

Values, the Economy and Metaeconomics in the 2000 US Presidential Election: A Historical Perspective (1896-1996)

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Abstract: Conventional wisdom holds that the outcomes of U.S. Presidential elections are positively related to the state of the American economy. The eight years of the Clinton-Gore administration (1992-2000) witnessed sustained growth and employment with price stability. Given the conventional wisdom, Gore should have won with ease; but he did not. This phenomenon raises two fundamental questions: (1) Either the conventional wisdom is a myth; or (2) For a good percentage of voters, the economy was not the deciding factor in 2000. A quick review of U.S. presidential elections over the last one hundred years (1896-1996) reveals that the conventional wisdom is not a myth. A detailed analysis of the Presidential election 2000 shows that for a good percentage of voters the main issue was not the economy, rather moral values and metaeconomics.

The recently concluded 2000 United States presidential election has raised a number of issues that will be studied and debated by scholars and practitioners for quite some time to come. The conduct, process and conclusion of this election has unravelled a host of problems in the American electoral system.¹ Some of these problems and issues are of an administrative nature as they deal with rules, regulations and procedures, while the others are more general in their nature as they

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are rooted in the socio-economic dynamics of the American society. It is the understanding of these dynamics that deserves our attention as it can enable us to work with the United States more effectively to protect and promote the interests of the masses of the developing countries. In the context of the socio-economic dynamics of the American society and its impact on the country's politics, one important issue worthy of serious study is the relationship between the state of the country's economy and the voters' response to it through the ballot box. Conventional wisdom has it that if under a certain U.S. president the economy has performed consistently well for a number of years by delivering significant growth combined with full employment and price stability, then a substantial majority of voters would like this kind of capable economic management to continue.² Hence they are very likely to support his bid for re-election or his party's nominee for the job in the following presidential election. Consequently either the incumbent president or the nominee of his party will win election to the office of the president *with ease*. Hence the party will retain the occupation of the White House due to the vote of confidence by the voters on the handling of the economy. By the same token, all other things being equal, the opposite will be true if the economy performs poorly under a certain administration.

However the results of the 2000 US presidential election have defied this conventional wisdom. Although the US economy had done extremely well during the eight years (1992-2000) of Clinton-Gore administration, vice president Gore failed to gain a wide support of the voters that could have allowed him to establish a clear, convincing, stable and decisive lead over his Republican challenger, Governor Bush. The contest, on the contrary, ended up being the closest presidential race in American history, unfolding a series of events that led to Mr. Bush being declared the winner.

In the 2000 election Gore received a total of 50.1 million popular votes against the 49.8 million popular votes of Bush. This gives a mere 0.3 million (or 0.003%) popular vote majority to Gore³. From the point of view of the validity of the conventional wisdom, the issue is not that Gore has a thin majority over Bush; rather, we discover the following two problems in Gore's case when we try to ascertain its relationship with the conventional wisdom:

1. First, Gore's clear *lack of ease* in election victory. There was an obvious failure on the part of Gore to establish a clear and convincing majority lead in opinion polls over Bush throughout

the long and heated election campaign, despite the superb performance of the US economy during the Clinton-Gore years.

2. Second, a consistently strong support from the people (as shown by opinion polls) for Governor Bush throughout the campaign; always demonstrating beyond doubt that the governor was at least an equally likely alternative to the vice president.

In the 2000 election the voters had to respond to one simple question: should they vote in favour of the vice president who had worked so diligently and skilfully (with the president) to deliver eight years of economic growth, prosperity and global prestige to the country or not? It is clear that in spite of the booming economy, Gore failed to attract a decisively large percentage of voters in his favour.

This paper attempts a case study of the United States to determine why the sound and successful economy of that country failed to mobilise the broad support of voters in favour of Mr. Gore as should actually have been the case in light of conventional wisdom.

The Idea of Metaeconomics

Metaeconomics is a phenomenon which arises when the members of a society (or group) gain consciousness of the issues and factors dealing with a bigger reality. This bigger reality happens to be over and above, and far beyond the knowledge of the existing or expected economic reality. It is true that, as a general rule, in everyday life it is the economic reality that determines man's individual and collective decisions influencing the other aspects of life. However sometimes the consciousness of a bigger reality changes this equation and a new sense of proportion emerges. This new sense of proportion does not deny the importance of economic reality, but a realization occurs that as far as the larger scheme of things is concerned, in the final analysis, the bigger reality transcends the economic reality. As the bigger reality follows economic reality, in the philosophical sense we may call this consciousness of bigger reality: *Metaeconomics*. Metaeconomics is concerned with the supra-economic perspectives of the greater reality. We introduce the term metaeconomics here in the philosophical tradition of the term metaphysics.⁴ Metaeconomics emerges when this consciousness of the bigger reality starts influencing man's individual/collective decisions of economic nature.⁵

This paper argues that once the American voters were satisfied that the US economy was doing fine and would not cause any major problems in the foreseeable future no matter who becomes the president in 2000, their choice of the next president was influenced by

metaeconomics. In their view the system had some serious problems and the solution of these problems depended significantly on the personality and character of the person who was going to be the next president of the United States. Thus to (nearly) half of the American voters, the economy was no longer the major decisive factor in the 2000 election, rather it was the metaeconomics.

The next section gives us a quick glance at the U.S. presidential elections during the last one hundred years (i.e. 1896-1996). We have chosen this period because in the 1860s American society experienced a bloody and disastrous civil war. Following the civil war, the issues of reconciliation and reconstruction continued to dominate American politics for quite some time. It was only by the time of the presidential election of 1896 that the dust had settled considerably. Hence our analysis starts with this election. Our focus will be on the crucial factors that have played a decisive role in the voters' choice of their presidents for the one hundred year period under review here. We fully acknowledge the fact that in any presidential election, voters in each constituency have their own concerns and perspectives on issues and about candidates, and the decision to vote for a candidate is influenced by a host of factors and considerations. However in this analysis we are basically looking at the possibility of conventional wisdom vis-à-vis metaeconomics, as the major factor influencing the general sentiment of voters in their choice of the presidential candidate. In this regard we take a dynamic approach and give a brief overview of the factors responsible for the outcomes of the US presidential elections during the 100 year period (1896-1996); and use this understanding to focus on the forces responsible for the outcome of the 2000 presidential election.

