

# Struggle for the Presidency

**The 2000 Presidential Elections - Why the winners were  
successful and the losers were not**

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## Abstract

Im Jahr 2000 verlor zum ersten Mal der Kandidat der zuvor regierenden Partei, obwohl die ökonomischen, sowie weltpolitischen Rahmenbedingungen diesen stark favorisierten. Bill Clintons Vizepräsident Albert Gore und der Sohn des 41. US-Präsidenten George W. Bush hatten über Monate um die Gunst der Wählerschaft gerungen. Beide setzten sich in den parteiinternen Vorwahlen gegen ihre Herausforderer John McCain bzw. Bill Bradley durch. Der längste und teuerste US-Wahlkampf aller Zeiten sollte sein Ende jedoch erst vor dem Supreme Court finden.

Anspruch dieser Arbeit ist es, die beiden Wahlkampagnen Revue passieren zu lassen, hinter die Fassaden des US-amerikanischen Wahlsystems zu blicken und schließlich die Frage zu beantworten, warum George W. Bush zum 43. Präsident der USA gewählt wurde.

Die Analyse behandelt zahlreiche Aspekte der Kampagnen. Angefangen mit den Vorwahlen, über die Regeln des Wahlsystems, die Strategien, die Debatten und die Berichterstattung bis hin zu „videostyles“, der Organisation der „Conventions“ sowie der Wahl der „Running Mates.“ Fünf für die Dynamik des Wahlkampfes entscheidende Momente kristallisieren sich dabei heraus, von denen Gore zumindest zwei für sich entscheiden konnte. Es werden sich sechs zentrale Vorteile der Kampagne des Republikaners gegenüber der des Demokratischen Vizepräsidenten ergeben, die schließlich die eingangs gestellte Frage beantworten.

In 2000, the incumbent party lost the presidential election for the first time, although the pre-election environment strongly favored the incumbent party. Bill Clinton's Vice President Albert Gore and the son of the 41<sup>st</sup> US-President, George W. Bush, fought for the electorate for several months. Both, Bush and Gore, succeeded their party competitors John McCain and Bill Bradley, respectively. The longest and most expensive race in the history of US-elections ended up in a Supreme Court decision.

The paper's aim is to pass the election campaigns in review, to check the background, and to find answers to the question of why George W. Bush was elected 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States. The analysis deals with numerous aspects. Beginning with the primaries and caucuses, the paper continues with the rules of the game, the campaign strategies, the debates, and the media coverage. Among others, it tackles the "videostyles", the Conventions and the selection of the running mates. Of the five pivotal elements two of them come out in favor of Gore. Six crucial advantages of Bush against Gore decide the race and answer the main question, which was stated before.

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## Introduction

In 2000, Bill Clinton's Vice-President Albert Gore ran for the 43<sup>rd</sup> US-Presidency. His challenger, George Walker Bush, was Texas' Governor and the son of the 41<sup>st</sup> President. On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2000, a very competitive race was ended up with the Republican winner and current President of the United States: George W. Bush. After both parties had held their nominations processes till August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000, four month of election campaign narrowly resulted in 271 electoral votes in favor of Bush and 266 in favor of Al Gore. Although, Al Gore won the majority of popular votes (48.4% vs. 47.9%), he lost the 50-state-race with 20+DC versus Bush's 30 state victories (GALLUP POLLS 2007, 270TOWIN.COM).

The question, I want to focus on, is: "Why was George W. Bush successful in the Republican primaries as well as in the general election and why lost Albert Gore the race although he had won the Democratic nomination?" It was the first time that the incumbent party lost the election although the pre-election environment strongly favored the incumbent party. This paper finds reasons which explain this phenomenon.

In answering these main questions, the paper covers the rules, the strategies, the messengers, the messages, the political advertisement, the role of media coverage, the fundraising, the endorsement, the audience, the candidates' traits, the debates, the campaign framing, the running mates, the "527 groups" and the final outcome. In regard to these points, the paper firstly discusses the parties' nomination process in 2000. In a second step, the paper proves these points again on the 2000 general election.

Besides Robert E. Denton's incredible book "The 2000 Presidential Election: A Communication Perspective", the Congressional Quarterly Weekly, the Congressional Quarterly Researcher, the Gallup Polls, and the National Journal were used as the basic academic sources. Boston Globe, Financial Times, Los Angeles Times, Newsweek, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Time were consulted as the basic newspapers and magazines.

## **The Parties' Nomination Process**

### ***Early Campaigns***

In order to analyze the 2000 election campaign, we should firstly know when it exactly took place. Judith S. Trent delivers an insight into the early campaign phase. Compared to the 1996 nomination campaigns, the 2000 ones started and ended earlier. Trent figures out that the campaign actually started 31 month before the Iowa Caucus. Thus, the first campaign speeches were hold in May 1997 by four Republicans and two of their Democratic counterparts. Unlike prior elections, in 2000 we have to deal with the immense number of 15 seriously campaigning candidates who raised and spent more money than ever before in history (TRENT 2002).

George W. Bush and Albert Gore set their first exclamation point in leading the fundraising. In June 1999, thus one year prior to every primary, George W. Bush had raised the incredible amount of \$23 million. His rival Al Gore had collected \$18.5 million after all. John McCain (\$5 million) as well as Bill Bradley (\$11.5 million) remained in the second row (TRENT 2002).

Bush and Gore profited from their overwhelming name-recognition. The candidates McCain and Bradley both were first not completely concentrating on the presidency. Arizona's Senator McCain was the "media's main man" (TRENT 2002: 19). McCain was perceived as likely to run and the media pushed him to do so. New Jersey's Senator Bradley was the popular super-star the media wanted to see running. According to Trent, the candidates entered the race at such an early point because they wanted to achieve name-recognition. However, Gore as the Vice-President incumbent and Bush as Texas' Governor and eldest son of the 41<sup>st</sup> US-President George H. W. Bush was pretty well known. Trent concludes that the Republicans were energized to run because Clinton's administration was involved in many scandals like the "Lewinsky-Scandal" (TRENT 2002: 21, CQ RESEARCHER 2001, GIROUX/BENENSON 2000).

In 1998 and 1999, Bush and Gore did best in the candidates' tasks to attract endorsement and built up the necessary campaign organization. McCain waited till his Senate re-election in Arizona and later missed the required organization capabilities. He never showed the ability to compete in terms of fundraising. In contrast to McCain, Gore excellently accomplished the early race.

Actually, he started running directly after Clinton's re-election in 1997/ 1998. Like Gore, Bush understood how to campaign early. In 1998 both already accelerated their campaign and were successful concerning endorsement, fundraising, name-recognition, as well as concerning the polls. Bush's advisor Karl Rove made the Texan Governor speak at a lot of events outside his home state. Furthermore, Bush attended several seminars about domestic and foreign affairs to close unfortunate gaps in his knowledge. Bush founded "The Pioneers" which is a network of 150 very wealthy donors who each contributed the amount of \$100,000. Accordingly, [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org) delivers an all-embracing donation register. Finally, Bush got the endorsement of 23 Republican Governors. Bush's family also strongly supported and advised him with broad experience like Thomas and Brant detailed report in Newsweek (THOMAS/BRANT 2000). Gore campaigned on the same level and collected the endorsement of many Democratic Governors in 1998 because he had backed them in their Governorship elections. "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." Bradley wanted to be perceived as being a completely independent candidate. Thus, he made an irreparable mistake in rejecting to hire campaign strategists who could have improved his framing and timing. He refused to engage spin doctors who would have adjusted his speeches, or political advisors who probably would have aligned his campaign issues and personal traits. Bradley also avoided talking about himself. He rejected questions on his person. At the latest since "Watergate", a political advisor would have advised him that the messenger is equivalently worth as the message. We will see that endorsement, campaign organization, and fundraising make the differences between winners and losers within both parties (TRENT 2002, OPENSECRETS 2007).

### ***Rules of the Game***

After 1972 and the so called McGovern-Commission, the presidential elections truly changed. Accordingly, Henry C. Kenski (2002) concludes major impacts on the parties' nomination process. The primaries were enhanced by state legislature. To become the party's candidate, the competitors have to win the delegates' votes through winning the primaries and not through convincing at the Convention anymore. Thus, it became necessary to campaign in the several states

to win the primaries and take to delegates. To achieve the ability to seriously compete over several months, the new system requires from the candidates to build strong organization teams and to raise a lot of money. Generally, it compensated the old party-based system through a new candidate-oriented system. Secondly, since 1992, the states compete against each other concerning their primary's date. This tendency to place the primaries at an early time and prior to other states' primaries is called "front-loading" (KENSKI 2002, see also chapter "Front-Loading and Invisible Primaries").

Bush had difficulties in "open" primaries. In 2000, 12 out of the 50 states held "open" primaries which mean that besides the registered Republicans, also Independents and Democrats are allowed to vote in the Republican primaries. These circumstances favored John McCain. He took the non-Republicans in South Carolina, New Hampshire, and Michigan. Without their support, McCain probably would have been forced to drop out the race earlier (KENSKI 2002).

### ***Front-Loading and Invisible Primaries***

Robert E. Denton figures out five moments in the 2000 election campaign which changed the dynamics such as the framing, the issues, the strategies, and the outcome of the primaries as well as the general election. I will name them all at several of this paper's pages. Firstly, Denton mentions the primary season's front-loading (DENTON 2002: 2). As elections went by, it became obvious that the states nervously tend to place their primaries or caucuses right at the primary season's beginning (DENTON 2002).

