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wines. Don't Lite Beer drinkers watch the evening news? Nobody gets any points on this one.

Let's add up the numbers. Remember, the low score wins. ABC comes out a narrow winner with 17, closely followed by CBS with 18, and NBC with 19. The actual ratings for the week showed the three news shows in a dead heat, each with 22 percent of the audience. This seems to support those who insist that there isn't a dime's worth of difference among the shows. But I stand by my figures. A dime's worth of difference is precisely what there is.

86 elections
FRED BARNES

Democratic Senate sweepstakes.

WIN NOW, PAY LATER

ONE OF THE worst things that could happen to the Democratic Party will probably happen this year. The Democrats will regain control of the Senate. Party leaders and political commentators will proclaim the end of the Reagan revolution. Democrats will stop worrying about who they are and what they stand for. The Great Restoration will be under way: the Senate in 1986, the White House in 1988.

We've been through all this before. Remember 1982? The worst recession in postwar history gave the Democrats 26 new House seats and seven new governors. As a result, the party stopped examining the lessons of 1980. Reaganism was clearly a failure, an aberration—"the Reagan detour," as Richard Reeves called it. In 1984, it was said, the voters would reverse the mandate of 1980. Democrats were wrong then, and they will repeat the mistake this year. Big Democratic gains in 1986 will mean as much for 1988 as the gains of 1982 meant for 1984: nothing.

What about all the evidence showing that Americans have not shifted to the right? A CBS News/*New York Times* poll last January reported that "on a range of ideological questions first asked about five years ago, no clear swing to the right has been discerned." Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers reviewed an enormous quantity of survey data in the May issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* and concluded that America's turn to the right is "a myth." On issue after issue, the public's policy preferences have remained stable or shifted to the left since 1981. A recent Gallup poll shows no shift in the public's self-described political ideology over the past ten years. Conservatives outnumbered liberals by 49 to 31 percent in 1976 and by 50 to 33 percent in 1986.

These polls have a pernicious effect. They encourage liberals to believe that "none of this is really happening." They give Democrats an excuse not to do something they don't want to do—namely, modernize the party's message. The polling evidence is not wrong. But there is more to the

story. The Reagan revolution was not caused by an ideological shift, but by a populist reaction against Big Government and the inflationary trend of the 1970s. Beginning with the tax revolt of 1978, Americans rebelled against the excesses and abuses of government power—overspending, waste, fraud. There was never strong support for dismantling the welfare state. It is the same with the current move for tax reform. The public wants to curb the abusive influence of special interests, but there is little sentiment for destroying progressive taxation. President Reagan has his own agenda, of course, and he has skillfully channeled anti-government and anti-tax sentiment to his own ends.

American voters tend to be pragmatic—whatever works must be right—and so they accept the Reagan revolution even if they don't agree with most of it. Gallup shows President Reagan's job approval rating at an all-time high. A record two-thirds of the public say they are satisfied with the way things are going in the country. Those are the views that tend to count in a national election. Most people vote on the basis of performance, not ideology. That is why, according to a recent poll by *U.S. News and World Report*, Americans prefer a conservative to a liberal for their next president, 57 to 32 percent, and want that president to "continue Reagan's policies" rather than "go in a different direction."

SO WHY SHOULD the Democrats have great expectations about 1986? There are three reasons for predicting a Democratic takeover of the Senate this year.

First, the issues. Republicans are seen as better at managing most areas of national policy—controlling inflation, maintaining prosperity, keeping the nation out of war, dealing with the Russians and upholding the nation's military security. Ask the voters what they would criticize about the Reagan administration and they say, "The lack of progress on the deficit and arms control." Then ask them which party they believe would handle each problem better and they say, "The Republicans." On the other hand, Democrats hold the lead when it comes to protecting people and providing government services: protecting the poor, providing jobs for the unemployed, protecting women and minorities, providing quality education, protecting the environment and American jobs. What the public dislikes about the Democratic Party at the national level (tax, tax, spend, spend) it likes at the local level (protect, protect, provide, provide).

Presidential elections are about the overall direction of national policy. State and local elections are about more parochial concerns—benefits and services. That is the Democrats' territory, which is why the party ought to do well in 1986. But it means little for 1988, when the election once again becomes a referendum on national policy. This distinction explains why Americans like having a Republican president and a Democratic Congress. People want to have it both ways: the Republicans in charge of overall economic and foreign policymaking and the Democrats in charge of delivering services and protecting people—in many cases, protecting people from the consequences of

ertarians. For thoroughness, ABC gets 1, CBS 2, NBC 3.

Reporters. The second week in July may not have been the best time for judging network reporters. Many of the best—Brit Hume of ABC, Phil Jones of CBS, Marvin Kalb of NBC—didn't put in appearances. Sam Donaldson, the meddlesome White House correspondent for ABC, got on the air once, horning his way into the July 10 story about the Federal Reserve. But there was enough evidence to reach an opinion. On July 10, when President Reagan went to Dothan, Alabama, for a speech on tax reform, NBC's Robin Lloyd suggested that the president was trying to put pressure on Congress to pass a bill to his liking. Wrong. Bill Plante of CBS got it right in reporting that Reagan's real intent in the Dothan address was to claim credit for achieving tax reform, now a foregone conclusion. NBC also got into trouble with a piece on Senator Russell Long of Louisiana, who is retiring. Correspondent Tom Pettit declared that Long's "absolute power is diminished, but not his influence." Hogwash. The tax reform bill that passed the Senate represents practically everything Long has opposed for three decades. His influence was nil. On another competitive story, the riot at Lorton Reformatory in Virginia on July 10, CBS was again the best. Its correspondent, Bruce Morton, used the Lorton blowup to describe the problem of overcrowding prisons around the country. Dennis Troute of ABC and Robert Hager of NBC simply presented it as a local story. For years, CBS's reporting crew has had the reputation as the smartest, most aggressive and incisive, and that may be deserved. CBS gets 1, ABC 2, NBC 3.

