote is their currency. Thus, democratic responsiveness hinges on the capacity of citizens to manifest discriminating behavior within the electoral arena. Moreover, because the din in "policy kitchens" is great, citizens must demonstrate the capacity to wield a big electoral stick. Popular sentiments and concerns will influence the decisional calculus of strategic political elites only if those elites view the electorate as a force that can impinge on their desire for elective office. This will happen only if voters demonstrate the capacity to depart from their normal voting behavior, regularly administering sharp, disequilibrating electoral jolts.

Electoral pressures are usually not as targeted or unambiguous as other forms of influence upon government (sophisticated information campaigns by interest groups, strategically placed campaign contributions, targeted lobbying efforts, etc.). But ordinary citizens have few other feasible alternatives. They do not have the resources or expertise to compete successfully with the powerful special interests huddled around the various "cooking stations" that generate public policy. Other forms of more focused popular expression (demonstrations, riots, protests) are much more difficult to organize and sustain. While electoral influences are often

blunt and ambiguous, they can impact profoundly upon the core interests of political elites: their desire for electoral success. Thus, to generate fresh empirical insights into popular efficacy, the empirical analyses presented here focus on two phenomena that are crucial to electoral accountability: electoral independence and the competitiveness of electoral settings.

Electoral independence refers to the capacity of citizens to overcome the inertial tendencies in, and centripetal partisan pulls on, their electoral behavior. The dominance of these forces within the electoral arena is an important component of the "manageable fools" caricature of voters. If ordinary citizens do not evidence the capacity to overcome these forces on a regular basis, then it will be difficult to argue that they are efficacious political actors. Their capacity to compete with organized interests and to penetrate, mobilize, and integrate cumbersome policy-making networks would be suspect. The dominance of inertial and partisan forces in the determination of electoral outcomes would suggest that ordinary citizens are little more than "silent partners" in democratic governance.

On the other hand, if citizens demonstrate that they are discriminating consumers of public goods, it will be possible to conceive of them as efficacious political actors. By regularly demonstrating their capacity to administer disequilibrating electoral jolts, citizens can teach political elites that it is in their interest to be attentive to popular concerns, even to the point of anticipating threats to core political desires and acting preemptively. These "electoral lessons" become an important part of the political lore handed down from one generation of political elites to the next. Through this education in democratic politics elites would learn that elections are not ceremonial rites arranged to provide citizens with the opportunity to reaffirm partisan loyalties. Rather, they would be taught that elections are opportunities for citizens to scrutinize political stewardship. Thus, if citizens "fitfully intervene" with the electoral arena on a regular basis, political elites will internalize an image of the electorate that is akin to the fickle and discriminating clientele of a restaurant. And they will act according.

Competitive electoral settings facilitate electoral independence. They make it easier to translate evaluations of stewardship into electoral jolts; more competitive settings reduce the number of politically discerning voters needed to generate a disequilibrating electoral outcome. But electoral competitiveness also has an independent effect on popular efficacy. It plays an important role in the education of political elites by teaching elites about the importance of popular concerns in democratic politics. When electoral settings are competitive, party elites cannot be content to rely on time-tested techniques designed to mobilize party loyalists. Rather, they must think strategically and creatively about both retaining their electoral base and attracting inactive, unaligned, or marginally aligned

voters. Thus, the persistence of electoral competitiveness over time will (1) teach strategic political elites that it is in their interest to be attentive to public concerns and (2) provide them with the incentive to identify and address those concerns.

Reexamining Electoral Accountability

Compelling empirical evidence on the electorate's capacity for electoral independence and the impact of electoral independence on electoral outcomes could provide the basis for important new inferences about the responsiveness of representative democracy. Providing this empirical evidence, however, requires working outside the individual-level survey research paradigm that has dominated research on mass-elite linkages for over half a century.[2] Thus, the empirical results reported here are derived from analyses of election returns from all counties and most major cities in the continental United States for all presidential elections from 1828 to 2000 (44 elections, 3,131 locales, over 110,000 observations). I focus

[2] Aggregate electoral analysis was the norm before the emergence of survey research but the tradition continued even after the individual-level survey research paradigm became established (see, for example, Burnham, W. D. 1970. *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*. New York, W. W. Norton; Kleppner, P. 1970. *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850–1900*. New York, Free Press; Jensen, R. 1971. *The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict, 1888–1896*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press; McSeveney, S. T. 1972. *The Politics of Depression: Voting Behavior in the Northeast, 1893–1896*. New York, Oxford University Press; Silbey, J. H., A. G. Bogue, et al., eds. 1978. *The History of American Electoral Behavior.* Princeton, Princeton University Press; Kleppner, P. 1979. *The Third Electoral System, 1853–1892: Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press; Clubb, J. M., W. H. Flanigan, et al. 1980. *Partisan Realignment: Voters, Parties, and Government in American History.* Beverly Hills, CA, Sage Publications; Kleppner, P., W. D. Burnham, et al., eds. 1981. *The Evolution of American Electoral Systems*. Westport, CT, Greenwood Press; Bartels, L. M. 1998. "Electoral Continuity and Change, 1868–1996." *Electoral Studies* 17 (3): 301–26. A very comprehensive compilation of citations to aggregate works in the realignment tradition can be found in Bass, H. F. 1991. "Background to Debate: A Reader's Guide and Bibliography," in *The End of Realignment? Interpreting American Electoral Eras*, ed. B. E. Shafer. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.

