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Fighting off the Counterrevolution

The conventional wisdom has arrived: 2012 was a status quo election. The President was re-elected. Democrats continue to have a majority in the Senate. Republicans still control the House. Only two states changed their presidential votes from 2008 to 2012 (North Carolina and Indiana). Six billion dollars were spent and almost nothing changed!

The conventional wisdom is wrong. Things have indeed changed. Voters came out to defend the revolution of 2008. They rejected a return to the old order.

The status quo candidate in this election was Mitt Romney. Romney represented the old order that's been in power since 1980: the Reagan regime with its power base of older white men. Bill Clinton, the only Democrat to win the White House during that regime, tried to make accommodations with it. They impeached him.

All that changed with the revolution of 2008. The New America, led by Barack Obama, came to power. It was a movement of young people, working women, African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, union members, liberals, gays, and other groups that had long been out of power.

A revolution always faces a

counterrevolution. When the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, they immediately faced a counterrevolution led by the White Army, which was fighting to defend the Tsarist regime. When the Obama movement came to power in 2009, a counterrevolution sprang up immediately: the Tea Party. The Tea Party enjoyed a big victory in 2010 when it gained power in Congress and nearly killed health care reform.

This year, the New America defeated the forces of reaction. There were some doubts about whether the 2008 majority would show up again. Many Democrats were disappointed in President Obama and frustrated by his inability to deliver the hope and change he promised. But they did show up.

What drove them to the polls this time was not hope but fear—fear that the Tea Party Republicans would take over the country. Obama continued to draw strong support from women, gays, African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, liberals, and union members. In some cases (Latinos, Asian-Americans, gays), Obama did better than he did in 2008. His big loss was among white men (from 41% in 2008 to 35% this year). They're the old regime.

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The White Army was routed. It retreated to Siberia—in this case, the House of Representatives, where Republicans retained their majority. Why did Republicans hold on to the House? Because the House is fortified against change. House incumbents are difficult to defeat. Their challengers are mostly unknown. Moreover, most state legislatures are controlled by Republicans, and they used their power over redistricting to protect Republican incumbents.

It's hard to call this a status quo election when so many Americans are dissatisfied with the status quo. In the network exit poll, more than three quarters of voters described the nation's economy as bad. A majority said the country is seriously off on the wrong track. Only a quarter said they were better off than they were four years ago. How did President Obama escape blame? Voters blamed President Bush—the old regime—more than President Obama for the nation's economic problems (53 to 38%). The revolution is not finished. It must go on.

Will we see change? Sure. We're getting more and more evidence every day. House Speaker John Boehner has signaled a willingness to make a deal on taxes ("We're ready to be led"). High-income taxpayers will very likely see their taxes go up. The new health care law has been protected from repeal. Former Republican Party chairman Haley Barbour is calling on Republicans to support immigration reform. If they don't, the whole country could go the way of California, where Latino voting power has reduced Republicans to a powerless minority.

The country will not go over the fiscal cliff. President Obama has vowed not to let that happen, and Republicans in Congress know it would throw the country back into recession. Obama doesn't have to face the

voters again. They do.

Before this year, same-sex marriage had been rejected by voters 32 times. This year, it was approved by voters in all four states where it was on the ballot. It should now be possible for President Obama to break the logjam and peel off some Republican support for tax reform, energy legislation, and debt reduction.

Karl Rove was the Admiral Kolchak of the counterrevolution. His American Crossroads Super PAC spent over \$100 million on attack ads. According to the Sunlight Foundation, only one percent of the candidates supported by his committee won. That is one of the lowest returns on investment of any independent spending group. The Bolsheviks shot Admiral Kolchak. Rove was lucky. He just got humiliated on national TV.