Features. CBS certainly does the best soft pieces, again thanks largely to its reporters. The best feature of the week was a three-part series on Navy fighter pilots by David Martin, the sharpest of the network Pentagon reporters. Martin had obviously been working on the series for months, and the three segments were shrewdly broadcast at a time when a movie about Navy pilots, *Top Gun*, is wildly popular. CBS also had an appealing feature on "black velvet" art, the large paintings, sold at roadside stands, of tigers, Elvis Presley, unicorns, and other tacky subjects. NBC had a nice piece by reporter Ken Bode, a former TNR political correspondent, about Lyndon Larouche's intimidation of people in a rural Virginia county, but it's an old story. ABC's best had a new twist on the blackened redbird craze: the story showed how it's caused overcatching of redbird. CBS gets 1, ABC 2, NBC 3.

Enterprise. CBS seems to put a higher premium than the other networks on exclusive stories. Braver's piece on bombs-for-Israel was a scoop, as the *Washington Post* acknowledged in matching her story in the next morning's paper. CBS also tried harder in reporting on the crash of what may have been a prototype of a Stealth bomber. NBC aired a tough examination by science reporter Robert Bazell of the highly questionable advertisements that promote calcium supplements as a way of preventing osteoporosis. ABC showed little enterprise. CBS gets 1, NBC 2, ABC 3.

Slant. CBS lived up to its reputation as the most liberal,

ABC as the most conservative. NBC hugged the middle ground. The coverage of pornography was telling. CBS presented a sidebar about Tupelo, Mississippi, described by correspondent Peter Van Sant as "a pornography-free zone." His report described a small minority of Christian activists pushing the town to the brink of sweeping censorship. On the other hand, ABC offered a sidebar about Father Bruce Ritter, a member of the pornography commission, who told at length of the ruined lives of young runaways sucked into the pornography industry. On other subjects, CBS played up the negative much more than ABC and NBC. On July 11 Rather noted that interest rates had dropped and the inflation rate was flat—good news, in other words. He left it to economics reporter Ray Brady to find a dark cloud. "Those low prices for consumers are coming at a high price," Brady said, pointing to a "devastating" effect on farmers and layoffs in Louisiana, an oil-producing state. NBC gets 1, ABC 2, CBS 3.

Commentary. What ever happened to it? Not long ago, George Will was holding forth regularly on ABC and Bill Moyers on CBS. Now only John Chancellor of NBC delivers opinion pieces with any regularity. This is too bad. I think commentary should be a regular segment on the evening shows, even if commentators make fairly obvious points, as Chancellor did. It offers an outlet for opinion, arguably reducing the temptation to slip opinion into supposedly objective news stories. Will is the best of the commentators—crisper, more pointed, better informed—but he's not given a chance more than once or twice a month now. The feeling at ABC, I'm told, is that he hasn't been a popular hit on the evening news. But he gets more air time than Moyers, who gets none these days. CBS says he's busy on documentaries. NBC gets 1, ABC 2, CBS 3.

Gimmicks. Like slant, this isn't a category a network should excel in. But ABC does. "The Person of the Week" (for July 7 to 11 it was Pete Rozelle, president of the National Football League) may have increased ratings on Friday, but it's ridiculous. (See "Celebrity Sweepstakes," by Michael Massing, TNR, June 16.) After forking over \$10 million for the right to cover Liberty Weekend festivities, ABC wasn't about to abandon the subject quickly. The following week it ran a story on the gospel singer who crooned the national anthem at the closing ceremony, and another on a feud over who should pay if Weekend organizers come up short of cash. NBC has a gimmick of its own, something called "Special Segment." The only thing special is the labeling. The stories are the regular ones—about Russell Long and cocaine use by college kids. CBS was all but gimmick-free. CBS gets 1, NBC 2, ABC 3.

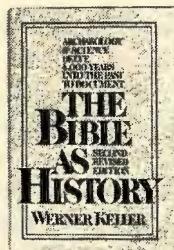
Ads. The commercials are truly striking. It's as if the networks assume that most news show viewers are old, constipated people who wear dentures and suffer from recurring headaches. And there are oh, so many of the ads. ABC had five in a row one day on "World News Tonight." The laxative commercials come at you non-stop on all three networks. And if you don't want to take pills, there are lots of high-fiber cereals that come highly recommended. The only appealing spots are schmaltzy ones for Gallo