The front-runners Bush and Gore benefited from the front-loading. The media coverage is focused on these early primaries. The winner of the first one or two primaries is called the "front-runner". Candidates have to win the so called "invisible primary" which means they have to raise the biggest amount of money. The majority of media coverage will focus on these favorites. If you cannot compete in this early race, the media, the public, and most crucial possible donators will lose interest in supporting your campaign. Only already well-known and well-funded candidates have the ability to compete at this early point. The candidates who lead the invisible primary also lead the polls of the major institutes and benefit from the horse-racing effect. Both, George W. Bush as well



as Al Gore, were favored by this phenomenon. As I mentioned above, both, Bush as the son of the 41<sup>st</sup> President and Gore as the Vice-President incumbent, even world-wide, were pretty well known. Both could not complain about lacking endorsement and both were well funded. Consequently, they won the early primaries. The majority of candidates with less name-recognition dropped out even before the race had started (DENTON 2002).

Bush's fundraising outclassed every other candidate. Bush dominated the first polls against Gore and Bradley. His fundraising strategy was to drop out of the public finance system and raise more money at an earlier period of time. In April 2000, Bush led the invisible race with \$68.7 million. In February, multimillionaire Steve Forbes had spent \$34.1 million of his private capital and dropped out of the race after Delaware's primary. McCain remained far behind with \$15.7 million in April. The others raised less than \$10 million and were forced to drop out of the race (KENSKI 2002).

### ***The Democrats' Primaries***

President Bill Clinton was not allowed to enter the race for the third term due to the Constitution's 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment. Instead, Clinton's Vice-President Albert Gore from Tennessee, a former Congressman and Senator decided to run for a third Democratic term in a row. New Jersey's experienced Senator and former basketball star, Bill Bradley, can be considered as Gore's only serious competitor in the Democrats' nomination process (KENSKI 2002).

Bradley wanted to challenge the front-runner with liberal positions and his will to change the way how politics work. Surprisingly, in December 1999, he was very effective and led the polls with 48% to Gore's 45% (KENSKI 2002: 73). Although, Gore was favored in Iowa's polls, Bradley was widely seen as the better challenger of George W. Bush. Besides Gore and Bradley, who were blessed with well-funded campaigns, the other Democratic insurgents had to drop out very early because of missing political and financial endorsement (KENSKI 2002).

Prior to the Iowa Caucus, Gore was financially eye-to-eye with Bradley. Then, the framing "fight for the people" gained Gore the fore. Al Gore was endorsed by the Democratic base. They were satisfied with his work during the

eight Clinton years. Furthermore, he was supported by Bill Clinton and the Centrist Democratic Leadership Council, which is a major bloc within the Democratic Party. Clinton even announced that making Al Gore his partner in 1992 was one of the best decisions he ever made (CNN 2000a). Among others, Ted Kennedy and Jesse Jackson endorsed Gore. Consistent with his celebrity image, Bradley got the support of Michael Jordan, the famous Chicago Bulls basketball star, but he also got the endorsement of Nebraska's Senator John Kerrey. Both raised financial records. Bradley collected \$27.8 million and Gore called \$29 million his own by April 2000. However, due to his incumbent status, the media coverage focused on the Vice-President and personated him as the clear Democratic front-runner. Both competitors aired expensive spots at an early time. Gore used focus groups to test his appearance. Evaluating the findings, he focused on the favored trait to "fight for the people". He aligned his whole framing with this trait (KENSKI 2002, CANNON 2000a).

Al Gore was challenged by Bradley but won every single primary and every caucus because he placed the right emphasis on the right issues and traits. Only in New Hampshire, "Bradley had a window of opportunity" (KENSKI 2002: 77) indeed missed to benefit and win the primary. Instead, he lost with 48% to 52%. Iowa went to Gore with 63% to 35% as well as Delaware with 57% to 40%. Gore produced spots on the most prominent issues like education, Social Security, Medicare, etc. Every ad ended with "Al Gore – fighting for us" (KENSKI 2002: 79) which referred to Gore's research findings that were mentioned above. In doing so, he reduced Bradley's lead prior to the Iowa Caucus. Among others, Bradley focused on the women's pro-choice issue. Crucial, Iowa's most prominent issues like Social Security (26%) and education (22%) were clearly occupied by the Vice-President (75% versus 21% and 56% to 33%, respectively). In New Hampshire, where Bradley had a slight chance to win the primary, Bradley had the lead on the second most important issue. Bradley was favored with regard to healthcare with strong 61% to 39%. Nevertheless, Gore kept the edge on education with 55% to 44%. In terms of the candidates' traits, the most important was "stand for your beliefs" with 30%. Again, Gore dominated this poll with overwhelming 70% to 27% (KENSKI 2002).

Before the first primary took place, Gore heavily attacked his major competitor Bradley. Firstly, Bradley was accused for his record and the fact that

he had retired from the Senate. Secondly, Gore punched him hard on healthcare. On this traditionally Democratic policy field, Gore did best. He blamed Bradley for offering an utopian healthcare system. Instead, he suggested a step-by-step expansion plan. Gore conquered the Democrats' hearts in including children with low income background. Gore's presentation of himself as being the advocate for the poor and forgotten Americans against big money and special interests bore fruit. His focus on the military was narrow but clear. He wanted to cut the forces but make them more efficient (BARNES/STONE 2000).

Bradley made the economic situation of the poor and middle class to his major issue. Besides, he issued gun control and followed John McCain in promising a campaign finance reform towards a public finance system. Bradley ran on the morality issue. He used a classic outsider-strategy challenging Gore on his obvious ties to Clinton. In 1999, he led the polls because he focused on the administration's scandals. He promised to give Washington a new face of integrity. Gore was perceived as standing close to Clinton. Thus Clinton's shadow could become dangerous. In order to oppose this image, Gore moved his campaign organization from Washington to Nashville, Tennessee (TIME 2000, BARNES/STONE 2000, CQ WEEKLY ONLINE 2000).

Bradley used four types of strategies to get back into the race on Super Tuesday but each of them missed the target. (KENSKI 2002: 83) Firstly, he confronted Gore's gradualist policy with his own "big solutions for big problems". Believing in the polls, Bradley failed with this message and Gore did better in imitating Clinton's step-by-step programs (NATHER 2000). Secondly, Bradley blamed the Clinton-Administration to be ethically one-sided. On the one hand, this attack attracted centrist voters but on the other hand it frightened the party's base. Thirdly, the New Jersey Senator unsuccessfully tried to draw Gore as missing the necessary electability. This attack was just ridiculous after Gore had won every prior event and Bradley was the overall loser. Finally, Bradley indicted Gore for being too conservative. As I mentioned above, Ted Kennedy and Jesse Jackson were the proofed evidence that Gore was politically well balanced in his campaign and definitely not a radical conservative (KENSKI 2002).

Gore's strategists puzzled out some much better message strategies to knock Bradley out. Kenski briefly mentions them on page 84 in Denton's book "The 2000 Presidential Campaign". Gore countered Jordan's endorsement of

Bradley by pointing out that Jesse Jackson's backed him. Thus, both were able to attract Afro-American voters. To rebut Bradley's lead on abortion and gun control, Gore produced two ads with popular and well-known representatives of the particular area. Finally, he aired an ad with Kristina Kiehl from "Voters for Choice". At an earlier time, she had supported Bradley's campaign but later on she changed allegiance and endorsed Gore by saying "I no longer support Bradley because his unfair tactics divide us at the very moment we should stand together against the Republicans" (KENSKI 2002: 84).

**Illustration 1: 2000 Primary Election Results**

STATE	Al Gore	Bill Bradley	George W. Bush	John McCain
Alabama	77	-	84	-
Arizona	67	16	35	60
Arkansas	78	22	80	-
California	81	18	61	35
Colorado	71	23	65	27
Connecticut	55	42	46	49
Delaware	57	40	51	25
DC	96	-	73	24
Florida	82	18	74	20
Georgia	84	16	67	28
Idaho	76	-	73	-
Illinois	84	14	67	22
Indiana	75	22	81	19
Kentucky	71	15	83	6
Louisiana	73	20	84	9
Maine	54	41	51	44
Maryland	67	28	56	36
Massachusetts	60	37	32	65
Michigan	-	-	43	51
Mississippi	90	9	88	5
Missouri	65	34	60	35
Montana	78	22	78	-
Nebraska	70	26	78	15
New Hampshire	50	46	30	49
New Jersey	95	-	84	-
New Mexico	75	21	83	10
New York	66	33	51	43
North Carolina	70	18	79	11
Ohio	74	25	58	37
Oklahoma	69	25	79	10
Oregon	85	-	84	-
Pennsylvania	74	21	72	22
Puerto Rico	-	-	94	5
Rhode Island	57	40	36	60
South Carolina	-	-	53	42

South Dakota	-	-	78	14
Tennessee	92	5	77	15
Texas	80	16	88	7
Utah	80	20	63	14
Vermont	54	44	35	60
Virginia	-	-	53	44
Washington	68	31	58	39
West Virginia	72	18	80	13
Wisconsin	89	9	69	18

Source: Federal Election Commission: <http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2000/2000presprim.htm>