Moreover, there has been a recent spate of longitudinal work using aggregated survey data (see, for example: Wright, G. C., R. S. Erikson, et al. 1985. "Measuring State Partisanship and Ideology with Survey Data." *Journal of Politics* 47:469–89; Wright, G. C., R. S. Erikson, et al. 1987. "Public Opinion and Policy Liberalism in the American States." *American Journal of Political Science* 31:980–1001; MacKuen, M. B., R. S. Erikson, et al. 1989. "Macropartisanship." *American Political Science Review* 83: 1125–42; Stimson, J. A. 1991. *Public Opinion in America*. Boulder, CO, Westview Press; MacKuen, M. B., R. S. Erikson, et al. 1992. "Peasants or Bankers? The American Electorate and the U.S. Economy." *American Political Science Review* 86:597–611; Erikson, R. S., G. C. Wright, et al. (1993). *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Erikson, MacKuen, et al. 2002.

on presidential elections because empirical analyses of these contests have played a major role in shaping our understanding of popular efficacy. The 1828 to 2000 period is employed because it spans the entire democratic era in American politics.

The subnational, longitudinal approach adopted here is essential for empirically examining the conception of mass-elite linkages outlined above, which has straightforward implications that are observable in the voting patterns of local electorates. For example, if the radiated effects of exogenous events that impinge upon citizens' core desires overcome endogenous influences on their voting behavior, then their electoral impact will be manifested in departures from normal voting patterns. The political dynamics that give rise to these departures from normal voting patterns require a long time frame such as the one employed here. A long temporal reach is essential both to define normal voting patterns and to capture sufficient numbers of salient exogenous events. Also, using a research design with a subnational focus and a broad geographic reach provides for both a more comprehensive and precise specification of the electoral effects of exogenous events, which are expected to vary spatially.

While the empirical analysis conducted here is at the local level, its conceptual underpinnings are rooted in the individual-level survey research paradigm. That is, the empirical analyses are based on a macro-level extension of *the Michigan model of voting behavior.* The Michigan model was used to structure the macro-level analyses because it is theoretically well developed and empirically supportable at the individual level. At the core of the Michigan model is the concept of a normal vote. Normal voting behavior reflects the major role played by endogenous (partisan) influences on electoral behavior; normal party votes reflect the size of a party's electoral base. Within this framework electoral independence is gauged by *changes in* and *deviations from* normal voting patterns; electoral competitiveness is determined by the *relative size* of the parties' electoral bases.

This normal vote framework, in conjunction with the structure of the research design developed here, makes it possible to conduct analyses that are beyond the scope of the survey research paradigm. In particular, the approach offered here permits a focus on (1) the role of exogenous factors in generating *departures* from normal voting patterns and (2) the *impact* of those departures on electoral settings and outcomes. The factors that generate departures from normal voting patterns provide important insights into *whether citizens can be viewed as discriminating consumers of public goods*. Examining the impact of those departures on electoral settings and outcomes provides insights into *the lessons political elites have been taught about the role of the electorate in democratic politics*. Consid-

ered together, the empirical findings from this approach can provide unique insights into the responsiveness of American democracy.

Organization of This Book

The following three chapters provide the individual-level theoretical foundations for the empirical analyses. A half-century of individual-level research has raised so many questions about the efficaciousness of citizens that macro-level empirical analyses bearing on popular efficacy require a sound individual-level foundation. Chapters 2 through 4 provide this theoretical foundation.

Chapter 2 reviews some of the earlier literature on mass-elite linkages and offers a theoretical synthesis that differentiates the approach offered here from earlier efforts. This synthesis addresses two foundational issues concerning democratic citizenship and popular efficacy. What does being an efficacious political actor entail? Can we conceive of citizens fulfilling those expectations? It argues that an *evaluative conception of democratic citizenship*, in conjunction with the *emerging work in cognitive science*, provides the theoretical basis for believing that citizens may be capable of efficacious political behavior.

This conceptualization acknowledges the peripheral processing of most political information as well as the dominant role of endogenously tainted political heuristics. It also assigns a central role to exogenous events that impinge upon core political desires and lead citizens to initiate episodes of intensive processing of political information and induce political learning. These intensive interludes can generate experientially based cognitive reconfigurations of political matters that, in turn, can influence evaluations of stewardship and vote choice.

While the theoretical synthesis offered in chapter 2 demonstrates *why* exogenous events can be an important source of inferences about popular efficacy, chapter 3 demonstrates *how* exogenous events are manifested in macro-level electoral change. The transformation of exogenous events into evaluations of stewardship and vote choices involves the complex workings of several sets of factors that unfold over time. Chapter 3 presents an individual-level model of this transformational process. It shows how the interactions among these various factors can lead citizens to deviate from their normal voting behavior; the aggregate effects of these deviations produce macro-level electoral changes of varying magnitude, duration, and geographic scope.