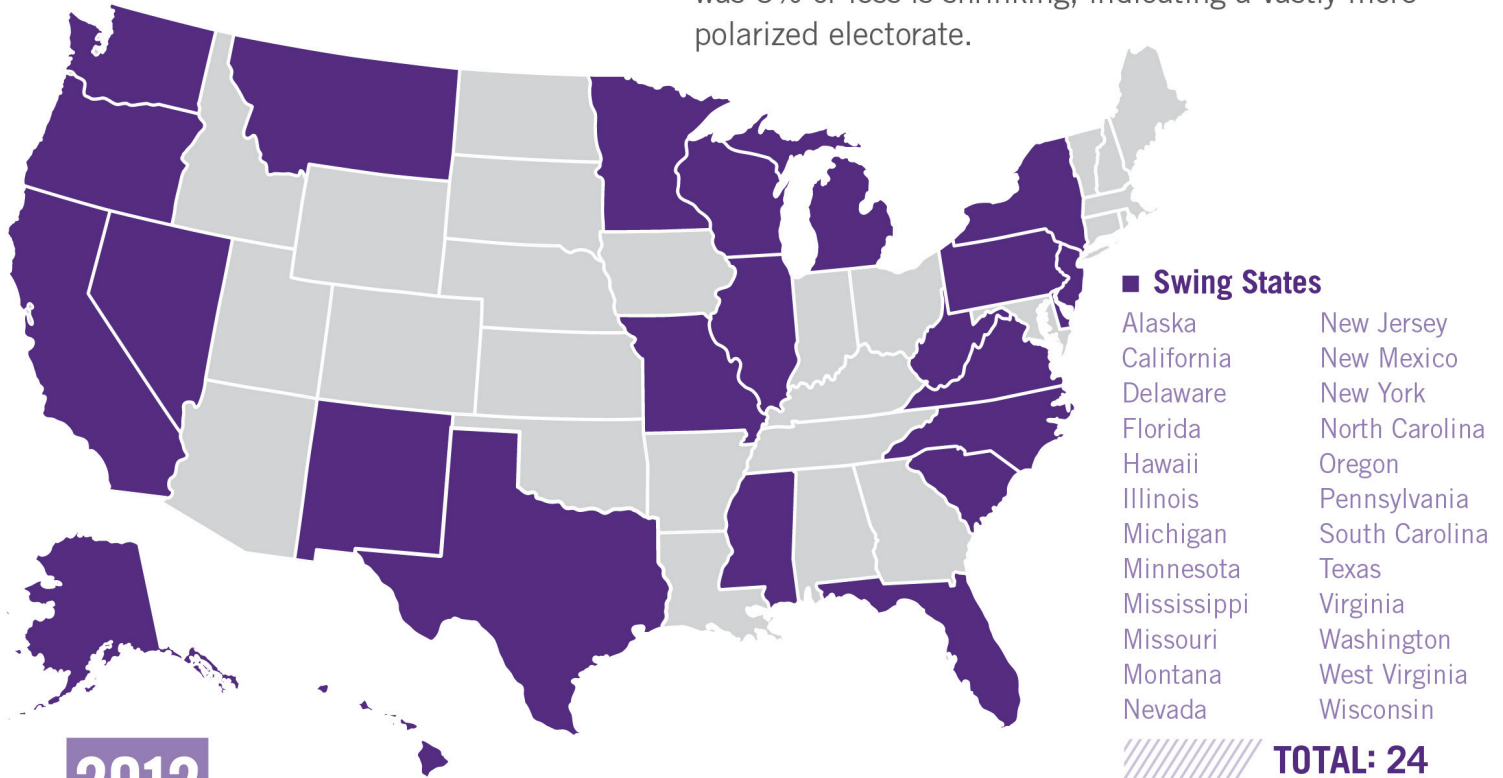
Why did Democrats win? It certainly wasn't the economy. It was the demography, stupid. Mainstream America is changing. Message to Republicans: deal with it. ■