### ***The Republicans' Primaries***

According to Kenski's article, I split the Republican nomination process into three temporal phases. The first one covers the first three primaries and caucuses in Iowa (January 24<sup>th</sup>), New Hampshire (February 1<sup>st</sup>), and Delaware (February 8<sup>th</sup>). Bush started well funded as the front-runner into the nomination race. Even before the Iowa Caucus, several opponents like Bush Senior's Vice-President Dan Quayle, the former Governor of Tennessee, Lamar Alexander, the author Pat Buchanan, the Red-Cross activist Elizabeth Dole, Ohio's Congressman John Kasich, and Senator Robert Smith from New Hampshire showed a lack in funding or endorsement. They withdrew from the race before it actually had started. Besides Bush, Arizona's Senator John McCain as well as the Afro-American activist and former Ambassador Alan Keyes (radical, ban on homosexuals in the military) from Maryland was seriously running during the entire January till March 2000. Bush took the Iowa Caucus with 41%. The publisher Steve Forbes (pro flat tax) campaigned on second place with 31%. Keyes was left on third position with 14%. McCain started badly on fifth rank (5%) even behind Reagan's Undersecretary of Education Gary Bauer (9%, opposed to the legalization of abortion, pro tax cuts). Utah's Senator Orrin Hatch (issues were similar to Bauer's) got 1% and dropped out afterwards. One week later, Gary Bauer dropped out of the race because he had just got 1%. McCain recovered after he had not focused on Iowa and then won New Hampshire. He concentrated his financial and temporal effort on this state and defeated Bush with 49% to 31%. The result arose from the circumstances that Independent and Democratic voters were allowed to vote in New Hampshire's Republican primary. Moral values were seen as most important (28%) in New Hampshire and McCain

(47%) was given the greatest credibility on this issue. The most admired candidate's trait was the quality "stand up for what you believe in". Again, McCain had a lead with 61% over Bush's 13% (KENSKI 2002, CQ RESEARCHER 2001, BARNES/STONE 2000, GIROUX 2000, GIROUX/BENENSON 2000).

McCain had a good start but picked the wrong issue. His signature theme was the campaign finance reform but just 9% of the voters mentioned this topic in polls. In turn, Bush won Delaware which shows that he had attracted the registered Republicans. Steve Forbes dropped out of the race after he had got poor 20% in Delaware. McCain broached the issues of protecting Social Security but was badly hurt by Bush's attack ad. Bush accused McCain for trusting the government instead of the people. Bush cleverly aired ads on his quality to bring back the presidential pride and "restore values" (KENSKI 2002: 59, GIROUX 2000).

The nomination process' second round almost turned the first's outcome upside down and brought a preliminary decision in advance of George W. Bush. South Carolina opened the second phase with an open primary. Again, Bush won among the Republicans and McCain caught the Independents and Democrats. In total, however, Bush won the state. Now, Bush started attacking McCain with two radio ads. One addressed McCain on his campaign finance issue and the other attacked McCain's liberal tax plans. Bush blamed McCain by referring on Al Gore's endorsement of McCain's tax plans. Thus, Bush's own reform proposal which included broad tax cuts appeared much more Republican (KENSKI 2002, GIROUX 2000).

Bush showed the better rebuttal skills. He counterpunched three of McCain's most attacking ads directly. As Cook's Report found out, the ad addressing McCain's attack on Bush's integrity and tax plans was a significant blow. McCain had compared Bush with the Republicans' favorite enemy: Bill Clinton. McCain's spots compared Clinton's lack of moral behavior with Bush's false integrity. In Bush's eyes, McCain went too far. He angrily responded complaining about McCain as a dirty campaigner. McCain just won Michigan with 50% to 43% and his home state Arizona with 60%. Bush got the voters' majority in Puerto Rico (strong 94% versus 6%), North Dakota (also clearly with 76% to 19%), Virginia, and Washington. Polls showed that McCain was

perceived as the “reformer” by 53% and Bush by 59% (KENSKI 2002, COOK 2000e, GIROUX 2000).

This phase’s most crucial issues were Moral Values. Bush improved his percentages in this area. Unlike the first primaries, Bush led the polls concerning these issues with 55% to 36%. He had turned McCain’s former edge to his own favor. Secondly, Bush slightly closed the gap with regard to the last round’s most prominent quality “to stand up for your beliefs” (KENSKI 2002).

Bush placed emphasis on a 50-state-campaign which now bears fruit. His lead got decency through the nomination’s third round. McCain had just focused on several single states thus Bush carried nine of the thirteen Super Tuesday primaries. Charlie Cook subsumed the situation in writing that Bush “is running a national campaign for a national office. McCain isn’t, but should be” (KENSKI 2002: 68). Bush aired ads about education, leadership, and taxes in the big states such as California, New York, Illinois and Ohio. McCain did not do so because he did not have enough money. On the other side, Bush heavily questioned McCain’s record on education in Arizona. Consequently, the Texan Governor won the delegates from the big states and McCain just collected some from the open primaries in the New England States where the Republicans’ and Christian Rights’ percentage was low and the Independents and Democrats could co-decide (KENSKI 2002, GIROUX 2000).

Two days later, McCain dropped out of the race which shaped up as an excellent situation for Bush because McCain’s withdrawal gave him a six week opportunity to develop a coherent and strong policy agenda on education, healthcare, Social Security, the economy, and foreign affairs. Beside his unbeatable will to lead the country and take a clear stand on issues, George W. Bush introduced the “Compassionate Conservatism”. He promised to improve Social Security, healthcare, the economy, etc. with traditionally conservative methods and values such as rolling back governmental action, tax cuts, and advanced private responsibilities (CNN 2000b, MITCHELL 2000a). In terms of foreign affairs, Bush had a clear stand on rebuilding America’s military strength. His foreign agenda seemed to be guided exclusively by America’s interests and values (KENSKI 2002, GIROUX/BENENSON 2000).

The first political ads were aired in January 1999. In order to attract the media’s attention, McCain toured around the country in “The Straight Talk

Express” (MITCHELL 2000b). In doing so, he combined his major trait of being honest with an action which grasps the media’s attention (GIROUX 2000). As we will see, Bush kept his edge on amiability throughout the entire campaign against Gore (COOK 2000e).

## The Conventions

Al Gore was favored by the Democrats’ perfectly organized Convention, however, Bush also did well. After the front-loading had limited the number of serious candidates, the Conventions showed a first change in dynamics in Gore’s favor. The Conventions took place at the end of July and mid of August 2000, respectively. Naturally, both parties wanted to present an unified party performance. The Republicans tended to integrate “diversity” into their Convention. Afro-American, Hispanic, and homosexual Congressmen got time to address speeches to the Republican audience (TIME 2000). Further speeches focused on values and leadership. The Convention was one of the most successful events and enhanced Bush’s position in the polls. The Convention “bump” (DENTON 2002: 9) earned Bush 5% to 7% in the polls (HOLLOWAY 2002). According to Schneider’s detailed work, I agree with the existence of two “bumps.” A big Republican “bump” was followed by an even bigger Democratic “bump” (SCHNEIDER 2000a, COOK 2000b).

In comparison to Bush, Gore addressed his Democratic base in a more populist way. Between the August 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the Democratic Party held its Convention. Al Gore was unanimously elected because Bradley released his delegates and recommended to vote for his former opponent Al Gore. The Democrats’ Convention was also media-oriented and clearly focused on unity (HOLLOWAY 2002). However, one basic difference to the Republican Convention can be identified. Gore’s speech was surprisingly old-school Democratic. Gore spoke in a populist way about his independence from Clinton. Although the media coverage was mainly negative, Gore’s self-portrayal as the advocate of the poor and forgotten Americans against big money and special interests bore fruit (COOK 2000b).

In his acceptance speech, Al Gore presented himself as independent from Bill Clinton. He only mentioned him once during the entire speech. Although he



honored Clinton's achievement with regards to the reduction of unemployment, Gore was not satisfied with the status quo. He promised improvements in healthcare, campaign financing, wages, and the way how politics in Washington deal with special interests such as tobacco and oil. His speech was straightforward, charismatic but also complex over the entire 51 minutes. He rejected tax cuts for the wealthiest and attacked Bush and Cheney on foreign affairs. He showed willingness, strength and experienced leadership concerning foreign issues like nuclear proliferation, which is usually a home game for Republicans. Just to name a few of the speakers, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Ted Kennedy, Jesse Jackson, and the actor Tommy Lee Jones all held endorsing speeches (CNN 2000c, SCHNEIDER 2000b).

Finally, Gore benefited from a huge Convention "bump" about 11% to 17% and gained a 1%-lead in the polls for the first time (HOLLOWAY 2002). He took back the Democratic base with his traditional issues. Furthermore, the female voters switched to his side (COOK 2000b, SCHNEIDER 2000b). One of the several key points, which TIME highlights, is that Gore kissed his wife for seven seconds and was therefore perceived as a loving husband. In general, this article is worth recommending for further studies on key moments (TIME 2000).

Bush entered the Convention as the dominating candidate and designed the Convention after Karl Rove's fancy. Firstly, the Republican base was motivated through Bush's clear success in the primaries against the more moderate McCain. Secondly, Rove's plan to unify the party worked also in favor of the running mate. And thirdly, the four-day Convention gave the party people the opportunity to develop their political party profile through debates and speeches. The Republican Convention took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania between July 31<sup>th</sup> and August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2000. George W. Bush was clearly elected by the delegates. He got just three votes less than the total amount of 2041. What the Republican could not know was that the Democrats created an even stronger and better Convention (KENSKI 2002).

McCain presented himself as a fair loser and endorsed Bush by means of a supporting speech. Besides him, several other popular Republicans like Mr and Mrs Bush Senior, Colin Powell, and the actor Bruce Willis hold endorsing speeches. Bush announced the "Compassionate Conservatism" which I mentioned two pages ago. Furthermore he heavily attacked the duo Clinton-Gore for

bureaucratic chaos, scandals, missing economic progress, and “big government”. Finally, McCain did what we can call “fair play”. He strongly endorsed Bush although he had lost the previous race against him (GERMOND/WITCOVER 2000c).