U.S. Presidential Elections 1896-1996

Given the constraints of space, the explanation in this section is very brief and is limited to those elections only in which the outcome of the presidential election went against the political party of the reigning president.

i) *Election 1896: The Democrats lose due to the poor economy.*⁶ From 1892-96 Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, was the president. He believed in *laissez-faire* and envisioned a non-activist role for the government. The small farmers and common people were suffering at the hands of monopolies of railways, big business, moneylenders and big farmers, which collaborated with each other. Things got worse and panic started in 1893, which led to the bankruptcy of many railroads

resulting in the collapse of the stock market and the banking system. Thus in the 1896 presidential election the state of the economy became a big issue and played a negative role against the Democratic Party. Consequently, the Democrats lost the White House to the Republican candidate, William McKinley, by a big margin of electoral votes. The Republicans retained the White House in the elections of 1900, 1904 and 1908 due to their successful management of the economy through regulation of the monopolies.

ii) *Election 1912: The Republicans lose due to the unsatisfactory handling of monopolies.*⁷ In the 1912 presidential election Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic candidate, criticized the Republican approach of monopoly regulation. He argued that regulation had, in principle, allowed the monopolies to exist and continue the exploitation of the masses. He instead advocated promoting competition to destroy monopolies. Wilson's message of Reform (as against regulation) received popular support and he won the 1912 election with a huge majority of electoral votes. He was re-elected in 1916.

iii) *Election 1920: The Democrats lose due to the poor economy.*⁸ The post WWI US economy faced the problems of inflation, unemployment, labour unrest and racial riots; making the Democratic administration unpopular. The Republican candidate Warren Harding promised a "return to normalcy" and won the election. The Republicans managed the economy well and retained the White House throughout the 1920s. In 1928 Republican Herbert Hoover won the presidential election but in the very first year of his presidency the Great Depression occurred.

iv) *Election 1932: The Republicans lose due to the Great Depression.*⁹ The Democratic candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt promised a "New Deal" to revive the economy from depression and trounced the incumbent Republican president Hoover. The success of the New Deal enabled the Democrats to retain the White House for two decades (1932-1952).

v) *Election 1952: The Democrats lose due to the metaeconomics.*¹⁰ After WWII, the U.S. emerged as the world's sole super power. The American people were expecting peace and tranquillity, but it was not to be. In 1949 the Cold War heated up as in that year Mainland China fell to the communists and the Soviet Union exploded the atomic bomb. There was also the threat of the subversive domestic communist movement within the United States. The Americans felt that the Democratic administration of Truman, being liberal, was not firm

enough on the American communists. The 1950 invasion of South Korea by the communist North forced the U.S. to intervene militarily, resulting in 140,000 Americans dead and wounded. All these developments made the American people feel frustrated and in the 1952 presidential election they voted for the Republican Eisenhower with Richard Nixon as his vice president. Eisenhower retained the presidency in the 1956 election.

vi) *Election 1960: The Republicans lose due to metaeconomics.*¹¹

The prosperity and affluence of the 1950s was not shared by all the segments of American society. There were Afro-Americans and poor whites who had been left behind. The Afro Americans were still no better than second-class citizens. The time had come for them to protest and demand their rightful place in society. Despite the growth and prosperity of the 1950s many Americans wanted a social change in the 1960s. Republicans nominated Richard Nixon but he lost to the Democrat John F. Kennedy who stood for change and promised the nation a 'New Frontier'.

vii) *Election 1968: The Democrats lose due to metaeconomics.*¹² The decade of 1960s was a turbulent period. It saw the Vietnam War, student unrest, the drug culture, racial riots and the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King. The people's dislike for the government was so deep that the incumbent President Lyndon Johnson withdrew his re-election bid for 1968. Republicans nominated Richard Nixon. He promised peace and a return to the middle class values, and won. Nixon was re-elected for a second term in 1972.

viii) *Election 1976: The Republicans lose due to the crisis of confidence in leadership (i.e. metaeconomics).*¹³ Nixon was re-elected in 1972 but he had rocked the boat during the election campaign because of the Watergate conspiracy. First, his vice president Spiro Agnew resigned under the allegations of financial malpractice scandal and bribery charges, and was replaced by Gerald Ford. Then Nixon himself was forced to resign under the Watergate scandal, and Gerald Ford became the president. People expected Ford to restore the credibility of the office of the president. Merely a month after becoming president, Ford shocked the nation by granting a full and complete pardon to Nixon. This raised questions about Ford's own credibility. In the 1976 election Jimmy Carter, a Democrat and former governor of Georgia, promised to clean up Washington from

corruption and under this slogan rallied the support of the nation. Carter defeated the incumbent president, Ford.

*ix) The 1980 election: The Democrats lose due to metaeconomics.*¹⁴ The Carter presidency faced one crisis after another, e.g. high energy prices, stagflation, high taxes, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. decision to support the unpopular Shah of Iran and the U.S. hostage crisis in Iran. The inability of Carter to solve any of these problems added the dimension of the ineffectiveness of leadership to the already existing problem of the lack of confidence in leadership. Ronald Reagan, a Republican, promised economic recovery and restoration of America's place in the world. Reagan won in 1980 and rescued the American economy. He was re-elected in 1984. He ended his second term in 1988 under a cloud of suspicion of White House involvement in covert activities to achieve foreign policy goals. This scandal came to be known as Iran-Contra scandal and further deepened the crisis of confidence in leadership¹⁵ After Reagan, his vice president George Bush was elected president in 1988.

*x) Election 1992: The Republicans lose due to recession.*¹⁶ In his first term Mr. Bush had promised no tax hike, but after getting elected pragmatism forced him to raise the taxes. However his popularity soared when in 1991 he successfully used his diplomatic skills to rally the world in support of operation 'Desert Storm' to punish Saddam Husain for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. But then a recession set in, which resulted in the decline of his popularity and he lost the 1992 presidential election to Bill Clinton, a Democrat. Under Clinton the economy improved. He was re-elected in 1996 to continue the growth and prosperity. After Franklin Roosevelt, in more than fifty years, Bill Clinton was the first Democrat to win the second term as president.

Booming Economy and Metaeconomics: A Quick Recap

At the outset of this study we had argued that according to the conventional wisdom, generally in the United States the outcome of the presidential elections depends on the state of the economy. The above quick review of the American presidential elections during the last 100 years (1896-1996) further reinforces the conventional wisdom that indeed most of the time the performance of the economy has been one of the major factors in deciding the fates of presidential hopefuls. However, the above review also demonstrates that during the last one hundred years, on a number of occasions, the conventional wisdom did not hold. There were times when despite having delivered a healthy economy the reigning president found that the voters were neither in

the mood to re-elect him nor did they want the nominee of his political party elected to the office of president of the United States. Whenever such a situation arose it was due to the metaeconomics (i.e. the concern for higher ideals). There are quite a few instances of this phenomenon in American history. For example, in 1952 the incumbent Democratic president Harry Truman was forced to announce that he would not seek re-election. This decision was due to the overwhelming influence of metaeconomic factors, which had clearly impressed upon the president that the American people had developed a strong perception that the Democratic leadership was not able to handle the emerging global cold war scenario satisfactorily, i.e. the inability of the administration to maintain the position of the US as the world's major superpower. This assessment of the American voters' mood by Truman was proven true when in the 1952 presidential election the Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson was defeated decisively by the Republican Eisenhower. The predominantly decisive factor in the 1952 election was not the economy but metaeconomics. Similarly, despite the unparalleled modernization, growth, peace and prosperity under the eight years of Eisenhower's administration it was not the economy but, predominantly, the metaeconomics that decided the outcome of the 1960 presidential election. Despite the economic progress, social progress had not taken place. On the issue of social progress there was a sharp silent division in society. Those who wanted to retain the status quo were almost as many as those who wanted a change in favour of social progress. Kennedy, the Democratic candidate for president, promised change and won the presidency by a thin margin of popular votes over Nixon who had stood for the status quo. Nixon was Eisenhower's vice president for eight years and in this capacity had contributed to the policies that made the United States earn the title of 'affluent society'. However in the 1960 election it was not the economy but metaeconomics that decided the outcome. In the first post-Watergate election, the metaeconomic fallout of the scandal resulted in the defeat of the incumbent president, Ford. In the first post-Monica Lewinsky affair election history repeated itself and the incumbent vice president was the casualty.