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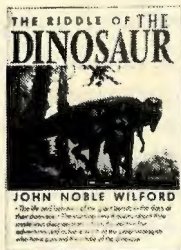
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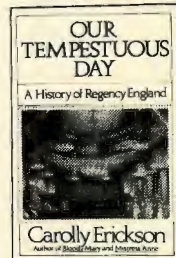
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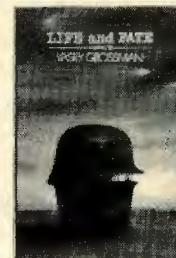
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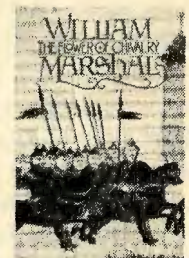
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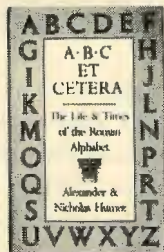
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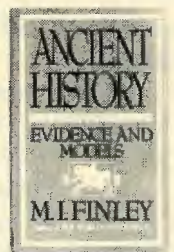
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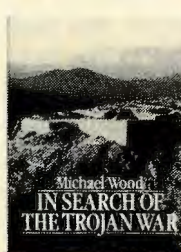
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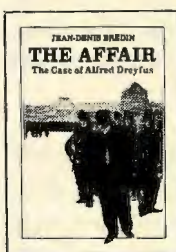
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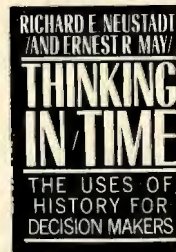
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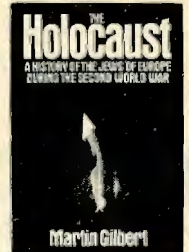
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the Republican policies they like at the presidential level.

Second, television. All Senate races are statewide races, and so all are covered on television. The result is that incumbents and challengers are more evenly matched. (Few House races are covered on TV and few House candidates buy TV advertising; a congressional district is usually too small to match a media market. As a result, House incumbents, unlike those in the Senate, are relatively safe.) Hitherto unknown Senate challengers are becoming more visible simply because they are getting TV coverage—particularly after they win primary victories—and senators running for re-election don't look as safe now as they did a few months ago. That is bad news for the GOP, which has twice as many exposed incumbents as the Democrats. Right now 12 Republican seats, and only four Democratic seats, look either dubious or close.

So look for obscure Senate challengers to start moving up in the polls between now and November 4. Some of them will even beat well-known incumbents. That's how Mack Mattingly, Steven Symms, Dan Quayle, Charles Grassley, Warren Rudman, Alfonse D'Amato, John East, James Abdnor, Slade Gorton, and Robert Kasten got to the Senate in 1980.

REALIZING THEIR vulnerability, the "Class of 1980" Republican senators have been conspicuous in their dedication to constituency service. For the most part, they have failed to assume a high legislative or ideological profile. That is a surprise to many observers, who expected the 1980 Republicans to be the shock troops of the Reagan revolution. Although they generally have been loyal to the president, their principal commitment has been to their states. Thus freshman Republican Alfonse D'Amato joined other New Yorkers in criticizing the provision in Reagan's tax reform plan that would have ended the deductibility of state and local taxes. And during the farm credit crisis, freshman Republican Charles Grassley of Iowa attacked Pentagon waste in order to rationalize emergency federal help for farmers. Both senators are enjoying high approval ratings.

A member of Congress must choose between striking a high legislative profile—becoming a nationally known expert in some issue area or a spokesman for some point of view—and keeping a low profile and tending to constituency interests. New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is a high-profile politician; voters nationwide look to him for intellectual leadership on foreign affairs and social policy. His colleague, D'Amato, has kept a low legislative profile; New Yorkers go to him for services and favors. Similarly, California Senator Pete Wilson is almost invisible in Washington, but he has cultivated an image of low-key effectiveness in California. Senator Alan Cranston, who used to be seen as hardworking, effective, and relatively colorless, changed his profile when he ran for president in 1984. He turned out to be the most liberal candidate in the field, after Jesse Jackson. Cranston is now seen as a highly ideological figure, and his approval ratings in California have suffered.

Nevertheless, it is not clear that a low legislative profile

will protect senators as well as it does representatives. House elections tend to turn on voters' feelings about the incumbent, and those feelings are generally favorable. Over 90 percent of House members who run for re-election regularly win, usually on a vote of personal confidence. Senate elections are more responsive to issues and to the political mood of the electorate. That includes Senator D'Amato, whose conservative record is likely to become the focus of the campaign once his challenger is nominated in September.

THE FINAL AND most important factor is voter turnout. Senators up for re-election this year will face a significantly different electorate than they faced in 1980—one much less friendly to Republicans. From a presidential year to a midterm year, turnout in Senate elections always drops, and that always works to the disadvantage of the president's party. Look at what happened in the 17 states that held Senate elections in 1980 and again in 1982. Turnout dropped from 50 to 40 percent of the voting-age population. The Republicans lost 3.2 million votes, while the Democrats lost 2.5 million.

Thus senators elected in 1980 will probably face a 20 percent smaller electorate in 1986. The voters who disappear in midterm years are casual voters who go to the polls once every four years, for presidential elections. They have no strong partisan or ideological inclinations. They are Zeitgeist voters who register the mood of the country. In 1980 that mood was profoundly anti-Democratic. In 1986 the presidential-year bonus vote will vanish—and that should be more than enough to sweep away many Republicans who won by slim margins in 1980. (Sixteen freshmen GOP senators were elected with an average of 53 percent of the vote in 1980. Five of them squeaked by with 50 percent or less.)