## **The Running Mates**

Gore’s decision to pick Lieberman was bold and unpredicted but a great success. Charlie Cook even compares his courage in making this decision with Mondale’s choice to run with Geraldine Ferraro (COOK 2000c). Denton’s second moment of opportunity was the vice-presidential selection. In the pre-convention weeks, Bush had led the polls. To close the gap, Gore had to do more than just pick a loyal running mate (DENTON 2002). According to Victor Kirk, the decision to run with Lieberman was clever in several respects and finally closed the gap (KIRK 2000). Firstly, Lieberman was independent-minded and could take the conservative Democrats (TULLY 2000). Taylor meticulously lists in which way Gore and Lieberman differed concerning their key votes. In comparison to Gore, Lieberman stood for stable morality and conservative budget policy (TAYLOR 2000). Secondly, he is Jewish and could run on the minority issue. Thirdly, he was a pretty unexpected choice if we consider that popular Democrats like John Edwards, John Kerry, Dick Gephardt, and Bob Graham could have been chosen, too. Finally, both Kirk and Schneider point out that Lieberman stood for Gore’s independence from Clinton because the running mate was one of Clinton’s main critics (KIRK 2000, SCHNEIDER 2000b). Luckily for Gore, the media was also surprised and largely covered the decision as both bold and smart. Finally, Lieberman came from Connecticut and thus attracted a different regional base than Gore whose home state is Tennessee (COOK 2000c).

The selection of Lieberman and Dick Cheney strongly changed the race’s dynamic. The former Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, was advised to find an appropriate Republican running mate for George W. Bush. Finally, Bush picked Cheney himself. Unfortunately for the Republicans, Cheney was not able to combine any of Lieberman’s advantages. He came from Texas like Bush. Cheney was perceived as being the less charismatic one. His health suffered from a heart disease and he represented the right-winged Conservatives. Consequently, Dick

Cheney barely attracted centrist voters like Lieberman did (DENTON 2002). Finally, Cheney got under Republican attack for emphasizing “free choice” which favors same-sex marriages. His family background concerning this issue is broadly known (JAMES 2000, KITFIELD 2000, DEBATES.ORG 2000d).

## **The Campaign Framing**

With the “Compassionate Conservatism”, Bush chose a pretty good framing to increase his electability. Surprisingly, if we consider that Bush’s “Compassionate Conservatism” is still a conservative policy and McCain’s liberal ideas would strongly reform America’s economic policy, George Bush was mostly seen as the “reformer”. Crucial at this point is that Bush chose his campaign framing. He avoided to take radical positions and implemented a framing almost every voter could live with. The general framing should show so called “electability” towards the voters’ broad majority. Basically, the candidates use umbrella terms. In the best case, the voters should interpret the term on their own and see their own interest represented through the framing. Let us illustrate the point with three examples. The Texan, 60 years old, white, farmer should interpret “Compassionate Conservatism” as the idea that everything is going to be the same under Bush like it was in past years. “Compassionate Conservatism” should stand for stability and contingency from his point of view. The young, well educated, not-married, liberal businessman from New York should expect the reduction of bureaucracy and big government. Finally, the middle-class mom with her four children in Seattle should focus on the term’s “Compassionate”-part. I think the point is clear. Bush did well concerning his campaign framing (HOLLOWAY 2002, PIERCE 2000a).

While Clinton considered the voters’ wealthy center as important to win the majority and dig deep into the Republican clientele, Gore used a more offensive and populist rhetoric to keep the poor and middle class. His framing to aggressively address the “people versus the powerful” at the Convention was a success in the short-term. In the long-run, Gore lost some wealthy Centrists in the political center between both parties to Bush (HOLLOWAY 2002).

## **The General Elections**

### ***Pre-Election Environment***

With regard to the pre-election environment, Gore should easily have won the general election. Obviously, Clinton consigned the economy and the foreign affairs in a condition which favors a Vice-President incumbent. Things looked so good for the Democrats but Gore lost against Bush. The following pages will figure out why he did not win and did not benefit from Clinton's achievements.

The Clinton years consigned peace and prosperity. The economy boomed, 22 million jobs were created under his administration, and federal budget was almost debtless. Like Schneider emphasizes, Bush faced limited possibilities to attack Gore on his record. Consequently, Bush had to choose soft issues like education and Medicare as well as traditionally Republican issues like taxes (SCHNEIDER 2000b). However, Gore had to take care not to get too close to Clinton. Like with a double-edged sword: On the one side Gore could attract pro-Clinton voters who were satisfied with his domestic and foreign record. As Vice-President, the achievements also were Gore's record. On the other side, getting too close was dangerous to scare voters away who blamed the Clinton-Administration for its moral misbehavior. Like Brownstein points out, Gore even rejected Clinton's help in the Swing States. (BROWNSTEIN 2000, CANNON 2000b, CQ WEEKLY ONLINE 2000). Especially, the young male and rural voters turned away from Gore. The electorate remembered that Al Gore strongly defended Clinton during impeachment after the Lewinski scandal. Therefore, Aylor and the Kenskis even calls Clinton "the elephant in the living room" (KENSKI/AYLOR/ KENSKI 2002: 256).

### ***The Messengers, Strategies and Campaign Organizations***

In 2000, the candidates could bank on very effective organizations. Kate Kenski, Brooks Aylor, and Henry Kenski did a great job in evaluating the campaigns in this respect. They figured out the traits set by two "very professional campaigns" (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002: 231). The voter had to decide between two clearly different policies as well as between two definitely different personalities. Bush ran on leadership and empathy because it was almost

impossible for him to attack Gore on domestic issues. Clinton's record in terms of domestic issues was enormously good because the economy was booming. Bush's campaign strategist Karl Rove decided to attack Gore on his credibility (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002).

Ex-Democrats joined Bush's team and advised that sometimes traits matter more than issues. The former Democrats Matthew Dowd and Mark McKinnon supported Bush's team with insider knowledge about the Democratic Party. Bush basically concentrated on honesty, leadership, integrity and Gore's weak point to have a clear stand in challenging times. Like Bush accused McCain, now, he perceived Gore as trusting the state instead of the people and cleverly combined this attack with his position on cutting taxes. "I trust you but Gore trusts the government" (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002: 228). He also used this phrase in the third presidential debate (ALTER 2000).

Gore stroke back and referred on empathy but was attacked on Clinton's scandals. "He's fighting for us" (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002: 229) was one of the best ads showing Gore as the protector of Medicare and Social Security. Nevertheless, Bush had hurt him heavily on his close ties to scandalous Clinton. Bush strongly attacked the Democrats' Clinton-Administration for a huge lack of moral integrity. To accuse Clinton for scandals like the Lewinsky-scandal was easy. Thus, the Republicans stretched the issue over ads, debates, and speeches. Gore could only counter this attack in not showing up with the former president. Clinton's misbehavior was tied to a general moral decline of values and clear standings concerning gay marriage, abortion, sex, etc. Especially rural voters turned their back on Gore because Bush showed desirable traits in this regard (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002).

### ***Issues***

One of the basic reasons why candidates win or lose elections is how their performance appeals concerning the most prominent current issues. Does the candidate offer appropriate solutions for the mostly named domestic and foreign issues? Clinton showed in 1996 how a successful stand on issues can look like. Bill Clinton had an overwhelming edge on three of the four most important issues. The most prominent issues were these which got the most media coverage, the

most naming in the campaign advertisement, and were mentioned the most in representative polls. 61% believed in Clinton in terms of the economy and employment which was the most crucial issues with 21%. The situation was similar on rank two. Clinton stroke Dole with 67% to 26% on the second important issues (Medicare and Social Security). Dole did well on reducing the deficit (12%) and incredibly well concerning taxes (11%). Dole had offered a \$550 million tax cut. Nevertheless, Clinton had the hold (78%) on education (12%). Classically, the voters who were satisfied with the economic situation were satisfied with the incumbent's administration. Vice versa, the unconfident people preferred to give Dole a chance for change (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002, CQ RESEARCHER 2001, BARNES 2000a).

The voters thanked Clinton but not his Vice-President Gore for the economic prosperity (BAKER 2000). In 2000, the whole situation changed. Although the voters showed a higher degree of economic satisfaction than four years ago ("excellent" rose from 4% to 28%), less voters gave credit to Gore as the incumbent (53%) than Clinton (78%). Gore's strategy not to get too close to Clinton hurt him with regard to Clinton's great economic record. Like Germond and Witcover point out, Gore even did not use Clinton's name during his entire campaign (GERMOND/WITCOVER 2000a). Despite this shift, the Democratic domination on issues in general remained stable. However, the figures slightly decreased. Charney's amazing summary in National Journals Vol. 32 Issue 40 gives a brief but all-embracing overview about all the election's issues (CHARNEY 2000). I cover the crucial ones. Acomb delivers further figures. Gore was favored on five of the seven issues: Economy (18%), Education (15%), Social Security (14%), Health Care (64%), and Medicare (7%). Nevertheless, Bush closed the gap to Gore in comparison to Dole's gap towards Clinton. Foreign affairs gained importance (from 4% to 12%) and with 54% to 40% Bush had the edge on this issue. Also, Bush's tax cuts hit the nail on the head. The issue's recognition rose from 11% to 14% and Bush was favored by overwhelming 80% (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002, SCHNEIDER 2002, BARNES 2000a, GERMOND/WITCOVER 2000a, CHARNEY 2000, ACOMB 2000a).