The activities of political stewards play an important role in the transformational model presented in chapter 3. Indeed, some of these activities constitute what can be characterized as endogenous influences on elec-

toral behavior. Endogenous influences are efforts by political elites to shape, direct, and control the political behavior of citizens. Efforts by elites to control the electoral effects of politically salient exogenous events undermine objective evaluation of political stewardship; these endogenous influences constitute the primary threat to popular efficacy within the conceptualization of mass-elite linkages offered in chapter 2.

Because endogenous influences represent individual-level factors that may negate the political dynamics described in chapter 2 and chapter 3, chapter 4 provides a broad introduction to the role of endogenous influences in democratic governance. Chapter 4 demonstrates that endogenous influences are primal forces in democratic political orders and argues that the political party is currently the dominant vehicle for the transmission of endogenous influences. It concludes by addressing the role of endogenous influences on voting. This analysis provides the theoretical basis for the derivation of normal voting patterns for local electorates, which are used in specifying departures from normal voting patterns.

Chapter 5 presents the subnational, longitudinal design used to structure the empirical analyses. It introduces the concept of a local electorate and details the historical data archive used to obtain profiles of them. It then presents an overview of the approach used to derive the normal voting patterns of local electorates, which are defined as the manifestation of endogenous (partisan) influences on individual voting behavior—aggregated to the local level. Some examples of normal voting patterns are presented and used to provide concrete insights into the concepts of electoral independence and competitiveness. Finally, the normal voting data are used to underscore the centrality of endogenous influences on the voting patterns of local electorates.

Because local normal voting patterns are defined as the manifestation of endogenous influences, only departures from those patterns are used to generate inferences about popular efficacy. Chapter 6 underscores the conservative nature of this approach by challenging the interpretation of normal voting patterns as the manifestation of endogenous influences on voting behavior. Defining normal voting patterns as the manifestation of endogenous influences rests on an interpretation of political parties as endogenous institutions dominated by party elites. It follows from this rather constricted view that partisan influences on voting reflect little more than the interests of party elites. The challenge posed in chapter 6 rests on a pluralistic view of parties that views partisan influences on voting as a reflection of the interests of the party's core constituencies. The analyses reported in chapter 6 suggest that partisan influences on voting cannot be viewed as wholly, or even largely, endogenous. These analyses provide empirical support for the assumptions underlying the transforma-

tional model presented in chapter 3, in addition to important insights into mass-elite linkages in American democracy.

Chapter 7 presents the first component of the electoral independence analysis. Its focus is on enduring electoral change (critical and secular), and it examines the incidence, geographic scope, and magnitude of these data. The data on enduring electoral change are distributed in a manner that comports with the transformational model presented in chapter 3. The temporal and spatial structure of these data is consistent with the assertion that they were generated by a series of reinforcing exogenous events rooted in transformative societal developments. It also demonstrates that the magnitude of these enduring changes is large enough to capture the attention of political elites and play a role in their political education.

Chapter 8 presents the second component of the electoral independence analysis. It uses data on electoral perturbations to generate inferences about popular efficacy. This analysis integrates two sets of independent variables with the normal vote data. The first is a set of performance indicators that captures variations in the realization of core political desires within three domains: prosperity, war and peace, and personal security. The second set includes data on partisan resources and actions designed to manage and control electoral behavior. The results demonstrate that while the effect of the performance indicators on electoral perturbations is substantial, the effects of partisan activities are weak and mixed. Indeed, some of the partisan factors have unanticipated effects rooted in the long-standing American fear of concentrated power. While these analyses cast doubt on the capacity of political elites to manage and shape electoral perturbations, they provide strong support for the notion that voters are discriminating consumers of public goods.

Chapter 9 speaks to the role of electoral independence in the education of political elites by examining its impact on electoral settings and electoral outcomes. Its focus is on the incidence of competitive electoral settings and disequilibrating electoral outcomes (realigning elections, deviating elections, endorsement elections). The distribution of these election types demonstrates that centrality of the electorate to the core interests of political elites was underscored either going into a presidential campaign or in the outcome of the election in two-thirds of all elections since the emergence of a two-party system. The results suggest that, over the course of the past two centuries, political elites are likely to have learned that the electorate is a potent political force in democratic politics.

When joined with the findings of the electoral independence analyses, these results shed a good deal of light on the paradox of elected officials. They suggest that strategic political elites are likely to have internalized an image of the electorate that is very different from that found in most

academic research. Indeed, the image of the electorate that emerges here suggests that it is rational for political stewards to engage in anticipatory actions to guard against the consequences of electoral rebukes, as well as to reap the electoral benefits that accrue from wise stewardship. The empirical analyses presented here make it clear that strategic political elites driven by the desire for electoral success cannot afford to treat the electorate as a silent partner in democratic governance.

Chapter 10 summarizes the basic argument of this book. It also reviews the empirical evidence bearing on the debate over popular efficacy. Finally, it develops the broader implications of these findings for democratic theory, American politics, and future research.

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