In fact, the Democrats who lost their Senate seats in 1980 were already highly vulnerable. Their previous election had been in the Watergate year, 1974, when vast numbers of embarrassed Republicans stayed home. Six years later the 1980 presidential bonus vote overwhelmed these Democrats. The appearance and disappearance of this bonus vote is one of the reliable, rhythmic features of American politics. It explains why, after a president is elected, his party always loses congressional seats at the ensuing midterm.

Not only was there a presidential bonus vote favoring the GOP in 1980, but the Democratic abstention rate that year was very high. Polls reveal that about one out of every four people who had voted for Jimmy Carter in 1976 stayed home in 1980. They couldn't bring themselves to vote for Carter again, and they were unwilling to take a chance on Reagan. This year there is no reason to expect an exceptionally high level of Democratic abstention.

Whenever a party wins a landslide, it has to defend a great many vulnerable seats at the next election. This year the Republicans have to defend their 1980 Senate landslide—and under far less advantageous conditions. The Democrats will be defending their landslide in the guber-

natorial elections of 1982 (these days most states elect their governors in midterm years) and are certain to lose a good many governorships. For the House of Representatives, the base year is 1984, when the Republicans made only small gains (14 seats). Neither party is defending a landslide in the House, and so there won't be much change.

Every one of these outcomes—big Democratic gains in the Senate, big Republican gains in governors' races, no big shift in the House—can be predicted in advance, simply by knowing what each party has at stake. Inevitably, the

results will be analyzed in November as if they represent some sort of peculiar national mood, or as if they had some great meaning for 1988.

WILLIAM SCHNEIDER

William Schneider is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a contributing editor to *National Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times*. His last article for TNR was "The Perils of Populism" (July 15 & 22, 1985).

The rise and fall of a 'special relationship.'

ROMANCING THE SAUD

By BARTON GELLMAN

AT THE HEIGHT of his popularity, Ronald Reagan came closer to congressional defeat on an arms sale than any president before him. And all to swing a small-time and twice-diminished missile deal with Saudi Arabia. For the first time in the history of such sales, Congress voted no, and Reagan's veto escaped override by a single vote.

The missile flap was the first visible sign of a souring in the ten-year romance between the United States and Saudi Arabia. For a decade or so, to successive American administrations, the Saudis were regarded as a powerful and highly desirable ally. They controlled the most important strategic commodity in the world, they were prodigiously wealthy, and they had decisive leverage (or so it seemed) from Cairo to Baghdad and beyond. And Washington had plans for them. They would be a pillar of stability in the Persian Gulf. They would be a bulwark against Soviet penetration. They would be a skilled and willing broker of Arab-Israeli peace. Since 1973 American policy has turned on the rise and disillusionment of all these heady hopes.

From President Reagan to the National Association of Arab Americans, people still portray an essentially unchanged special relationship dating from the Second World War. "The U.S. defense relationship with Saudi Arabia," Reagan said in his May 21 veto message, "was started by President Roosevelt in 1943 and endorsed by every president since." So why the near-derailment of a minor missile transaction? The answer, according to practically everyone, was base domestic politics. "Congress is exhibiting a virulent strain of anti-Arab feeling," said Richard Straus, editor of the *Middle East Policy Survey*. Ed

Barton Gellman is director of foreign policy studies at American Horizons, a foundation chaired by Arizona governor Bruce Babbitt.

Walsh of the *Washington Post* and Steven Roberts of the *New York Times*, who covered the sale, cited the power of Jewish and pro-Israeli PACs. Charles William Maynes, the editor of *Foreign Policy*, told Hodding Carter on Public Broadcasting's *Capitol Journal* that the Reagan administration was "not really lobbying" for the package.

These observations, true enough, don't explain much. In fact, Washington's passion for Saudi Arabia—which actually dates back only as far as the mid-1970s—has turned into disenchantment a decade later.

In Roosevelt's time, and for decades thereafter, Saudi-American relations had been modest. The ardor was all in Riyadh, then as now concerned about Saudi Arabia's survival as a political entity. By 1932 Ibn Saud had improbably conquered and reunified a land mass four times the size of France, which his ancestors had twice ruled and lost. He spent the next 20 years struggling to keep it, and he wanted American help.

What troubled Ibn Saud, as Nadav Safran observes in *Saudi Arabia*, was a fragility of empire that remains to this day. The kingdom's vast terrain is largely desert wilderness. Its population is sparse—some five or six million—and of dubious cohesion, being historically divided into dozens of tribal groupings. Even its strongest leaders have ruled by blandishment and shrewd coalition. The kingdom's oil wealth lies vulnerably concentrated along the Persian Gulf, and its access to open sea relies entirely on three choke points: the Bab al-Mandab, the Suez Canal, and the Strait of Hormuz. On top of all this the Saudis are surrounded by states whose extreme disparities of wealth, strength, and ideology seem calculated for instability.

Ibn Saud pushed relentlessly for a military alliance with the United States, but Washington took little notice. With the outbreak of World War II, the U.S. government sent lend-lease aid, but further assistance was cut short by an

American embargo during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The production of oil in commercial quantities, and the gradual diminution of the British in an important strategic environment, piqued American interest in the early 1950s. Ibn Saud never got his alliance, but he did trade access to the Dhahran air base for a treaty of mutual assistance. For the next 20 years Washington's interest was uneven.