Gore had made the economy the main issue and had taken every step possible to remind the people that he was the only one who will be able to continue to deliver the brilliant performance of the economy that had become the hallmark of the Clinton-Gore team. However, this theme did not receive the kind of enthusiastic response from voters that he had expected. This raises a number of questions; e.g. what was that

dimension of metaeconomics that changed the perception of such a big population of voters about societal priorities? How did it come into play to damage the Gore candidacy, and how was it played out in the election campaign? These questions are important for a number of reasons and their answers will be attempted in the following sections.

The 2000 U.S. Election: The Politics of the Centrist Platforms

One intriguing question emerging out of the US presidential contest 2000 is: why did the race turn out to be so close that in the end it was decided by a margin of only a few hundred votes in Florida? One of the factors that made this race so close was the centrist politics of both candidates. Although Bush is conservative and Gore is liberal, both of them managed to offer platforms that divided the nation right through the middle. The reason is that on ideologically divisive issues (e.g. abortion, gun control, homosexuals, taxes, etc.) neither of them took an extreme position, rather both of them tried to take the middle of the road position.

Take the environment, for instance. Bush supported tax breaks for Ethanol use, but also supported opening of Alaskan reserves to oil and gas exploration and opposed the Kyoto treaty. Al Gore supported tax breaks for environmentally friendly homes, cars and businesses, and supported preservation of Alaska's Arctic wildlife, and the Kyoto treaty. Here it is obvious that, despite being a liberal, Gore is not strict on businesses and industries that are heavy polluters. Rather, he takes the middle ground, making young pro-environment Democrats unhappy. That is why the pro-environment Democrats heavily voted for the Green party candidate Ralph Nader, causing a fatal blow to Mr. Gore's presidential aspirations.

On homosexuality, one would expect that, being a conservative, Bush would outright ban homosexuals from the US military. However, in clear defiance of the rightist stand he took a centrist position by allowing the military to follow a "Don't ask, Don't tell" policy. Thus the military will neither ask their staff about their sexual orientation nor will the staff reveal it. As a result, homosexuals will continue to serve in the US military. Gore supports allowing the homosexuals to serve openly in the military.

Regarding gun laws, Bush supported enforcement of existing gun control laws, voluntary child safety locks in firearms, background checks and gun shows. However he opposed national gun registration. Gore, supported background checks and gun shows, national licensing of firearms, and advocated mandatory child safety locks in firearms.

One would expect that, being a liberal, Gore would advocate stricter legislation which would declare unlicensed possession of firearms either illegal or make it subject to very strict conditions, but on this issue he, like Bush, took a centrist position.

Bush proposed a US\$1.3 trillion tax cut over a period of 10 years, a simplified income tax system, increased child credit, and phasing out of estate tax. Gore also supported tax cuts for middle and working class lower income Americans, to the tune of US\$500 billion over 10 years, mainly favouring the poor and the middle class. He also proposed increased earned income tax credit for large families and tax breaks for college education. Bush's tax cuts are more in a conservative spirit as phasing out of the estate tax favours the rich, as they are mainly the ones who own estates. However, his increase in child credit is a move towards the centre as the poor have more children. Gore's tax cuts are more in the liberal spirit, favouring the middle and low-income groups.

Bush opposed abortion except in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the woman and supported outlawing late term abortion. Conservatism demanded Bush to firmly outlaw early term abortion. Instead he chose a centrist position by banning late term abortions only. Gore supported a woman's right to have an abortion in all circumstances. He also opposed a ban on late term abortion.¹⁷

In the process both of them offered centrist platforms to the voters. The purpose of adopting this centrist strategy was to be least controversial to the independent and ideologically moderate voters while still retaining one's ideological base.

The Game of Numbers

As far as the outcome of a presidential election is concerned, according to the American constitution the popular vote majority of a candidate is immaterial. In order to be elected the president of the United States, the winning candidate must have an electoral vote majority (i.e. in a two way race at least 270 out of 538 electoral college votes)¹⁸. In 1860, in a race split between four presidential candidates, Abraham Lincoln secured less than 40 percent of the popular vote but he won the presidency because he had the electoral vote majority¹⁹. In the 2000 election so long as Florida's vote count remained disputed Gore's electoral count stood at 267 as against Bush's 246. Whoever carried the state of Florida would secure all of its 25 electoral votes and achieve the constitutionally required mark of

270 electoral votes to become the 43rd president of the United States. In this election Gore suffered a few serious setbacks.

First, there was an impression that the US Supreme Court voted on party lines in favour of G. W. Bush.²⁰ Second, there was an important Nader factor. Had Nader not robbed Gore of the votes of environmentalist Democrats in Florida and New Hampshire, Gore would have been a clear winner even without the plea for a vote recount in Florida, and he would have won the presidency. This is obvious from the fact that in these two states Gore lost to Bush by a smaller margin than the number of votes secured by Nader. In New Hampshire Gore lost to Bush by 7,282 votes while Nader received a total of 22,156 votes. More ironic was Florida where according to the official count Gore lost to Bush by a thin margin of 537 popular votes only, while there Nader secured 87,974 votes. New Hampshire has 4 electoral votes while Florida has 25. Nader's votes were mainly Democratic votes and hence their diversion to the Green party turned out to be a fatal blow to Gore, especially since the race was so tight.²¹

All the above arguments are well taken to appreciate that indeed it was a very close election and apparently for many, Gore may still potentially be the genuine winner, but for circumstances which twisted the outcome in favour of Bush. However the problem with this kind of analysis is that it is based entirely on what is obvious and reaches a conclusion based on events as they took place, while completely ignoring the forces that produced those events which ended up generating the numbers as they stand now. The above analysis fails to identify the cause of such a close race between the two candidates and also the reasons why Gore fell short of the required number of electoral votes. The understanding of this issue requires a historical background of the problem as discussed in the following section.