Bush faced a pre-election environment which strongly favored the Democratic Party. His only option was to accept the existence of peace and prosperity and to run on other issues. Like I said before, Bush's basic agenda

focused education. He argued that especially in these wealthy times, the government should take hard decisions. These hard decisions should bring the society on an upper level of prosperity. He primarily addressed the educational recession. Later, both, Bush and Gore, promised to improve education but Bush offered another way to achieve this goal. He also required “accountability” on the federal state level because he wanted to avoid wasting governmental money on education. Thus, he differed from Gore in adding accountability to educational spending. Bush also promised to increase the degree of accountability for schools. Especially, Bush predicted to higher the children’ ability to read. His favorite framing for education was “no child gets left behind.” In focusing on this actually traditionally Democratic issue, Bush showed his electability for Independents and Democrats. Concerning foreign affairs, the candidates did not do much because it was not a current issue in 2000. There was not one single ad aired with a foreign content.

### ***Candidates’ Traits***

While in 1996 the voters’ judgment was almost equally distributed over trustworthiness (20%), sharing my view of government (20%), visions (16%), stands up for his beliefs (12%), cares about me (10%), being in touch with the 90s (10%), the 2000 matters changed. Trustworthiness became the most important trait (24%) followed by experience (15%), leadership (14%), judgment (13%), understands issues (13%), and cares about me (12%). Finally, amiability was mentioned with 2%. Interestingly, Gore did worse than Clinton in 1996. Bill Clinton had the lead on four out of the six mentioned issues. In 2000, Bush closed the gap in outperforming Gore on four of the seven issues. Notably, he had an 80% edge on the most crucial trait in being more honest and trustworthy than Gore. Due to his years as Vice-President, Gore was desired for his experience, nevertheless he lost ground concerning leadership, judgment, and the appearance as someone you would like to have a beer with (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002, CQ RESEARCHER 2001, CANNON 2000b).

### ***Presidential Debates***

Not many voters expected very much from Bush concerning the debates but everything should come unpredictably. Robert V. Friedenberg describes Bush as the “underdog” (FRIEDENBERG 2002: 139) after Gore had dominated the “debate over debates” (FRIEDENBERG 2002: 139). Gore determined the setting and the rules how to debate. Bush seemed passive in this process prior to the debates. The voters expected more from Al Gore. Even his own campaign strategists saw in Gore an outstanding experienced and skilled debater (FRIEDENBERG 2002) but he was impolite and uses “fuzzy math” to emphasize his arguments. The National Journal’s “by the numbers” in Vol. 32 Issue 41 names this quotation which George W. Bush used during the first debate and in four subsequent speeches. Instead, Bush was charming especially in the town hall debate and showed the required traits like leadership, faith, and a clear stand on issues. He was funny and easy to understand. Gore seemed more intelligent than Bush but debated in a very complex way in using a lot of figures and background information. It became a Republican joke to call Gore “Al Bore” what illustrates Gore’s sometimes annoying and odd performance. It was Gore’s own fault. He had arrogantly announced to “debate Bush anywhere, anytime” (FRIEDENBERG 2002: 138). Actually, it was his advisors’ mistake. Later, Gore was mentioned as the only one who did not understate Bush’s skills. The Democratic campaign organization had overdrawn Gore’s rhetoric skills to convince the public through TV-debates (FRIEDENBERG 2002: 140). Bush played the guy you would like to have a beer with. He also did best in trustworthiness (LESTER 2000). Sometimes and very sudden he interrupted Gore in blaming him for his Washington insider status. Bush heavily attacked Al Gore for confusing the viewer with “phony numbers”. Finally, Bush renamed Gore’s Medicare reforms into “Medi-Scare”. However Gore offered a broader knowledge, Bush showed the better rhetoric reflexes than the Vice-President. In general, the voters conceded a better performance to Al Gore (ACOMB 2000b, DENTON 2002, FRIEDENBERG 2002, DEBATES.ORG 2000a).

The media’s habit to measure the candidates to their handicap hurt Gore badly. Al Gore was perceived as the clear favorite but won with “just” 7% towards Bush. In the media’s perception, he was the political loser after the first



90 minutes debate at October 3<sup>rd</sup> in Boston. Bush instead met the expected performance and debated on almost the same level as the experienced Gore who could look back on 44 debates (FRIEDENBERG 2002: 155, COOK 2000a).

The Gallup Polls calculated a 49% to 36% victory of Bush in the second debate. This debate at October 11<sup>th</sup> was more conversational. Bush surprisingly showed adequate knowledge on foreign issues. He accused the duo Clinton-Gore for the 18 dead soldiers who died in a peace-keeping mission in Somalia 1993. "I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building" (DEBATES.ORG 2000b). Gore had learnt from the last debate and was not that annoying anymore. At the debate's end the clear differences between the incumbent and its challenger came to daylight (BATZ 2000b). Bush argued pro some kind of a flat-tax. Gore explained his rather social tax plans to reduce inequalities. Definitely, Gore appeared more charming than in the first round. He decreased his aggressive bias. Nevertheless, Bush remained in his next door's guy role (GALLUP.COM 2000, DEBATES.ORG 2000b).

Finally, Bush turned Gore's prior lead of 8% into his own of 6%. The third debate was held in the "town hall" style on October 17<sup>th</sup>. In general, Bush changed the perception to his favor. At the latest in the third debate, the audience saw a presidential Bush while Gore seemed to play the role of the aggressive challenger. This phenomenon was a major advantage for Bush because from now on both competed at least at the same level. Especially the possibility to move on the stage, to interact with the audience, to react quickly on public questions favored Bush's appealing. Gore on the other hand felt back into the first debate's aggressive tone (FRIEDENBERG 2002: 159). Although Bush performed better, Gore debated properly and he targeted well his Democratic audience. What remained was that Bush appeared as the more amiable debater and Gore could not fulfill the high expectations. According to Schneider, the "Voters went with the guy they liked more" (SCHNEIDER 2000c, FRIEDENBERG 2002: 162, DEBATES.ORG 2000c).

### ***Media Coverage***

To integrate the media's role as the fourth estate in this research makes sense. As the "democracy's most important product" (TEDESCO 2002: 199) it has the influencing ability to heavily affect the election's outcome. Either through news coverage or as the candidates' vehicle which transports and multiplies their messages, the media gain weight. A variety of forms grew up as time went by. Today, we are facing a broad range beginning with old-school print and radio, the television, till the revolutionary communication channel internet. Although, Acomb numerally documents the public's dissatisfaction with the news networks' inaccurate coverage, it is worth to have a brief closer look at the media's role (ACOMB 2000c, TEDESCO 2002).

Bush and Gore picked appropriate issues. Earlier, especially Bush benefited from the media because it was well-disposed towards his Convention speech (COOK 2000b). John T. Tedesco offers a deep view inside the research on news coverage. His study results in a ranking about the networks ABC, CBS, and NBC. Among the observed 22 issues, Tedesco estimates a pretty surprising order. He found out that education was the most covered issues in 2000 followed by taxes and family values. These findings make sense if we still have in mind what we concluded about the candidates' issues in chapter "Issues" on this paper's page 20. Gore had an edge on education like Clinton before. Bush earned the credibility for taxes and values. Like several times in this whole paper, we are facing a drawn. Gore took the first issues. Instead, Bush occupied the second and third place. On rank four, the economy is situated which Gore had a hold on. Surprisingly, McCain's special campaign finance issue finds itself on rank 20 out of 22. In average, foreign affairs are just placed on the 14<sup>th</sup> position (TEDESCO 2002).

In a second step, I examine how the media covered the election due to the fact that the reporting did not do the best job. First, they did not report that Bush had taken drugs in past. Second, the media missed to emphasize that Gore altered his stories as time went by. He often overstated things in telling them a third or fourth time. Third, the press went much too far in hammering on Bush's sometimes questionable knowledge about foreign affairs and banged him on his intelligence. Fourth, like I said before, McCain was heavily favored by the press. He even was the "media's man" and bought their attention in traveling with "The

Straight Talk Express.” Fifth, the media perceived McCain as eye-to-eye challenger for Bush. Although, McCain just did good in “open” primaries. Thus, the press missed to explain the rules and explain that Bush did incredible good among the “real” Republicans. Finally, Gore was covered far too badly after the presidential debates. The reporting basically focused on Gore’s sometimes rude and aggressive performance but avoided to cover the debates’ issues. Thus, Gore became the political looser however he had won the debates (see also SHOGAN 2001).

### ***Advertisement***

Lynda Lee Kaid presents a pretty good and brief insight about scientific studies on political advertisement. After centuries of permanent growth in spending, the 2000 election campaigns reached the previous peak. Especially, the political parties financially endorsed their candidates. Always in hope, that their expensive ads will have an impact on the electoral outcome. However, it is hard to say whether the commercials’ effect is positive or negative (KAID 2002).

Kaid refers back to her work with Johnson in 2001. To analyze the 2000 candidates’ unique performance with regard to advertisement, I use their well-proofed method. Johnson and Kaid call someone’s way to produce and use commercials the “videostyle”. They split it into three basic parts. Firstly, the “verbal component” which means the message’s content. What is the ad trying to say? Secondly, the “non-verbal component” stands for manner. How is the verbal component presented? Thirdly, the “production element of the videostyle” covers the ad’s technical side. In combination, these three components give a very detailed and clear picture of the candidate’s advertisement strategy (KAID 2002).