Things changed fast in the early 1970s. First came the oil shock. The 1973 embargo, along with Saudi production decisions in the next six years, made a spectacular impression on the Western alliance and the world economy. Although the initial quadrupling of oil prices is now widely thought to have been an uncontrolled consequence of the embargo, it established Saudi Arabia as a force to be reckoned with. Henry Kissinger believed that force could be put to good use. He thought the Saudis had been instrumental both in Egypt's 1972 expulsion of 15,000 Soviet advisers and in Syria's disengagement following the Yom Kippur War.

THESE THREE OBJECTS of desire—an ally inside OPEC, a useful check on the Soviets, and a partner in the search for Arab-Israeli peace—launched the American romance with Saudi Arabia. "We were hoping for a major relationship with Egypt in which the Saudis would foot the bill," recalls William Quandt, who worked for Kissinger at the time. "Meanwhile the Saudis would help with stability on oil prices. In that context it was natural for Kissinger to say, we've got to do something for them." Arms sales, as usual, were the currency of the American courtship. The Nixon-Ford administration promised Saudi Arabia the American warplane of its choice, and Riyadh chose the F-15. Jimmy Carter, who went ahead with that sale in 1978, attached it to a similar package for Israel—metaphorically promoting Saudi Arabia from the friendly moderate of old to coequal with our strongest "special relationship" in the region.

Carter was expecting a lot in return. To the first three goals for Saudi Arabia, he added a fourth: Saudi Arabia would be "a powerful restraining force on terrorists." Carter's national security adviser had yet another mission in mind: the policing of stability in the Persian Gulf. Zbigniew Brzezinski's theory of "newly influential" nations, building on the Nixon Doctrine, led to a so-called Two Pillars policy. Gulf security would rest jointly on the shah's Iran and on Saudi Arabia, the one wielding military power, the other petroleum and cash. "One-and-a-half Pillars is the way we usually joked about it," Quandt says, but reliance on the Saudis was quite serious. When the shah fell to Khomeini, White House talk turned to finding a new second pillar.

All of this depended on the Saudis actually wanting to help us and actually being able to do it. The first was often true, though not always; the second was fantasy. The F-15 sale marked the full bloom of that fantasy in Washington.

John Campbell expressed the prevailing view of the sale in the 1978 "America and the World" issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "The mere listing of these objectives [peace, oil,

containment] makes the point that Saudi Arabia is of paramount importance to the United States by virtue of its vast resources of oil, its financial power, its influence on other Arab States, and its opposition to Soviet expansion. . . . Thus when the Saudi government decided to make its request to buy F-15 aircraft a test of America's friendship, the Carter administration got the message." Saudi potency, in other words, was the construct of an American desire. The persistence of this construct in the teeth of the next year's events became a triumph of imagination over experience.

Saudi power mattered most in relation to the Arab world, and later to Iran. Carter, as he reports in his memoirs, had two governing theories:

Saudi Arabia could play a powerful role in influencing the Syrians, the Jordanians, and the PLO to be cooperative, because the three groups were heavily dependent on Saudi financing. Furthermore, members of the royal family . . . were responsible for the protection of the holiest sites . . . of Islam. This gave them special status in the eyes of other Moslems.

Both theories were naive, like Carter's supplemental belief that Saudis disliked the Soviets primarily for their atheism. Carter was blind to basic power relationships. It hardly followed, for example, that Saudi payments to the likes of Assad and Arafat were a sign of strength, any more than the shopkeeper's to the local mob.

Campbell and Carter had plenty of company in Washington. It seemed impossible to conceive that this wealthy, friendly, and strategically placed kingdom might also be terribly weak—and that its weakness might lead it to harm us.

IN ALL FAIRNESS, Saudi Arabia *looked* less weak in the first years of the Carter administration than it ever had before. Oil, of course, was part of the reason, but other regional considerations were more important. Always hostage to its geographic and demographic vulnerabilities, the kingdom typically maneuvered between contending powers, mediating their disputes where possible and appeasing one and then the other where necessary. In the mid-1970s it played this game skillfully. Safran's book traces Riyadh's complex balancing act in three sets of Middle East power struggles: Egypt versus Syria, Iran versus Iraq, and North Yemen versus South Yemen. So long as the Saudis could find a point of equilibrium among all these contending forces, they made a passable showing of independence.

The whole thing collapsed in late 1978 and 1979. The fall of the shah, the outbreak of war between the two Yemens, and most of all the signing of the Camp David accords forced the Saudis to take sides. "Carter thought the Saudis owed us, and we'd cash in at Camp David," says Quandt. The Saudis, in this scheme, would deliver Jordan and the PLO to the follow-up negotiations, meanwhile keeping the oil market from panicking at the loss of production in Iran. Whatever else the Saudis might have thought of this, the prospect of simultaneous confrontation with the newly united Baghdad-Damascus axis of rejectionists on the one hand and revolutionary Iran on the other looked suicidal.

Stakes Unusually High for Both Parties in a Midterm Election Year

CAMPAIGN, From A1

that there will be little in the way of a national pattern to the voting, that most incumbents of both parties will do well, and that little partisan advantage will be recorded for either side.

"This is a year when all politics is local," Greg Schneiders, a Democratic campaign consultant, said. "There are no crises or great divides. There's no intensity to the partisanship. People feel very free to vote for the candidate they like. It's strictly best-man-wins. Both parties are likely to come out alive and well and ready for 1988," the next presidential election year.