The Rebellion of the South Against Gore

In the 2000 presidential election Gore received 48 percent popular and 267 electoral votes. Whereas in his first presidential election in 1992, Clinton had received only 43.0 percent of the popular vote, but despite this low percentage of popular vote, his electoral vote count stood at 370.²² In his re-election bid in 1996, Clinton's popular vote count increased to 49.3 percent while his electoral vote improved further to 379.²³ This is a stark contrast to Gore's 48 percent popular vote, generating only 267 electoral votes in 2000. Hence the problem behind Gore's failure is much deeper than the issue of a machine vote count versus manual vote recount, or the Supreme Court verdict, or

the apparent numbers game, or the Nader factor. The problem is the regional, cultural and ideological map of the United States as discussed below.

The Gore campaign failed to reach out to a wider range of American people with various shades of opinions on a number of issues. In his 1996 campaign, Bill Clinton had won in a total of 31 states plus the District of Columbia (i.e. Washington D.C.). In 2000, Gore managed to win merely in 20 states plus the D.C. There remained a total of 11 states which were won by Clinton in 1996, but Gore failed to carry them in 2000. These 11 states consist of: Arizona (8), Arkansas (6), Florida (25), Kentucky (8), Louisiana (9), Missouri (11), Nevada (4), New Hampshire (4), Ohio (21), West Virginia (5), and Mr. Gore's own home state, Tennessee (11). Here the numbers within parentheses corresponding to the name of a state show the number of its electoral votes. The total electoral votes of all these 11 states amount to 112.

One should remember that these states are located in the south and the midwest of the United States, and fall in either the Bible Belt region or the Sun Belt region of the country. These regions are traditionally conservative and the Bible Belt is also the centre of fundamentalist and evangelical Protestantism. The people in these regions are family oriented and strongly believe in traditional values and good moral character.²⁴ A survey reported that in election 2000, 56% Protestants voted for Bush while only 42% for Gore.²⁵

Bush managed to capture all the above 11 states, which in 1996 had voted for Clinton. All the 19 states that had voted for the Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole in 1996 remained firmly in the Republican camp and voted for Bush in 2000. These 30 states (19+11) formed a solid conservative vote bank for Bush. This demonstrates a serious weakness of Gore on two strategic fronts. First, his failure to retain the 11 states (out of 31), which had voted for Democrats in the 1996 presidential election. Second, his failure to win even one state (out of 19), which had voted Republican in 1996.

It is now clear that the cause of an unfavourable election outcome for Gore is much deeper and is rooted in the change of mood of the American people after the 1996 presidential election. The above analysis helps us establish that the regions where the majority of the population is religious, upholds traditional values and considers morality an important quality of character; rebelled against Gore. With this kind of ideological divide it becomes clear that in addition to the

skills of economic management and diplomacy these voters were also using some kind of a moral criteria when deciding their vote for the president of the US in 2000.

It can be said that the American voters in 2000 were not only looking at the candidates' past record on the economy and foreign and domestic policy issues, but were also looking for certain qualities in his character that would give them trust in his leadership as the president of the United States. There is no denying the fact that in the second half of the 20th century the American people have enjoyed the fruits of economic growth and successful foreign and domestic policies to varying degrees, under different presidents. But the fact of the matter is that many of these very presidents, more often than not, have also ended up betraying the trust of the nation. That is the reason why voters have ended up not renewing their or their party's mandate the next time around. The same is true for the outcome faced by Gore for his White House bid in 2000. This is especially due to the rebellion of the conservative south which was looking for certain values in the character of the president as the office of the president had lost credibility and the trust of the people in recent years.

The Gore Campaign 2000 and the Issue of Trust in Leadership

The Americans' faith in their leaders was shattered by a series of scandals during the second half of 20th century. These included the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, the pardoning of Nixon by his successor Ford, the failure of Carter in controlling the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Reagan administration's Iran-Contra affair, and finally the degradation of the office of presidency by Clinton. It was in this background of the haunting memories of presidential scandals of the recent past that Mr. Gore was offering himself as the next president to a nation whose confidence in its leaders had been totally shattered. As a presidential candidate he was now asking the nation to demonstrate its trust in him. However his silence on the issue throughout the investigations and proceedings of the Monica Lewinsky case had done little to maintain and cultivate people's trust in him. This policy of silence had compromised his integrity in the eyes of the voters. After winning the Democratic Party's nomination as their presidential candidate for the 2000 election, his ratings in polls vis-à-vis his Republican rival George W. Bush had remained low. He had realized it was due to the lack of confidence in leadership, which was rooted in his silence over the Monica Lewinsky affair. He tried to make up for this deficiency by distancing himself from Clinton during

the campaign and choosing Senator Joe Lieberman as his vice presidential running mate.

But Mr. Gore's skilful use of his own running-mate selection helped him erase Mr. Bush's national lead a second time. By tapping moderate Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman, a leading Democratic critic of Mr. Clinton's behaviour in the Monica Lewinsky affair, Mr. Gore distanced himself from the presidential scandals that formed an unflattering backdrop to the 2000 race. Mr. Lieberman's status as the first Jew on a major party ticket added an air of boldness to a Gore campaign tagged as cautious and calculating.²⁶

Senator Lieberman was the first Democrat to criticize President Clinton as soon as the Monica Lewinsky affair became known, and had a proven track record of integrity. Lieberman had also recently published his latest book *In Praise of Public Office*. In this book he was very critical of Clinton with reference to the Monica Lewinsky affair. Gore believed that the choice of Lieberman as his vice presidential running mate would satisfy those voters who were concerned about the credibility issue. Commenting on Gore's choice of Lieberman in the context of the Monica Lewinsky affair *Time* magazine wrote:

As Al Gore winnowed his list of prospective running mates last month, at least one prominent Democrat was less than thrilled with the idea that Joe Lieberman might get the nod. Bill Clinton praised the choice after it was made, but before the fact, he railed privately about how much Lieberman's latest book, *In Praise of Public Office*, ticked him off. ("The Clinton-Lewinsky saga" Lieberman writes, "is the most vivid example we have of the virus of lost standards.") Clinton told friends he was sick and tired of Lieberman's sanctimony. The Senator's famous 1998 speech condemning Clinton's behaviour was one thing, the president suggested, but wasn't it about time the guy gave it a rest?²⁷

It was Gore's hope that his choice of Joe Lieberman as his running mate would be able to bridge the gap between himself and governor Bush; and actually it did. After Senator Lieberman joined Gore on the Democratic ticket, polls showed the Gore-Lieberman ticket closing the gap against governor Bush.