With regard to the verbal content, Gore ran a highly negative campaign. In 62% of his ads, the message was negative. Bush instead placed a 63% emphasis on positive ads. Both competitors banked on logical explanations including graphs and statistics. In terms of emotions, the Gore ads exceeded the Bush ones almost by double. To intensify the emotion effect, Gore released ads with children. Most popular was the ad called “Ian” which showed Gore as the little boy’s fighter for better healthcare. Surprisingly for a Vice-President incumbent campaign, Gore’s messages, especially the messages about healthcare, dealt in more than the half with the people’s fear. Bush used this strategy just in every tenth spot. In general,

we can conclude out of the figures that Gore used a rather issue-oriented than image-involved advertisement strategy (84% to 16%). Bush chose the same tendency but attached more importance to his image (37%). Similar to Bush's town hall debate, he often conveyed on his compassion and empathy with the people. He mentioned this trait in 39% of the ads (Gore 20%). The National Journal briefly listed all the ads and categorized them. (KAID 2002, the "ads of the year": in National Journal. Vol. 32, Issue 46. Nov. 11, 2000)

With regard to the issues, the Kaid's charts show clear differences between the candidates. The National Journal's article "By the Numbers" delivers a detailed verification of her findings. Gore mentioned the economy in almost every third ad because he had an edge on this issue (also see chapter "Issues" on this paper's page 20). Bush countered with just 13% but focused instead with 46% on education (Gore 27%) where he had a lead on. Also, Gore mentioned taxes more often (25%) than Bush (4%). The reason is not that this was his strongest point but Gore attacked Bush on this issue. Negative campaigning should stir the fear of Bush's promised tax cuts for the richest. With 28% to 4%, the environmental issue was clearly placed on Gore's side (KAID 2002, "By the Numbers" in National Journal Vol. 32, Issue 46. Nov. 11 2000).

Gore as the assumed incumbent did not show an incumbent strategy. Kaid successfully incorporates Trent's and Friedenbergs' studies on incumbent and challenger strategies. In 1983, they evolved two advertisement patterns. Kaid could put her findings into a grid. The purpose is to measure whether the candidate's advertisement fits to an incumbent or to a challenger. Surprisingly, Gore did not lead any of the nine incumbent criteria nonetheless he was the Vice-President incumbent. To add insult to injury, Bush heavily beat him in "charisma" which he showed more than every tenth ad (11%). Gore never (0%) seemed charismatic in his ads. Secondly, Bush achieved the "surrogates" support in his ads (13% vs. 1%). Bush even attacked Gore with a second strategy. In the challenger's manner, Bush called for change in very second ad. Conclusively, Gore as the assumed incumbent did not show an incumbent strategy. There are obvious analogies to his debate performance (see chapter "Presidential Debates" at this paper's page 22). Thus, Gore indirectly offered Bush the possibility to act presidential as well as in the challenger's role. Craig Allen Smith' and Neil Mansharamani's research on the "Challenger and Incumbent Reversal in the 2000

Election” looks behind the curtain. I cannot go into detail but I would like to recommend the highly interesting and enlightening work for those who want to get more detailed findings than the finding I just briefly mentioned (KAID 2002, SMITH/MANSHARAMANI 2002, FRIEDENBERG/TRENT 1983).

Regarding the non-verbal component, Gore just spoke in 16% of his ads as the main speaker to the audience. Bush personally addressed his message in every fourth spot (25%). Both candidates knew about the Hispanic voters’ importance and aired ads in Spanish. Bush’s nephew also acted in several ads. He was handsome and some kind of the Republican wildcard to get the Latino votes especially the female ones. Bush attached importance to eye-contact (26%). Gore did not set great store by eye-contact in his ads (6%). Bush smiled three times more often than Gore. Gore was frequently shown with American symbols like the Capitol to endorse his incumbent status (KAID 2002).

Finally, a closer look on the production component shows us major differences in the camera angle. While Bush used close-up shots to enhance intimacy and sympathy (41%), Gore relied on this technique in just 24% of his ads. As we might expect, Bush had an edge in empathy and amiability throughout the entire campaign (KAID 2002). In his ads, Bush always wore colorful clothes instead of a suit and a tie. In comparison to the suit wearing Gore, Bush seemed much more personal and relaxed.

Although it is very uncertain to figure out clear correlations, Kaid summarizes some of the most important impacts. Both candidates benefited the most from ads about education. Bush’s “Trust” ad was most successful and advanced his lead on empathy. In turn, Gore profited a lot from an ad which showed him talking about his college years. Bush may have better avoided his ad about private investment in the Social Security system. Gore’s worst ad dealt with his attack on the Bush’s record in Texas (KAID 2002).

**Illustration 2: Comparison of the “Videostyles”**

Commercials	George W. Bush	Al Gore
content	Positive	Negative
Emotion	Yes	Yes
contact	Direct	indirect

While Gore's ads were indirect, emotional, and negative, Bush used a completely different "videostyle". Bush used the 2 to 1 ratio. Two thirds focused on positive messages and one third was perceived negatively. Like Barnes appropriately points out, Bush's strategists were reluctant to campaign negatively (BARNES 2000b). Like Ronald Reagan in 1984 against Walter Mondale, George W. Bush's advertisement can be classified as direct, logical, and positive. On the other side, Gore relied on almost exclusively negative ads. His strategy reminds of Stevenson in 1952, Johnson in 1964, Mondale in 1984, Dukakis in 1988, Clinton in both campaigns, and Dole in 1996. He adjusted his ads indirectly, emotionally, and negatively (KAID 2002).

### ***"527 Groups"***

Contributors such as the so called "527 groups" also have an impact on the candidates' advertisement in showing own ads as well as on their fundraising in raising money for them. Foerstel and Wallsten firstly categorize contributors into several groups and secondly have a closer look on these "527 groups". Gore and Bush benefited both from these groups. Consequently, they saw no reason to make advances to McCain's reform ideas. However Gore promised to approach the issue after his inauguration. The 527 groups' emergency extends to loophole concerning so called "unreported money". The "527 groups" tackle issues and are not officially bound to a candidate. However, in most of the cases it is apparently to which party they belong to. Both, Gore and Bush have strong supporters on their sides. For instance, "the Republican Leadership Coalition" tried to get Hispanic voters to the polls in favor of George Bush. This group independently raised money and aired ads dealing with Hispanic issues like Catholicism and migration. In doing so, they strongly supported Bush in the Southern States. The "Americans for Economic Growth" are specialized on attacking Democrats on their economic positions. In 2000, Gore had to face several ads. "The Sierra Club" heavily attacked George Bush's neglect of environmental issues and his position concerning the global warming and the environment, respectively. They independently produced and aired ads in about twenty congressional districts. In 2000, Ben Cohen who previously founded "Ben & Jerry Ice Cream" was engaged in enhancing healthcare through cutting the military budget. Thus, he endorsed

Gore. I could lengthen this list. Finally, I follow Foerstel and Wallsten in concluding an equally spread support in terms of ads and fundraising (FOERSTER/WALLSTEN 2000).

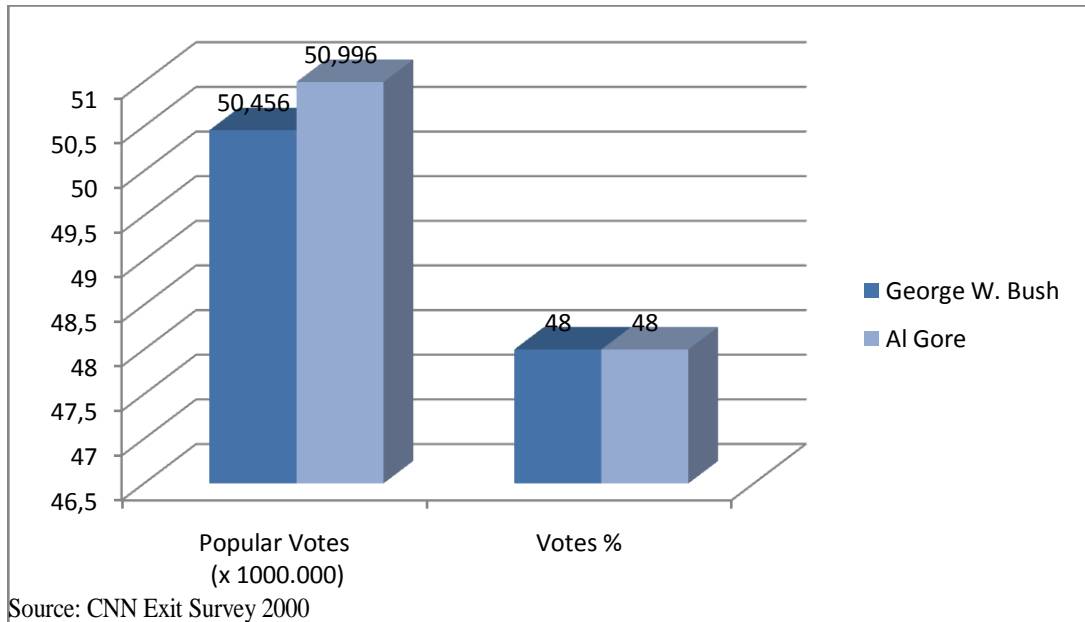
### ***Dealing with Ralph Nader***

The third party's candidate released some voters from the left. With 2,74% of the popular vote, the Independent Ralph Nader was no real threat. But facing the narrow polls especially in the last campaign weeks, both parties nervously tried to convince likely Nader voters. Al Gore downplayed Nader's role in announcing that his own political program will cover basic parts of Nader's claims. The Democrats wanted to release the basically left-winged voters. Like Pierce highlights, Gore had previously lost some left voters due to his effort to take back the Centrists who turned to Bush's "Compassionate Conservatism". The Democratic ads argued that there exist large political differences between Nader and Bush as well as large overlaps between Gore's positions and what Nader stands for. In contrary, some of Bush's ads tried to attract likely-Democratic voters to vote for Nader. These ads were pro-Nader to split the left-winged voters in the Democrats' disadvantage (PIERCE 2000b).