On the opposite side of the argument, supporters of the realignment theory say the Republican tide has been rising since 1978. They predict, against the odds, that it will rise again this year. They see an electorate—particularly younger voters—increasingly ready to pledge allegiance to the Republicans as the party of growth, opportunity and personal independence, and they expect further inroads on areas of traditional Democratic strength. They expect Republicans to hold onto the Senate, pick up some governorships, and make gains in the legislatures and among key voting blocs.

Where Democratic Chairman Kirk predicted that his party "will win back the Senate, add strength in the House and do very well in governorships," Republican National Committee Chairman Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr. said, "I think we'll turn this 'six-year itch' upside down."

Typically, the party that controls the White House loses heavily in the midterm election of its sixth year in power. Mitchell E. Daniels Jr., the assistant to the president for political affairs, has pointed to the average loss of six governorships, seven Senate seats and 48 House seats in the "sixth-year" elections of the postwar period.

But 1986 does not look like a typical year. Severe losses in the past—for Republicans in 1958 and 1974, for the Democrats in 1966—have been linked to a recession and/or a slump in the president's popularity. Reagan enters 1986 at historically high levels of support (66 percent in the latest Washington Post-ABC News poll) and the

"It doesn't mean realignment is an accomplished fact, but we have the opportunity to become the majority party."

—Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr.
Republican National Committee

That possibility is what makes presidential pollster Richard B. Wirthlin say that "for me, the critical election of the decade is 1986. We have to hold the Senate and gain in the states and in [voter] registration figures, or the 1980-84 years will reflect only a move toward a personable and attractive president.

"But if we see young people staying in the most Republican group in the electorate, if we see first voters registering Republican . . . , then we'll have a good chance to win the presidency again in 1988 and become the majority party of the 1990s."

Even some Republicans find Wirthlin's scenario overly optimistic. But it cannot be dismissed. Recent polls show the Republicans maintaining their edge as the party most likely to bring peace, prosperity and a better future. This appeal is particularly striking among young voters, who cast their first or second presidential votes for Reagan in 1984 and who may or may not show up for the less glamorous congressional and state contests of this year.

Republican pollster Robert Teeter conceded that the GOP hold on

by one vote," Schneiders said. "It would be a nightmare for the leadership, facing a popular president of the other party. We'd be liable for blame when things go wrong, and yet not really in control."

But others point out that Democrats cannot afford to fail in the Senate races this year, because the odds get steadily worse hereafter. In 1988, Democrats must defend more Senate seats than Republicans, and in 1990, they are at par. "If we don't get it back this year," said Peter D. Hart, a favorite pollster for Democratic candidates, "there will be more Russell Long and Tom Eagletons." Sens. Long of Louisiana and Eagleton of Missouri are retiring this year.

Their seats are targets for the GOP, as those of retiring Sens. Charles McC. Mathias Jr. (R-Md.), Paul Laxalt (R-Nev.) and John P. East (R-N.C.) are for the Democrats. But the major battlegrounds will probably be the South and the Farm Belt, where 10 freshmen Republicans, elected on Reagan's coattails in 1980, will be facing the voters.

By contrast to the Senate, the House looks quiet this year, with most of the battles expected in open

Democratic officeholders as candidates for statewide office this year in Texas, Florida and several other southern states. Dixie will be a special target, Fahrenkopf said; for Republican generic ads and registration efforts targeted both at new voters and at those who consider themselves Republicans now but retain their Democratic registrations.

Democrats are concerned. "The South is the area that has us the most worried," pollster Maslin said. "Clearly the party preference has moved dramatically." But Democrats were encouraged by their ability to hold a House seat in rural east Texas against a major GOP effort in a special election last summer and were even more heartened by their sweep in Virginia last November. Fahrenkopf, has pointed to the tactics of the latter race as the model "the Democrats may use against us in 1986." The Democratic gubernatorial winner there received 48 percent of the white vote and heavy majorities from blacks, a coalition that can keep the Democrats in power almost anywhere.

The Texas governor's race and the Florida Senate race probably will be the most expensive and headlined battles in the region. But

the Oregon gubernatorial race. Early polls put Rep. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.) out front for the Democratic nomination for the Maryland Senate seat that Mathias is vacating.

Impact of Economic Issues

Pollsters in both parties find no overriding issue and no great interest in politics, at the national level. But trade issues are hot in textile, shoe and steel communities, especially after Reagan vetoed relief for the first two of those industries. Even after the president signed the December farm bill that broke his stated budget limits, Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) still fretted that the depressed agriculture sector "may cost us one or two" Senate seats.

A larger question mark is the federal deficit, which Wirthlin's partner, Vincent Breglio, said is "moving up very fast from a blip to be equal with unemployment" as an issue of concern to the public. Most voters blame Congress, rather than the president, for the problem, and Republicans congratulated themselves for dodging the bullet with last session's passage of the

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Democratic National Committee

ticket, as could such charismatic newcomers as Rep. John S. McCain III (R-Ariz.), favored to succeed retiring Sen. Barry M. Goldwater (R-Ariz.), and former secretary of transportation Neil Goldschmidt (D), running for governor of Oregon.

Balance of Power in Parties

Even if the 1988 GOP and Democratic fields are not changed by the 1986 results, the internal configuration of both parties could shift.