The Bush-Gore race was also a dead heat by the Labour Day mark (i.e. the first Monday in September). The Labour Day polls showed Bush 47% and Gore 46%. If nothing else, the Labour Day numbers were signalling very clearly that despite an impressive record of the excellent performance of the economy to his credit for the eight year

Clinton-Gore teamwork, and with Joe Lieberman by his side, the vice president was still not able to break the invisible barriers to get decisively ahead of governor Bush.²⁸

The Promised Land: Gore's Unconvincing Promise

The theme of Gore's entire campaign was economy. He wanted to make the people realize that he (together with president Clinton) has been the co-architect of the great economic prosperity that they had enjoyed during the eight year Clinton-Gore term; and that out of the two candidates (i.e. Gore versus Bush) he is the only one who is qualified in terms of experience, skills and vision to continue this economic miracle. This focus of Gore's campaign is summarized by the *Asian Wall Street Journal* as follows:

Mr. Gore, for his part, puts forth literally books full of ideas to continue the peace and prosperity the voters have enjoyed during the democratic administration he's been part of.²⁹

Bush's inability to handle the economy was an important theme of Gore's campaign:

It is Gore 52, known for his mastery of complex policies, retorted that Bush is neither ready nor capable of becoming the leader of the world's only superpower. "Prosperity is at stake", he said, warning that a Bush win would mean a return to budget deficits, unemployment and inflation.³⁰

It is a fact that being the vice president, Gore had a valid claim on delivering the prosperous and successful eight years (1992-2000) of the Democratic administration. However to claim that he is the only one who can do it while Mr. Bush cannot; was a bit too much of an overstatement. A voters' survey revealed that the people were refusing to buy Mr. Gore's wishful claims on this crucial subject:

Much of the Gore campaign's effort in these closing days has been expended on fanning doubts about Mr. Bush's experience and his readiness for White House, to mixed results. The new poll finds that the electorate harbours similar doubts about both men on that front. While just 41% said they were comfortable with Mr. Bush's "knowledge and ability to be president," only 40% expressed comfort with Mr. Gore's.³¹

It is now evident that the Gore campaign's single minded focus on portraying their candidate as the sole expert on economic management did nothing to change the perception of the voters about him and his rival.

Promised Land Versus a Promising Leader

A Labour Day voters' survey quoted by the *Asian Wall Street Journal* on the eve of the election revealed that the voters' main concern was not the economy but the restoration of moral and family values. This also implicitly meant that they were more likely to vote on the criteria of the integrity of the character of a candidate than his mastery of economic management:

In sum, Mr. Bush is telling voters what he'll be; Mr. Gore is emphasizing what he'll do. The political advantages of those two contrasting messages are reflected in the new poll, which is based on 1,026 likely voters. Mr. Bush's slight edge with voters may be explained by the survey's finding that more Americans think that the next president's bigger priority should be to restore moral and family values, rather than to work continued economic growth. Half the voters say they have confidence in Mr. Bush's ability to work for better values, while a slim majority express doubts about Mr. Gore. But the results flip on the question of how confident voters are of each man's ability to manage economic growth. There Mr. Gore has the advantage. Americans have made tradeoffs before between policies and personalities when picking their presidents: Just as former U.S. President Ronald Reagan was more popular than his policies, President Bill Clinton's policies are more popular than he is.³²

Bush's Campaign Theme: A Trustworthy Leadership

The thrust of Bush's campaign was not so much on the economy; rather it focused on the personality and character of the future president of the United States. He always reminded voters about morality, trust and integrity as important ingredients of the personality of a person aspiring to lead the country:

As he has from the start of his challenge, Mr. Bush offers himself as a leader that Americans can trust, "a uniter, not a divider," who would ride from Texas to make "a fresh start after a season of cynicism."³³

Unfortunately for Gore, in 2000 election the integrity, credibility and trustworthiness of the leadership had become the central criteria for the voters in their choice of the next president. This was due to the Monica Lewinsky affair in which president Clinton had visibly demonstrated the weakness of his character in a number of ways. Many people, reacting to this crisis of confidence in leadership, had become more conscious of the role of moral values in their choice of the next president. Incidentally, as the economy was in good shape at

the time of election, the people could afford to give it a secondary position and instead give higher priority to the moral and ethical aspects of the personality of the next president. It was for these strategic reasons that Bush's campaign was focusing on the moral character and integrity of the next president; the decisive criteria in the minds of a big segment of the American voters. Gore on the other hand, was in a very difficult situation when measured on this criterion, as he, "... suffered from guilt by association with the Clinton scandals, without getting full credit for his share in the achievements."³⁴

Gore's Problem: Steep Climb with the Wrong Focus

Unfortunately the Gore camp did not realize the crucial importance of the issue of integrity in the minds of the voters in the last few weeks of the election campaign. They went into the post Labour Day dynamics of the campaign and into the TV debates believing that the reputation of Lieberman as a man of integrity was sufficient to insulate the campaign from any concerns in the minds of the voters about the integrity issue. This assumption was a costly oversimplification as later events proved.

The Gore camp's fundamental mistake was that they came to believe in their own wishful thinking that the integrity of Gore was not an issue. They perceived this wishful thinking as a fact especially when governor Bush's camp did not raise this issue through any kind of open negative campaigning. The Gore camp's other mistake was their over dependence on the strategy of convincing the voters that their candidate was the only one capable of delivering the miracle economy that was the hallmark of the Clinton-Gore administration. They tried to depict Bush as somebody who may run the state of Texas but may not have the ability to run the world's biggest economy. But this line of argument was inherently contradictory because Texas is at least the second largest state in the Union, while before coming to Washington, Clinton only had the experience of running Arkansas, which is a much smaller state than Texas.

Actually, it appears that during the 2000 election the American voters regarded the existence of economic stability and prosperity as the most appropriate time for a society to set higher moral ideals and use the election process to realize them. The fact of the matter is that during the last two decades of the 20th century an intergenerational change has taken place in the American population. People with the experience and memories of the miseries of the Great Depression have, over the decades, become a smaller percentage of the population

through the natural process of the mortality of man. Today the majority of the politically active and socially and intellectually influential members of the American society are from amongst those who have vivid memories of the Vietnam war, Watergate, etc; as argued by McWilliams and quoted by Miller & Shanks:

Until recently, memory was a Democratic fortress, recalling the Great Depression and World War II, the glory years of Roosevelt era—and in the South where memories faded more slowly than in the North, nursing the straight-ticket heritage of Reconstruction. Now those old remembrances are quieting into whispers, losing their connection to contemporary partisanship, especially since, wounded by change and the media, our political memory is growing shorter...Increasingly, the focus of American political retrospection is Vietnam and the turbulence of the 1960s, permissive morality, stagflation and the decline of America's imperium.³⁵

Thus many concerned American voters in the 2000 presidential campaign had a long list of betrayals of trust by their leaders. Topping the list were experiences such as Vietnam, Watergate, the Iran-Contra Scandal, the Monica Lewinsky affair; etc. Mr. Gore had been the vice president for eight years and during the entire crucial period of Monica Lewinsky investigations and proceedings, he had kept quiet. What kind of a president would he be? Could he be trusted? In the 2000 election a sizable proportion of American voters were willing to elect a president who was trustworthy but less skilful in managing the economy as against one who was more skilful in economic management but untrustworthy.