### ***The Audience and The Electoral College***

The election night could not have been more thrilling. The struggle for presidency ended unusually narrowly. George W. Bush took 50,460,110 popular votes but Gore exceeded him with additional 543,816 votes. Ralph Nader with almost three million popular votes was the best of the rest. However, the popular vote's 48.4% to 47.9% victory was nothing worth for Gore. In terms of the electoral votes, the challenger Bush counted 271 against Gore's 266 and Nader's one. For the third time in US-history, the popular vote's winner should be outcompeted by the electoral vote (THE NATIONAL ARCHIEVES 2007, GALLUP POLLS 2007, 270TOWIN 2007).

**Illustration 3: 2000 Presidential Election Results – Popular Votes**



Florida, followed by New Mexico, Wisconsin, Iowa, Oregon, and New Hampshire offered the narrowest result of all the states. The post-election period was dominated by these 0.0092% percentages which were missing for a Democratic victory. With Florida’s highly competed 25 electoral votes, Gore would have become President. Notably, the highly competitive states were eight small ones. One month prior to the election eve, it was uncertain who would take them. Consequently, Bush and Gore spend less money and time on the taken for granted states which were large and focused on the small ones (BATZ 2000a). An exception makes California where Bush heavily invested but lost the competition (GERMOND/WITCOVER 2000b, PLISSNER 2001, PURDAM 2000).

**Illustration 4: 2000 Presidential Election Results – Electoral Votes I**

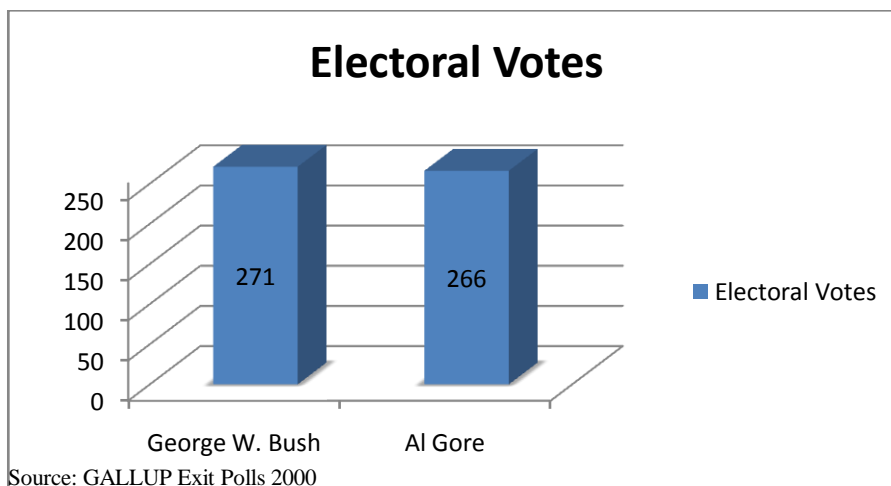
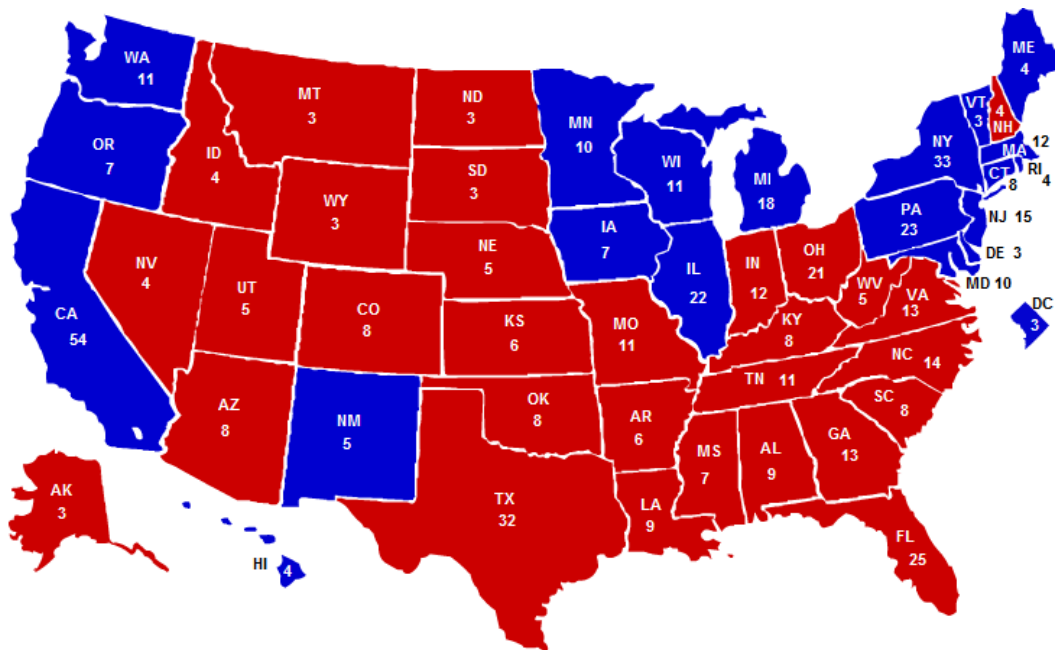




Illustration 5: „Red over Blue“ – Spread of the Electoral Votes



Source: 270towin.com 2000  
 red states: won by George W. Bush in 2000 Presidential Elections  
 blues states: won by Al Gore in 2000 Presidential Elections

Aylor and the Kenskis have a closer look on the Lean States. Interestingly, Bush kept all states which were won by Bob Dole in 1996. Furthermore, Bush attracted former Democratic states (GIROUX/BENENSON 200). If we compare Clinton’s states in 1996 with Gore’s in 2000, we can figure out where Bush dug into the Lean Democratic states. He attracted West Virginia at the Border, New Hampshire among the New England States, Ohio and Missouri in the Mid-West, and the Western Nevada. Crucial, Bush won four Lean Democratic States in the South. Clinton’s base and home state Arkansas, Gore’s home state Tennessee, Louisiana, and Kentucky changed the sides and voted pro Bush. Gore lost nine of the former 29 Clinton-States to Bush. What happened? Basically, he had lost the Rim and Southern State support which endorsed Clinton in 1996, 1992, Jimmy Carter in 1976, Johnson in 1964, and Kennedy in 1960. His change towards left-winged positions on abortion and gun control had scared the conservative voters in the Rim and Southern States. These voters were scared because Gore suddenly represented a position which was different to the Democratic Party’s position on abortion and gun control. These voters actually supported the Democratic Party but not Gore’s change in position. Bush won all Southern States due to his highlighted focus on conservative values (KENSKI/AYLOR/ KENSKI 2002).

**Illustration 6: 2000 Presidential Election Results – Electoral Votes II**

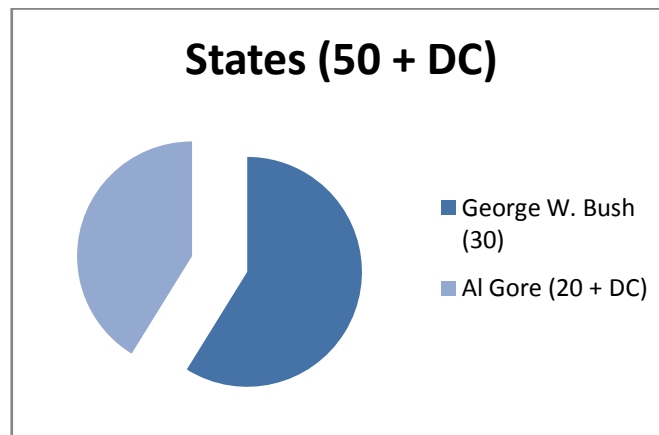
<b>George W. Bush</b>		<b>Al Gore</b>	
<b>STATE</b>	<b>EV</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>EV</b>
California	54	Alaska	3
Connecticut	8	Alabama	9
District of Columbia	2	Arkansas	6
Delaware	3	Arizona	8
Hawaii	4	Colorado	8
Iowa	7	Florida	25
Illinois	22	Georgia	13
Massachusetts	12	Idaho	4
Maryland	10	Indiana	12
Maine	4	Kansas	6
Michigan	18	Kentucky	8
Minnesota	10	Louisiana	9
New Jersey	15	Missouri	11
New Mexico	5	Mississippi	7
New York	33	Montana	3
Oregon	7	North Carolina	14
Pennsylvania	23	North Dakota	3
Rhode Island	4	Nebraska	5
Vermont	3	New Hampshire	4
Washington	11	Nevada	4
Wisconsin	11	Ohio	21
		Oklahoma	8
		South Carolina	8
		South Dakota	3
		Tennessee	11
		Texas	32
		Utah	5
		Virginia	13
		West Virginia	5
		Wyoming	3
<b>20 States + DC</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>30 States</b>	<b>271</b>

Source: CNN Exit Survey 2000

To figure out the differences between the 1996 Presidential Election and the one in 2000, it is important to have a closer look on the demography. Like the “Michigan Model” predicts, the most important criteria is party identification. History verified that Republicans win about 90% of their likely-voters if they are successful. The figure is a bit smaller in terms of Democratic victories (85%). 35% of the voters consider themselves as Republicans, 39% as Democrats, and 27% as Independent. Keeping this in mind, we can review the basic figures in 2000. Firstly, the 2000 big losers were the third party candidates. Ralph Nader (2%) could not reach Perot’s 8% mark (KENSKI/AYLOR/ KENSKI 2002, GALLUP POLLS 2007).