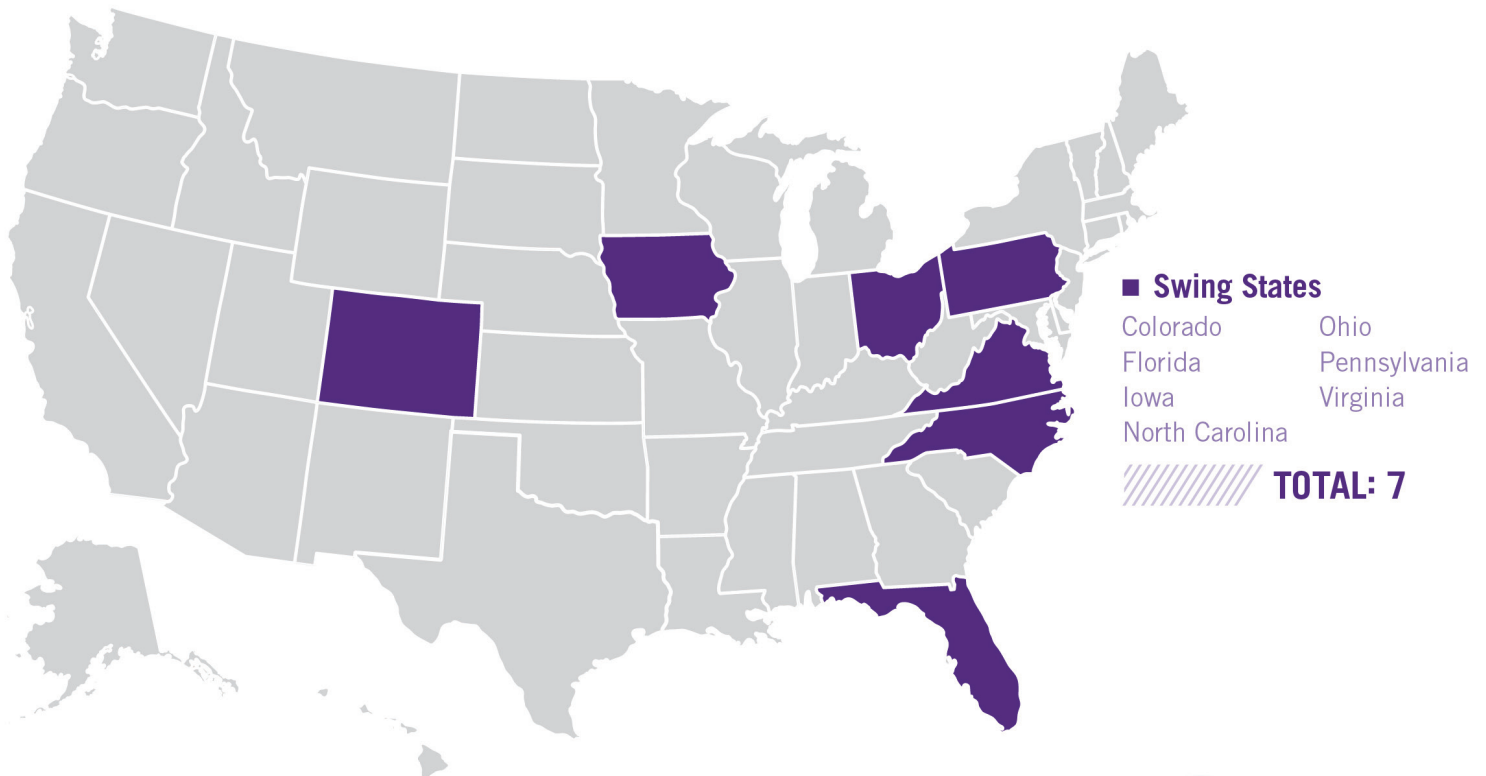
Shrinking Battlegrounds

1960

The number of states in which the margin of victory was 5% or less is shrinking, indicating a vastly more polarized electorate.



2012



1960 and 2012 data from Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections. Available at: www.uselectionatlas.org

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INSIDEPOLITICS

with Bill Schneider

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OBAMA		ROMNEY
	ALABAMA	9
	ALASKA	3
	ARIZONA	11
	ARKANSAS	6
55	CALIFORNIA	
9	COLORADO	
7	CONNECTICUT	
3	DELAWARE	
3	DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	
29	FLORIDA	
	GEORGIA	16
4	HAWAII	
	IDAHO	4
20	ILLINOIS	
	INDIANA	11
6	IOWA	
	KANSAS	6
	KENTUCKY	8
	LOUISIANA	8
4	MAINE	
10	MARYLAND	
11	MASSACHUSETTES	
16	MICHIGAN	
10	MINNESOTA	
	MISSISSIPPI	6
	MISSOURI	10
	MONTANA	3
	NEBRASKA	5
6	NEVADA	
4	NEW HAMPSHIRE	
14	NEW JERSEY	
5	NEW MEXICO	
29	NEW YORK	
	NORTH CAROLINA	15
	NORTH DAKOTA	3
18	OHIO	
	OKLAHOMA	7
7	OREGON	
20	PENNSYLVANIA	
4	RHODE ISLAND	
	SOUTH CAROLINA	9
	SOUTH DAKOTA	3
	TENNESSEE	11
	TEXAS	38
	UTAH	6
3	VERMONT	
13	VIRGINIA	
12	WASHINGTON	
	WEST VIRGINIA	5
10	WISCONSIN	
	WYOMING	3
95	SWING STATES*	0
332	TOTAL (need 270 to win)	206

*Swing states based on pre-election polling