Many voters with religious and conservative views especially in the Bible belt would expect their leaders to demonstrate integrity and trust by taking a clear and firm stand against such a scandal. Such voters may not be able to appreciate the wisdom of Mr. Gore's silence on the (Monica Lewinsky) issue. Despite being convinced of Gore's skills of economic management these voters perhaps viewed his silence on the scandal as one of his major weaknesses, and hence may not have voted for him. This was exactly the reason why there was a strategic need for Mr. Gore to address the issue of his stand on the said scandal directly and boldly and explain his position clearly to the voters to remove any doubts in their minds about his integrity.

Gore's Minor Slips and the Snowballing of the Integrity Issue

In the last quarter of the campaign a series of minor slips by Gore quietly made the integrity of the candidate a big issue. Some examples of these slips are as follows:

1. In late September 2000, the vice-president compared the cost of his mother-in-law's arthritis drugs to that of his dog's. The anger and criticism of this comparison affected his image and put him on the defensive.³⁶
2. At one point he told the audience that, "...his mother used to sing him as a lullaby a union jingle written when he was 27." When doubts were raised about the *credibility* of this statement, he said he was *joking*.³⁷
3. Shortly after the lullaby incident, addressing the issue of rising oil prices, he suggested that the U.S. should release oil from its strategic petroleum reserves. He argued that this release would bring the cost of home heating oil and gasoline down. This statement was not only a reversal of his earlier position but also allowed the Republicans to label him as a politically calculative opportunist who would say anything to win the election. This incident raised the issue of integrity to new levels of concern in the minds of people.³⁸
4. In the first TV debate, the vice president denied that he had questioned governor Bush's qualifications to be president. This is something that Gore had clearly done during the course of his campaign. Later in the same debate the vice-president erred in some other statements.³⁹

Bush and the Issue of Integrity: A Strategy of Silent Noise

Governor Bush did not raise the issue of the vice president's integrity directly and openly in his campaign. This gave him three major advantages. Firstly, if he had raised this issue openly, it would have given Gore the opportunity to defend himself and clarify his position, hence convincing the voters of his perspective as a vice president while the country was going through a crisis during the Monica Lewinsky affair. Secondly, not bringing it out in the open put Bush on a higher moral ground in the eyes of the voters as it gave them the impression that although Bush was within striking range of the vulnerable spot of the vice president, he was not doing so because he did not want to take advantage of his rival's weakness. Thirdly, it kept Gore guessing about the potential positive role and effectiveness of president Clinton in support of the campaign of his vice president. So when it came to using the aura and charm of the presidency to attract voters and dollars, Gore mostly played "Hamlet." This was a great success for the Bush campaign to effectively neutralize the support of the dynamic,

charming and crowd-gathering reigning president, Clinton, in support of his vice president's bid for the White House.

To say that Bush did not raise the issue of integrity is a gross misstatement and would deprive our analysis of its scientific validity. In fact Bush, by not using it openly, ended up using it more effectively to damage the vice president's credibility in the minds of the voters. However, he used it either covertly in the hidden messages where the voters could read his message in between the lines or sometimes he used it more directly through actions and symbols only to remind the people that in their choice of the next president they should also take into account the candidate's credibility. Some of the indirect expressions that he frequently employed to convey this message are as follows:

1. When asked what the country needs to increase voter participation, he replied simply: "It needs somebody in office who will tell the truth."⁴⁰
2. "In the closing weekend, at every stop, Mr. Bush ended his stump speeches the same way he has since last year — with a crowd-pleasing mock swearing-in that evokes the Clinton scandal without mentioning it. Holding up his right hand, he swears not only to uphold the laws of the land, but also—to building applause—"to uphold the honour and dignity of the office, so help me God".⁴¹

Thus governor Bush made very effective use of the criteria of integrity to remind voters to differentiate between him and vice president Gore on this basis when deciding their presidential vote. He did it in a very subtle and consistent manner through his 'silent noise'⁴².

These continuous suggestive references by Mr. Bush to the issue of trustworthiness and the credibility of leadership finally paid off and affected Mr. Gore's standing adversely. On the 18th of October, just three weeks before the election, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* quoted a survey's results:

At the same time, a 43% to 31% plurality of voters now say that "restoring moral and family values" should be a higher priority for the next president than "maintaining economic growth." That was nearly a reversal from last month, when economic growth led by a 44% to 36% margin.⁴³

Conclusions and Comments

Our analysis shows that as a general rule the conventional wisdom holds, i.e., generally it is the state of the economy at the time of election which determines the voters' mood and hence the re-election prospects of the incumbent president or that of the nominee of his party for the White House. Even if the incumbent president is a great hero, if people are unemployed and businesses are going bankrupt, this hero is doomed in his re-election bid. This is exactly what happened to president George Bush in his re-election bid against Bill Clinton in 1992. After the success of Operation Desert Storm in early 1991, president Bush had become a hero for the American people and was riding high in popularity polls. Had the presidential elections been held at that time, he would have been re-elected with ease. But then the recession set in. This downswing of the US economy resulted in the downfall of the hero, and Mr. Bush lost the White House to Mr. Clinton. On the other hand, delivering an economic boom, low rates of unemployment and inflation, and successful domestic and foreign policies are necessary for the incumbent, but not sufficient to win the next US presidential election if the metaeconomics becomes an issue.

The emergence of the metaeconomics phenomenon could either be a slow and gradual process of reflection, without any significant external trigger, as was the case in the 1960 US presidential election when the prosperity of the 1950s under Eisenhower-Nixon led to the yearning for metaeconomics of social change. Consequently, Kennedy, promising a *new frontier*, defeated the incumbent vice president Nixon. Or the metaeconomics forces in the society may be activated by an external trigger such as the perceived threat of communist subversion which reached hysterical proportions under Senator McCarthy and finally succeeded in unleashing the anger of the people that resulted in the defeat of the Democrats in the 1952 presidential elections⁴⁴. Or, it could take the form of morally explosive issues, like the Monica Lewinsky affair which fatally damaged the prospects of vice president Al Gore in 2000. In all these cases the economy was doing well but the nominee of the reigning president's party lost. This was also the outcome of the successful economy during the eight years of Clinton-Gore team. Under the comfort and certainty of economic stability, circumstances triggered the American voters to evaluate the president and his close associates on moral and ethical criteria rather than the usual criteria of the performance of the economy. Hence the damage to Gore's candidacy, who had built his entire case on the basis

of the promise of his capability to continue the stewardship of the economy with the same vision and skills, that had been the hallmark of the Clinton-Gore administration. Another important lesson to be learnt here is that although president Clinton survived the attempts of his impeachment, Gore on the other hand, who was aspiring to be the future president of the United States, ended up paying dearly for his own silence on the Monica Lewinsky affair. This scandal brought the crisis of confidence in leadership from its serious level of Watergate to its gravest levels. It was due to this crisis that the trustworthiness of the leadership of the country became a serious concern in the minds of the voters. Governor Bush was not spared either on the issue of trustworthiness. Only five days before election day, some quarters leaked the news of his arrest for drunken driving in 1976 when he was a young man. The timing of this news was very critical as there was hardly any time for damage control. The scenario that emerged after the leak was doubly dangerous. Firstly, he was an irresponsible man, and secondly, he kept this information a secret from voters, so he cannot be trusted. Had governor Bush not handled this challenge carefully, his own credibility could have easily become an issue and become fatal for his candidacy. Unlike Mr. Gore, who had chosen to be either quiet or at the best play 'Hamlet' on the issue (instead of boldly taking a stand on the Monica Lewinsky affair and explaining his position); Mr. Bush took the bull by the horns. He knew that this issue might upset voters committed to family values and conservative ideals. So he responded boldly. He turned it around indirectly in the same moral dimension in which he had run the entire campaign. His response was that he had not disclosed this because he did not want his teenage daughters to know about it.