Republican governors historically have been more progressive and less ideological than the party's congressmen, and an increase in gubernatorial ranks almost automatically translates into an infusion of strength for that underdog part of the party. Among the GOP moderates given good chances of winning governorships this year are Rep. John R. McKernan Jr. of Maine, ex-governor James A. Rhodes of Ohio, ex-governor and ex-senator Henry A. Bellmon of Oklahoma, Oregon ex-secretary of state Norma Paulus, Lt. Gov. William W. Scranton III of Pennsylvania.



But as the year begins, there is at least a possibility that some of the deeper shifts that were seen in the 1980-84 elections may manifest themselves again. If they do, the Republicans are almost certain to be the beneficiaries, for those elections saw the breakup of the old Democratic coalition and the emergence of a new pro-GOP majority in both presidential and Senate voting.

"I can't imagine anything more disastrous for the Democrats than to come out controlling the Senate

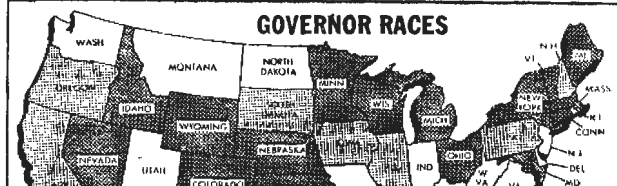
But Republicans must worry about holding governorships in three key states, California, Illinois and Pennsylvania, where Democrats are gearing for major challenges. A loss in any one of those states would erase the value of several small-state victories. And overall failure to dent the big Democratic statehouse majorities in 1986 would certainly send a message that the "Reagan revolution" is something the voters want confined to Washington, D.C.

In 1984, Reagan's share of the southern white vote reached 71 percent and he carried counties that had been Democratic since Civil War days. Moreover, in some states, notably North Carolina and Texas, voters not only backed Reagan for the Senate and House

They have recruited Wayne County executive William Lucas, a black, and Tampa mayor Bob Martinez, a Hispanic, both former Democrats, as candidates for governor in Michigan and Florida respectively. But neither is given as good a chance of prevailing in both the primary and general election as Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley (D), a

They, or their conquerors, could gain consideration for the national

Losses in those states, combined with reelection victories for such figures as Cuomo, Dukakis, Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) and Wisconsin Gov. Anthony S. Earl (D) would surely suggest that liberalism is still alive in the fight for the future of the Democratic Party.



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They also foresee races where the personal, financial and organizational strength of individual candidates will be more important than any national trends or issues. While Republicans will enjoy a substantial overall advantage in party-generated funds, Democratic congressional incumbents do well with their money-raising from political action committees.

And the Democrats believe that they have put their stamp on issues that will help them in particular districts and states: relief for farmers; protection against foreign imports of shoes, textiles and other products; guarantees of Social Security and Medicare benefits. Even the president's pet domestic project, tax revision, bears a Democratic label after its passage by the House.

Citing these issues along with sanctions on South Africa and the fight against "defense waste," Rep. Tony Coelho (D-Calif.), chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, claimed that "Democrats won the major legislative and political fights of 1985" and are now in a stronger position for 1986.

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Daniels said this is the White House's top priority and may be the Republicans' toughest challenge. Analyst Kevin Phillips has pointed out that, since 1950, in the five midterm elections held when they controlled the White House, Republicans have usually managed to win fewer than one-third of the Senate seats at stake. Their best showing, in 1982, was 39 percent. This year, with 22 Republican and 12 Democratic seats up, Republicans would have to win 65 percent of the races to maintain their current 53-47 majority, and 56 percent to eke out a 50-50 tie which Vice President Bush could break for the GOP in organizing the Senate.

That sounds like a large order, and it is. But it is vital to Reagan and to the GOP future. Without leverage in either chamber of Congress, Wirthlin said, "the president will be very much on the defensive in 1987-88 and he doesn't play well on defense."

Regaining control of the Senate "would be a tremendous psychological lift to our party," Democratic pollster Paul Maslin said. With control, Democrats could use committee hearings and legislation to draw issues for 1988 on everything from Reagan's judicial appointments to his budget priorities. On the other hand, Schneiders and some other Democratic strategists worry about what Reagan might do in making a Democratic-controlled Congress his whipping boy.

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the lead in domestic policy-making. It also gives them a head start toward controlling the redistricting of U.S. House and state legislative seats that will follow the 1990 census.

But 1986 is a year of vulnerability for the incumbent Democratic governors. Of the 36 governorships at stake, 27 are held by Democrats. Thirteen of the Democrats (and only four Republicans) are at the ends of their terms. The chairman of the Republican Governors Association, New Hampshire Gov. John H. Sununu, said the GOP hopes to make a net gain of at least six states, focusing on open governorships in states—such as Arizona, New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Florida, South Carolina and Maine—where Reagan ran strongly.

Encouraged by the takeover of the New Jersey assembly in 1985, Fahrenkopf said that for the long term, "the key for us is how we do in the legislatures. We're within 10 seats in 18 chambers now. If we can come out with a plus in a tough year like 1986, I'll be happy."

But Republicans must worry about holding governorships in three key states, California, Illinois and Pennsylvania, where Democrats are gearing for major challenges. A loss in any one of those states would erase the value of several small-state victories. And overall failure to dent the big Democratic statehouse majorities in 1986 would certainly send a message that the "Reagan revolution" is something the voters want confined to Washington, D.C.

Political Future of the South

In 1984, Reagan's share of the southern white vote reached 71 percent and he carried counties that had been Democratic since Civil War days. Moreover, in some states, notably North Carolina and Texas, voters not only backed Republicans for the Senate and House in increasing numbers but also elected Republicans to courthouse offices for the first time.