Secondly, the South turned from Clinton (46%) to Bush (55%). Bush closed the gap in the West but Gore still dominated the East (56% to 39%). Crucial, Bush overhauled the Democrats in the Midwest (49% to 48%). Thirdly, the big cities supported Gore (71%) even more than Clinton (68%). In turn, Bush won narrowly in the suburbs (49% to 47%). He also won clearly in the low population cities (59%) where Clinton had taken the majority (48%). Bush enlarged the Republican dominance in the rural areas (59%) in comparison to Dole (46%). Fourthly, Gore maintained Clinton's percentages among married (44%) and unmarried (57%) voters. Due to the Independent's decline, Bush attracted voters in both groups and achieved the lead's extension among the married (from 46% in 1996 to 53%). Fifthly, while Bush extended the Republican hold on Whites (54% to 42%), he added 10% to Dole's 21% among the Hispanics. Like Charlie Cook points out, Karl Rove's strategy to focus on the "swing groups" was successful. Hispanics, Catholics, and suburban voters were likely to turn the sides (COOK 2000d). What Pierce predicted in July became reality. Gore improved the Democrats' performance among the Afro-American voters from Clinton's 84% to 90% (PIERCE 2000b). He also stroke Bush among the Asian voters (54% to 41%). Sixthly, we see a dramatic shift from Independent to Republican among White Protestants and Catholics. Bush improved each proportion by 10%. Bush extended the percentages among all ages. However, Gore attracted some over 60 year old voters with his emphasis on Social Security. Finally, Gore took 86% among the Democrats which were 2% more than Clinton had taken. Notably, Bush outperformed Dole by 11% among the Republicans (91%). Bush attracted 47% among the Independents which meant a 2% lead. The importance gets obvious when we compare this figure to Clinton's 8% advance in 1996. Bush's "Compassionate Conservatism" attracted more Centrists and Independents than Gore's welfare plans. Emily Pierce even calls it "Bush's center strategy" and is right in doing this (PIERCE 2000a). Bush scared some Centrists with his conservative program but took 10% more among the Conservatives than Dole in 1996. Gore lost 5% of the Moderates due to his populist appearance. In the question of sex, Gore decreased the edge among females (16% in 1996 to 11%). Bush expanded the Republican edge from 1% to 11% (KENSKI/AYLOR/KENSKI 2002, GALLUP POLLS 2007, 270TOWIN 2007, SOLOMON 2000, COOK 2000d, TIERNER 2000, CORNELLY 2000, EDSALL 2000).

**Illustration 7: 2000 Presidential Election Results - States**



Source: CNN Exit Survey 2000

Kenski, Aylor, and Kenski point out an irony. Bush's promise to roll back governmental activity attracted more less-educated and low-income voters than Gore's pro extended government ideas (KENSKI/AYLOR/ KENSKI 2002: 247).

## Conclusion

As this paper's last part, I would like to summarize the answers of the main questions. *Why did George Bush win the Republican nomination process?* Just like Al Gore, Bush perfectly started into the early campaign phase. He led in fundraising and endorsement. Being the son of George H.W. Bush as well as being Texan Governor he was blessed by name-recognition. Karl Rove built up an extraordinarily professional organization structure. He benefited from the front-loading in the same way Gore did because he also was the front-runner and that is why he immediately got the media's attention. Bush dominated the first polls and the "horse-racing" due to his amazing financial funds. Later, McCain chose the wrong issue and Bush played the "Compassionate Conservatism" card. He ran for the "true" Conservatives. From the second round onwards, he benefited from the circumstances that "close" instead of "open" primaries were held. McCain declined in the polls. Bush presented better rebuttal skills than McCain. During the third round (Super Tuesday) Bush's favorite issue, moral values, gained importance. Finally, Bush's 50-state-strategy outcompeted McCain's focusing on single states. Beside all these strong facts, Bush showed also some weak points: he suffered from McCain's strong performance of honesty. McCain's idea to travel in "The Straight Talk Express" enhanced his campaign. Secondly, Bush had problems to attract Independents and Democrats in the "open" primaries.

*Why did Al Gore win the Democrats' nomination process?* He could not run as political "outsider" and suffered from standing too close to Clinton's ethical misbehavior. As I mentioned in the paragraph above, Gore optimally started his early campaign. He did better than Bill Bradley in regard to endorsement and name-recognition because he was the Vice-President incumbent. Due to his early start, he had enough time to organize an effective campaign team. Like Bush, he got the majority of media coverage due to his status as incumbent and front-runner. At the beginning of his campaign, Gore had a challenger, Bill Bradley. Then, he focused on his "fighting for the people" framing and extended his lead over Bradley. Gore's advisors picked traits and issues which suited him well. Bradley, on the contrary, avoided hiring a political advisor. Consequently, Gore won every primary and every caucus. Finally, Gore perfectly responded to Bradley's four strategies which later all missed their targets.

Finally, I will summarize the general election. *What did Bush do better than Gore and what did Gore do better than Bush?* Both sustained their professional campaign organizations. Secondly, research (TEDESCO 2002) verified that both picked those issues which were most covered by the media. *But what was different between the two competitors?* Considering that Gore got a booming economy and peaceful foreign affairs from Clinton, it is surprising that Gore lost the election. It follows a brief summary of (1) what Bush did better than Gore and (2) vice versa. By means of the (3) paragraph, I summarize where Gore's weak points were placed. These three paragraphs, especially the first and third, briefly explain *why the winner was successful and the loser was not.*

(1) *Bush's "pros" against Gore were:* McCain's early withdrawal gave Bush's team the opportunity to elaborate their campaign (issues, strategy, framing, etc.) and be best prepared for the campaign against Gore. Karl Rove's plan of using the Convention to unify and motivate the party members worked. Bush got a "bump" in the polls. McCain played the fairness card and endorsed Bush at the Convention despite his defeat. Furthermore, former Democrats joined Bush's campaign team and delivered insider information in order to support Bush. Bush heavily challenged Gore on values, trustworthiness, integrity, to have a clear stand on issues, leadership, etc. Foreign affairs became more important than they had been in 1996 and Bush had a hold on it. Bush also led over Gore in the most crucial trait: honesty. To run on the education issue was a clever and successful strategy. The debates advantaged Bush, too. He was the "underdog" but debated on almost the same level as Gore. From the media's point of view, he was the political winner in the debates. Especially, the town hall debate advantaged him because he appeared charming and spoke in an understandable way. The debates brought Bush back into the race. Just as in the debates, Bush seemed more like the incumbent in his ads. He stroke Gore on his basic field: Bush achieved a reversal in the perception. Research (SMITH/MANSHARAMANI 2002; FRIEDENBERG 2002) verified that Bush appeared as the incumbent and Gore as the challenger due to Bush's use of typical incumbent strategies in ads and debates. Bush's "videostyle" can briefly be described as positive, emotional and direct. The public favored this style. To integrate Bush's nephew George Bush was a clever tactic in order to

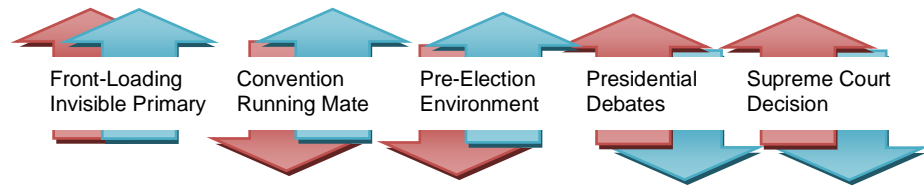
convince Latino voters. The ads increased Bush's edge on empathy. Bush's weak point was his decision to pick Dick Cheney as his running mate. He could never compete with Gore's Joe Lieberman.

(2) *Gore's "pros" against Bush were:* Gore was blessed by an even bigger Convention "bump" than Bush. Gore motivated the Democratic base with his traditional and populist speech. Gore achieved being perceived as standing independently of Bill Clinton. However, he managed to keep Clinton's endorsement at the Convention. Picking Joe Lieberman as running mate was probably one of Gore's best decisions. Lieberman attracted Centrists and Conservatives who Gore would not have been able to attract. With his "fighting for the people" framing, Gore adequately responded Bush's lead in some other traits, too. Furthermore, Gore was favored in respect to the most prominent issues such as economy and education.

(3) Gore showed a pretty good campaign but had also some *weak points which explain why he finally lost the campaign* against Bush. His campaign framing "the people versus the powerful" kept the Democratic base but was unable to dig deep into the Republican electorate. Bush on the other side magnetized some Democrats with his "Compassionate Conservatism". Secondly, Clinton's scandals lasted like a ban on Gore. Thirdly, the voters permanently refused to give Gore credit for the last administration's record (peace and prosperity). Fourthly, Gore overestimated his debating skills. The media measured him according to his prior arrogance and later declared him as the debates' political loser. Fifthly, Gore's "videostyle" was negative, indirect, and emotional. Finally, Ralph Nader released more voters from the Democrats than from the Republicans.

In conclusion, it was a very good campaign on both sides. Both campaigns showed many strong points, but also some weak ones. Finally, Denton's fifth "pivotal element" is the Supreme Court decision in the post-election time. I do not want to go into detail concerning the issues about the Florida recount and the electoral vote's democratic deficit.

Illustration 8: Denton's Five Pivotal Elements



George W. Bush: red arrows; Al Gore: blue arrows

Bush won the presidency because he did best within the “the-winner-takes-it-all” system. Gore won the majority of popular votes and more votes than any Democratic candidate before 2000. But this was worth anything and ended up in Michael Barone’s “49% nation” (CQ RESEARCHER 2000, DENTON 2002).



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