"I didn't want them drinking and driving. It was a decision I made." He went on to further reveal, "I regret that it happened. But it did ... I stopped drinking 14 years ago and I haven't had a drop since."⁴⁵

Governor Bush's resolve that he doesn't want his daughters to pick up the bad habit, and not only that he didn't tell them about his mistake in the past, but he actually had stopped drinking 14 years ago, was an attempt to establish that he has the moral strength to overcome his weaknesses and that now he is a man of principles who is sincerely committed to practicing what he preaches. This must have struck a chord with millions of American parents looking for a clue to guide their own children to a life of responsibility and discipline.

The analysis in this paper reveals that Gore's failure to establish a stable and meaningful lead was mainly due to the concern of the voters for the trustworthiness of their leaders. The trust of the American people in their leadership had gradually eroded starting with the Vietnam war, which had destroyed president Johnson's aspirations for his re-election to the second term, forcing him to withdraw from the contest. People had thought that perhaps after Watergate no president would ever abuse his power, or the glory and charm of his position, but the Monica Lewinsky affair proved them to be totally wrong. Watergate investigations not only resulted in the resignation of president Nixon but also led to jail terms of his top advisors. People had thought that these jail terms are a signal that in future if any president would attempt to do anything wrong, at least his close associates would be bold enough to criticize him immediately hence taking a clear position on the issue (without any reservation), and let the nation know that they don't approve of the wrong doing. However when the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke and throughout its investigations, vice president Gore, instead of taking a stand on the issue, maintained complete silence in this regard. Mr. Gore only expressed his disapproval of it during his election campaign. This policy of politically calculated silence did not go down well with millions of Americans. Those who believe in traditional values were deeply hurt by this scandal. This becomes clear from our analysis when we see that the 11 Bible belt conservative states in the Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States rebelled against Gore and voted for Bush, although these states had voted for president Clinton in his re-election bid in 1996.

These states constitute the heartland of American Protestantism and the country's conservative movement. Some quarters may argue that since these states are predominantly conservative, they were bound to vote for Bush who is also conservative. But this argument, when evaluated in terms of reality, does not hold because in 1996 these states voted for Clinton against the Republican leader Bob Dole. However in the 2000 election their mood had changed, and their criteria was no more just the economy; rather metaeconomics (i.e., in this case trustworthiness of the leaders) and hence they refused to vote for Mr. Gore despite his strong credentials of great skills in the management of the economy. In principle it was conservative forces that turned the tide against vice president Gore. These forces have their own perspectives on issues in society and have therefore lent their support to Mr. Bush with a certain vision of the future. Under this

vision these forces see a greater role for themselves in the American society in upholding the moral and ethical values in the light of their religious and ideological beliefs. Mr. Bush, aware of their potential contribution in solving many social and moral problems, has responded positively. Within the first two weeks of assuming the presidency he established a special White House office dedicated to encouraging faith-based organizations to play a greater role in solving the social problems in society and also seek federal funds for this purpose. In this regard the following developments as reported in the daily *Star*, add a new dimension to the current socio-political dynamism in the American society:

President George W. Bush established yesterday a White House office dedicated to encouraging faith-based organizations to seek federal funds to help solve social problems like drug addiction and homelessness. By doing so, Bush drew the wrath of advocates of a strict separation between church and state, who warned they might file a legal challenge on constitutional grounds. Appearing with 35 religious leaders, Bush signed an executive order setting up the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. And he appointed University of Pennsylvania political science professor John Dilulio to head it.⁴⁶

Thus it is now clear that the underlying issue in the 2000 US presidential election was metaeconomics, rooted in the crisis of confidence in leadership. It was incumbent upon Mr. Gore's campaign strategists to respond to this need of the hour and devise ways and means to assure the voters that Mr. Gore was indeed a trustworthy leader. Merely a healthy record of having delivered a sound economy and claims to maintain it had nothing to do with the crisis of confidence in leadership from which the nation was suffering for nearly half a century. It was here that the Gore campaign erred, and Mr. Gore ended up paying dearly. The fact of the matter is that in the 2000 election metaeconomics had put the limits on the political dividends of the sound U.S. economy. By the same token it is also true that given a sound economy, if metaeconomic targets are achieved through metaeconomic instruments, then the dividends of the sound economy will certainly be high and long lasting. One may add that in a liberal democracy, like the US, where there is a clear separation of the church and the state, the voters inspired by religious values were able to influence the outcome of the presidential elections by participating in the national political process, within the secular framework.

Notes

1. After the polling ended on November 7, and state-wise vote counting results started coming in, it became obvious that the race was very tight. The media, in a race to get the credit for breaking the news first, initially projected a Gore victory in Florida on the basis of exit polls. Later, as results of more Florida counties became available, the media reversed their position and projected Bush to be the winner in Florida. Victory in Florida had become crucial for both candidates as out of a total of 538 electoral college votes Gore had 267 while Bush's score was 246. Whoever could win 270 electoral votes would be the 43rd president of the US. Since Florida had 25 electoral votes, it was going to decide the next president of the US. After the networks projected Bush to be winner, Gore called Bush and conceded. According to the *Asian Wall Street Journal* (Dec 15-17, 2000) as the networks put the state back in too-close-to-call status for a second time, at 3 a.m. Gore called Bush to retract his concession. As the events unfolded it became clear that there were a number of problems in the balloting, e.g. voting machines were very old and broken, hence many of them were malfunctioning. Another problem was the way the ballot papers were printed. When the voters used these machines to vote in favour of Gore, they ended up marking the vote in a manner that either it looked like a vote for Mr. Bush, or the mark came out in such a way that, according to the rules, in a machine count it will be rejected. The Gore camp appealed for a hand recount and this led to court battles between the two camps, first in the Florida State Supreme Court and then in the US Federal Supreme Court. The *Time* magazine (Asian edition, December 4, 2000) summarized the positions of the two camps in these legal battles as follows:

Democrats say election officials must count any ballot for which they can reasonably determine the voter's intent, including dimpled chads—ballots on which a box for a candidate was intended but not actually pierced. The Republicans argue that the voting machines are more reliable than humans and that no ballot should count if it doesn't register in a machine tabulation.