As public affairs consultant Horace Busby, a Democrat, wrote recently, "The dramatic decrease in [southern] counties voting Democratic [in 1984] means that 1980 may be considered as the last stand of a history long crucial to the party."

Republicans are pushing hard to make the breakthrough permanent. They have recruited former Dem-

bloc.

Republican pollsters said, with fingers crossed, that they think the young voters may stick. "They're still fairly enamored of the Republicans today," Wirthlin said, citing even higher approval ratings than the older voters display for Reagan's handling of foreign policy and the economy.

Fahrenkopf cites polls showing the Republicans 7 points up on the Democrats in party identification among people ages 18 to 29, and even further ahead among their younger teen-age brothers and sisters. "It doesn't mean realignment is an accomplished fact," he said, "but we have the opportunity to become the majority party."

But there is conflicting evidence. In the 1985 Virginia gubernatorial race, the Democrats carried the younger voters. Lee Atwater, a Republican consultant who has focused on the "baby-boomers," cautioned that the GOP must make it clear it is "tolerant on the social issues" and "be careful of antigovernment rhetoric." The new voters, he said, "are 'pro-choice' on everything," and while they insist on "excellence and efficiency" from government, "they realize they need government in their lives."

Both parties will also be working to expand their support among women and minorities. Republicans have taken encouragement from New Jersey Gov. Thomas H. Kean's feat in gaining 60 percent of the black vote on the way to his 1985 reelection sweep, and are looking for inroads in other states, while continuing their avid courtship of Hispanic voters.

They have recruited Wayne County executive William Lucas, a black, and Tampa mayor Bob Martinez, a Hispanic, both former Democrats, as candidates for governor in Michigan and Florida respectively. But neither is given as good a chance of prevailing in both the primary and general election as Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley (D), a black, who is aiming for a rematch with California Gov. George Deukmejian (R).

The number of women candidates for Congress and statewide office is on the increase, but only three so far have surfaced as strong contenders. Lt. Gov. Harriet Woods (D) is the likely nominee of her party for the Missouri Senate seat that Eagleton is vacating, and former secretary of state Norma Paulus (R) has the same status for the GOP in

could pit Republican senators running for reelection against Reagan, in much the fashion that House Republicans found themselves at odds with him in December over the tax-revision bill. Such a split with the party's chief symbol and biggest campaign asset could cloud GOP prospects.

1988 Presidential Hopes

Dole and Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) must face the voters this year before launching their expected challenges to Vice President Bush in the 1988 Republican presidential primaries, but neither faces major opposition.

On the Democratic side, assuming that Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.) announces this weekend that he will not seek reelection to the Senate, New York Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, Rep. Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.) and Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) are the only speculative presidential contenders with a date at the polls this year. All of them are expected to roll up flattering margins.

Whether 1986 adds names to the prospective presidential list is uncertain, but observers will be watching the showing of such dark horses as California Gov. Deukmejian (R), Illinois Gov. James R. Thompson (R), Massachusetts Gov. Michael S. Dukakis (D), Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton (D) and Texas Gov. Mark White (D), all seeking reelection this year, and Florida Gov. Robert Graham (D), who is running for the Senate.

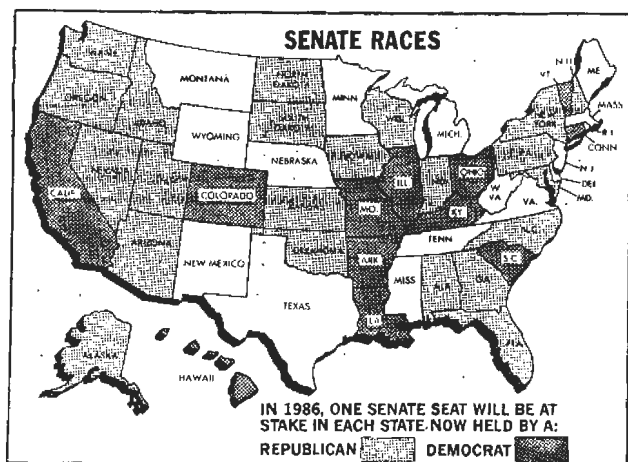
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conservative activists, Latham, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), are sponsoring candidates for senator or governor in their states, and in the case of Helms and Gramm are being opposed by other factions of the GOP in the primaries. The outcome of those contests, too, will be watched for clues.

On the Democratic side, the effort to shift the party's focus away from traditional liberalism has been led by a band of governors and members of Congress from Virginia out to Arizona.

With such major "revisionist" figures as Arizona Gov. Bruce E. Babbitt, Colorado Gov. Richard D. Lamm and South Carolina Gov. Richard W. Riley among the eight southern and western Democratic governors retiring, the credibility of the movement depends in part on the Democrats' ability to keep control of those states—as they did in Virginia last November, where outgoing Gov. Charles S. Robb (D) helped engineer a Democratic sweep—and to elect such potential adherents as Los Angeles Mayor Bradley and ex-senator Adlai E. Stevenson III of Illinois, both running again for governor in their states.

Losses in those states, combined with reelection victories for such figures as Cuomo, Dukakis, Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) and Wisconsin Gov. Anthony S. Earl (D) would surely suggest that liberalism is still alive in the fight for the future of the Democratic Party.



MAPS BY DAVE COOK—THE WASHINGTON POST

