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Guns and butter

he stakes in this fall's mid-term election couldn't be higher. A pickup of six seats would give Democrats control of the House; a pickup of one seat would give Republicans control over the Senate. The two political staples—guns and butter—are the key issues, and we look at both.

Guns or butter? Sen. John F. Kerry urges Democrats to avoid making the false choice urged by “consultants, pollsters, and strategists who argue that Democrats should be the party of domestic issues solely.” He writes, “John F. Kennedy didn't try to change the subject of the debate when General Eisenhower's vice president brought up foreign policy.” Columnist Will Marshall sees a similar opening for Democrats in President Bush's failure to effectively present America's case against Saddam Hussein, not because Marshall opposes toppling Saddam, but because he favors it. “By presenting the case against Iraq from the wider perspective of progressive internationalism, Democrats can put the onus back on Saddam and challenge our friends—in Europe, Russia, and the Middle East—to stop appeasing the Iraqi tyrant.”

On to butter. The overriding domestic issue is certainly the troubled economy. Gene Sperling, director of the National Economic Council under President Clinton, traces the evolution of Bushonomics from their Chicken Little days of trying to talk down the economy as a way to gin up support for their tax cuts, to their present posture as cheerleaders for a comeback. Along the way the Bushies have managed to botch the successful economic policies they inherited from Clinton. In a companion article, Robert D. Atkinson argues that the Bush team's overriding problem is that its “economic ideology is a throwback to some of the most outmoded thinking of the last century.”

Whether the administration recognizes it or not, America is undergoing a steady transition to a postindustrial economy. That trend is at the heart of the political analysis featured in our cover story, which is drawn from a new book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, by political analysts John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira. In places where the postindustrial economy has taken hold, Judis and Teixeira find a new political geography with profound political implications. The key features of this new terrain are metropolitan areas—dubbed “ideopolises”—that have made the transition to the postindustrial economy and have been trending heavily Democratic during the last decade.

We tee up their hypothesis and let an impressive array of analysts from the left (Harold Meyerson), the right (David Brooks), and the center (Marshall Wittmann) take it on. While Judis and Teixeira document a demographic opportunity for Democrats, pollster Mark J. Penn and The Editors talk about how to take advantage of it. For Democrats to build a true majority coalition, Penn notes, they've got to get their agenda right, and should especially pay attention to the growth and opportunity-oriented views of both suburban voters and Hispanics. Ed Kilgore adds a historical note arguing that Democrats should use the rhetoric of the progressive political tradition rather than its populist first cousin.

In sum, demographics are important, but they aren't destiny. Smart leadership still counts, and ideas still matter.

—Chuck Alston

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HEART OF THE IDEOPOLIS: Coffee chains and book stores abound in cities like Portland, Ore., and their surrounding suburbs. Such communities tend Democratic, say Judis and Teixeira.

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How To Earn a Majority

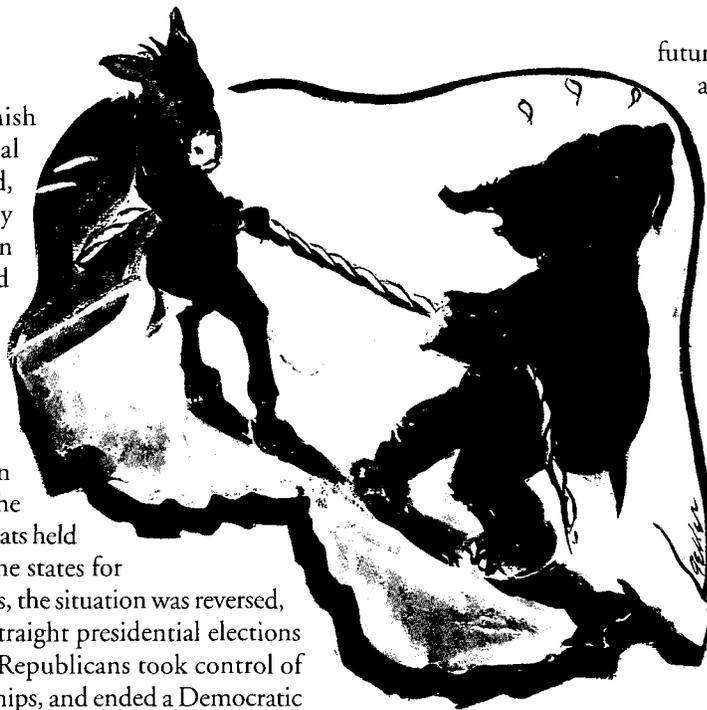
Demographic trends are creating Democratic opportunities. But a majority won't come automatically, or easily.

by **The Editors**

As the photo-finish 2000 presidential election illustrated, along with finely balanced partisan caucuses in the U.S. House and Senate and in state legislatures around the country, the two national political parties are at a remarkable state of parity. Arguably, this balance has existed for more than two decades. Even as Republicans held a lock on the presidency in the 1980s, Democrats held majorities in Congress and in the states for most of that period. In the 1990s, the situation was reversed, with Democrats winning two straight presidential elections by comfortable margins while Republicans took control of Congress, dominated governorships, and ended a Democratic advantage in state legislatures that reached back to the New Deal.

Throughout the last two decades, political analysts from across the political spectrum have competed with arguments about how one party or the other could break the gridlock and produce a lasting majority coalition, in line with most of U.S. political history. A variety of conservative theoreticians have repeatedly argued that the GOP breakthrough first outlined by Kevin Phillips in his 1969 masterpiece, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, had already happened or was right on the horizon. And the Democratic Leadership Council has repeatedly and with some success shown how Democrats could thwart the long-prophesied Republican ascendancy and build their own majority centrist coalition.

This issue of BLUEPRINT features an essay by political analysts John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira—based on their new book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*—that suggests Democrats will soon be enabled by demographic and economic changes to achieve a clear supremacy in U.S. politics for the foreseeable



future. We also offer comments and dissenting views from the left, the right, and the center.

What's important about the Judis-Teixeira hypothesis is its confirmation of the long-standing New Democrat claim that the Information Age is creating an electorate that is decisively receptive to a progressive, centrist message based on economic growth, limited but activist government, internationalism, reform of big public institutions, cultural tolerance, and inclusion. What's missing

from their analysis is the recognition that Democratic gains among the most important emerging electoral blocs are fragile and require a message and political strategy that reinforce the "different kind of Democratic Party" fashioned during the Clinton administration. Moreover, the Judis-Teixeira focus on voting patterns avoids the simple but critical fact that most of the suburban voters who have trended Democratic during the last decade remain political independents, with no enduring attachment to either party.

In other words, demography is not political destiny, and the ideology, message, and record of elected officials in both parties will determine whether today's trends turn into tomorrow's results. That's an important qualifier to the Judis-Teixeira analysis, which otherwise may serve to encourage Democrats to believe they can win while forgetting the political lessons of the last two decades.

In every important respect, *The Emerging Democratic Majority* vindicates the once-controversial New Democrat argument that the party needed to improve its ability to appeal