The Bush camp finally took the case to the US Supreme Court which ruled in their favour by a narrow 5-4 margin.

2. In support of this argument see an interesting discussion focusing on the relationship between the US economic conditions and the vote for the incumbent party presidential candidates (1932-1996) in, Thomas R. Dye, *Politics in America* 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 281-282.

3. "How Two Parties Became the Coke and Pepsi of Politics: Seesawing US Campaign Belied Uncanny Balance," *The Wall Street Journal of Europe* (December, 15-16, 2000), 1 and 9.

4. *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Metaphysics." "The term metaphysics is believed to have originated in Rome about 70 B.C., with the

Greek peripatetic philosopher Andronicus of Rhodes (fl. 1st cent. B.C.) in his edition of the works of the earlier Greek philosopher Aristotle... In the arrangement of Aristotle's works by Andronicus, the treatise originally called the *First Philosophy*, or *Theology*, followed the treatise *Physics*. Hence the *First Philosophy* came to be known as the *meta (ta) physica*, or 'following (the) physics,' later shortened to *Metaphysics*. The word took on the connotation, in popular usage, of matters transcending material reality. In the philosophic sense, however, particularly as opposed to the use of the word by occultists, metaphysics applies to all reality, and is distinguished from other forms of inquiry by its generality."(vol. 16, 209-211)." According to a dictionary of philosophy the secondary and derivative meanings of the term metaphysics are: (a) Anything concerned with the supra-physical. Thus "metaphysical healing," "metaphysical poetry," etc. (b) Any scheme of explanation which transcends the inadequacies of ordinary thought. See, *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient, Medieval, Modern*, edited by Dagobert D. Runes (Totowa: Littlefield, Adams & Co, 1981), 196.

5. After submitting this article I found that the idea of metaeconomics had been formulated and discussed earlier as well. A very useful reference, among others, G.D. Lynne, "Divided Self Models of the Socioeconomic Person: The Metaeconomics Approach," *Journal of Socio-Economics* 28 (1999)3: 267-289.

6. Christine Rider, *An Introduction to Economic History* (Cincinnati: South-Western College Publishing, 1995), 315-344. Also see Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000), 579-603.

7. Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 666-705.

8. *Ibid.*, 698-730.

9. *Ibid.*, 731-843.

10. *Ibid.*, 844-913.

11. *Ibid.*, 875-960.

12. *Ibid.*, 945-973.

13. *Ibid.*, 970-983.

14. *Ibid.*, 981-1001.

15. "... the most politically damaging scandal of the Reagan years came to light in November 1986, when the White House conceded that it had sold weapons to the revolutionary government of Iran as part of a largely unsuccessful effort to secure the release of several Americans being held hostage by radical Islamic groups in the Middle East. Even more damaging was the revelation that some of the money from the arms deal with Iran had been covertly and illegally funnelled into a fund to aid the contras in Nicaragua. In the months that followed, aggressive reporting and a highly publicized series of congressional hearings exposed a widespread pattern of covert activities orchestrated by the White House and dedicated to advancing the administration's foreign policy aims through secret and at times illegal means." See, Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 1006-1007.

16. *Ibid.*, 1002-1018

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17. *The New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, (November 6, 2000), 21.

18. Although the millions of citizens who vote in the November election rightly think that they are deciding who shall be president, only the members of the electoral college who number 538 are, under Article II and Amendment XXXIII of the Constitution, entitled to vote directly for president and vice president. Each state appoints a certain number of its members to the electoral college using a common formula. The formula requires that the total number of members to the electoral college from each state should be equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives to which the state might be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or person holding an office of trust or profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector. How states choose their electors is, under Article II, Section I, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, determined by state legislatures. See Walter Berns (ed), *After the People Vote: A Guide to The Electoral College* (Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press, 1992), 8 & 71.

19. Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, A-32

20. Some quarters have attempted to argue that the US supreme court decision favouring G.W.Bush was partisan as the court consisted of a total of 9 judges of which 7 were appointed by the Republican presidents (Nixon, Ford, Reagan and George Bush) while only 2 were the Democratic appointees under Clinton presidency. For details of US Supreme Court composition see "Flipping the Script," *Time* (Asian edition), (December 18, 2000), 32-35.

21. "College Bound?" *Time* (U.S. Edition), (Nov. 20, 2000), 42-45.

22. Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, A-36

23. *Ibid.*, A-36

24. Geographically this region of the United States is identified with the deep South, the border states, and the lower Mid-West. This region is populated by fundamentalist and evangelical Protestants, among whom literal interpretation of the Bible, and rigid morality are common. Many states in this region which had voted for Mr. Clinton in 1996, rebelled against Mr. Gore in 2000 and voted for Mr. Bush. For details on Bible Belt please see: *Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, 15th ed. (1989), s.v. "Bible Belt." Also see the *Time* (Asian Edition), (November 20, 2000), 32-33, for the US map showing geographical standing of the two parties in the presidential election 2000.

25. "Breaking Down the Electorate," *Time* (Asian Edition), (November 20, 2000), 57.

26. "During the Election, The Two Parties Blurred Into One: Modern Campaign Tools Provide Perfect Market Info," *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (December 15-17, 2000), 1 & 11.

27. "Gore's Leap of Faith," *Time* (Asian Edition), (August 21, 2000), 16-20.

28. *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (September 4, 2000).

29. "Too Close to Call: The U.S. Election Defies Pollsters," *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (November 7, 2000) 1 & 6.

30. "Cliff-hanger for Americans: Opinion Polls Give Bush a Razor-thin lead over Gore," *New Straits Times*, Kuala Lumpur, (November 6, 2000) 21.
31. Too Close to Call," *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (November 7, 2000), 1 & 6.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Quoted in Warren E. Miller and J. Merrill Shanks, *The New American Voter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 23.
36. "How the Two Parties Became the Coke and Pepsi of Politics," *The Wall Street Journal Europe* (December 15-16, 2000), 1 & 9.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. "Combative Gore and Bush Set Out Positions in Spirited Debate," *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (October 19, 2000), 32.
41. "Too Close to Call," *The Asian Wall Street Journal* (November 7, 2000), 1 & 6.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., 1 & 6.
44. Joseph McCarthy, a Republican Senator from Wisconsin, was in the forefront of the movement alleging that the Democratic administration of Truman was tolerant of domestic communists in the U.S. In 1950 he alleged that he had a list of 205 known communists currently working in the US State Department. He generated anti-communist fervour in the country which has come to be known as McCarthyism in the American history. For details please see Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation*, 870-871 and 905-906.
45. "Bush Admits to Drink Driving Arrest," *The Star*, Kuala Lumpur (November 4, 2000), 25, also see the story entitled, "Lawyer Who Revealed Bush Arrest a Democrat," on the same page of The Star.
46. "Bush Sets up Faith-based Office," *The Star*, Kuala Lumpur, (January 30, 2001), 20.