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Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority. By Robert Mason. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004; pp 304. \$39.95.

In this welcome contribution to the history of Richard Nixon's complex presidency, Robert Mason directs our attention to Nixon's multifaceted efforts to activate the "silent majority" and create an enduring partisan electoral realignment. Where other studies of Nixon's presidency may discount Nixon's attempts to build a lasting electoral coalition (presumably because his majority-building project collapsed utterly in the face of Watergate), Mason insists on bringing the question of what Nixon did and how he did it front and center. In his own quest to narrate the Nixon story in an innovative way, Mason unquestionably succeeds. This book is a well-executed study of a pivotal presidency at an important crossroads in modern American political development.

Thanks to his in-depth archival research, Mason is able to pull back the curtain and reveal the calculations made and strategies developed by Nixon and his team to expand the president's 1968 plurality, cut into traditional Democratic constituencies, and build a new electoral coalition for his reelection bid in 1972. Nixon's majority-building plan included a wide range of presidential activities—crafting innovative policies, practicing the art of symbolic politics, using strategic rhetoric, and building new organizational forms. Thankfully, Mason is sensitive to the methodological problem of assuming that every presidential policy choice or political decision is motivated by electoral calculations or is part of a majority-building plan (indeed, how can we ever know, in any systematic way, whether a certain presidential action is motivated by principle or strategic calculation?). Instead, Mason uses this complication productively to show how Nixon's brand of politics could come to mean so many different things to so many different people.

Generally, normative judgments about Nixon's political style have already been made and opinions of the deposed president hold firm in the public mind. For most readers, the hard lessons of Nixon's aggressive presidential politics are all too familiar. What distinguishes Mason's fine study is that it reaches beyond these problems to draw out more from Nixon's leadership than will probably be familiar to most readers. Indeed, as Mason demonstrates, Nixon was actually striving to accomplish more than his own reelection. He was aiming to build something bigger than himself, something more enduring than his brief tenure in the White House (of course, Nixon knew not how brief at the time). The new majority Nixon envisioned was not only intended to reflect the president's personal political purposes and stand as a testament to his own leadership skills, it was to be a durable electoral coalition that would effectively entrench the Republican Party in the councils of

government well into the future. Indeed, Nixon's quest for a new majority was personal but also deeply partisan, Nixon's own ambivalence for the Republican Party proper notwithstanding. Mason sees Nixon's efforts as part and parcel—a cause and a result—of a broader historical development: a gradual shift toward conservatism in the American polity. While Nixon's quest ultimately produced only the appearance of a conservative majority and not the real thing, his *attempt* to realign politics, Mason argues, is worthy of examination on its own merits.

It is telling that Mason begins his history with Goldwater's launch of modern conservatism in 1964 rather than with the hybrid conservatism Nixon developed for his failed 1960 bid for the presidency. Rather than locating the significance of the Nixon case in the man's personal history—in his individual development of a political identity—Mason treats Nixon's quest for a new majority as an important element in the long rise of the conservative political movement. Nixon emerges not as a president driven by fundamental commitments but as a pragmatist who, standing in the cross-currents of history, tried to position himself just so; as one who sought to maximize his ability to influence the political winds and shape the political landscape according to his own designs. Indeed, partly because Nixon was no pure conservative ideologue—his “conservatism was tempered by pragmatic reformism” (210)—his contribution to conservative political developments was a mixed bag.

Even though he lacked doctrinal purity, the increasing vulnerability of liberalism as a governing philosophy and the weakening of the political commitments that had previously tied together the electoral coalition of the New Deal Democratic Party offered Nixon political opportunities to exploit in the late 1960s. The quest for a new majority is thus the story of a history-conscious president who “believed that the times offered great potential” (37) and who aimed to score his points and add adherents wherever he could. Then, he hoped, he would be able to infuse his new base of support with a political identity distinct enough to perpetuate itself in the future. Nixon had high hopes of consolidating his electoral majority into a new Republican Party in his image, but was ultimately left with only a brief window in between his reelection and his downfall in which to accomplish it. By April 1973, the demands of scandal management all but eliminated his capacity to build coalition ties to last.

As Mason tells it, the holes Nixon punctured in the Democratic coalition provided the opening through which Reagan would later climb. While Mason seems to want to argue the counter-factual that Nixon's new majority, if successful, would have been qualitatively different from the conservative majority Reagan would later build, perhaps the more important point is that Nixon's quest for a new majority was more than a historical deviation, more than an

interregnum. Rather, it made a significant contribution toward the articulation of a persuasive conservative attack on New Deal liberalism—an essential and consequential, if not conclusive, leg in the journey from FDR to Reagan.

The only limitations of the study are of the author's own choosing—Mason conspicuously leaves open the big questions; he leaves to the reader the task of figuring out how transportable or generalizable the lessons learned from the Nixon case could be. For example, what does the Nixon case tell us about the problems of building a new political majority in America in general? Can it be done from the White House? Do Nixon's efforts constitute a unique case? Mason seems to suggest that there may be an inherent conflict between building a president's reelection constituency and building a new American consensus, between that which is personal and that which is collective, but it is not clear where the line is drawn between the two.

Moreover, how "shapable" are American voters, after all? Was there a latent constituency waiting to be picked up and given a reason to vote 'R' instead of 'D' during the late '60s and early '70s, or did Nixon create it by articulating it? To what extent can strong leadership transcend and reshape established political patterns and allegiances? How extraordinary were Nixon's efforts, and how do they stand up against others who have tried similar feats?

In this book, Mason offers a solid down payment on these and related inquiries, and this new single-volume Nixon history is worthy of serious attention.

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Metaphorical World Politics. Edited by Francis A. Beer and Christ'l De Landtsheer. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2004; pp ix + 342. \$29.95.

American political discourse is replete with metaphorical depictions of foreign policy. Metaphors such as containment, the Cold War, isolationism, balance of power, globalization, and New World Order contextualize the way policy makers constitute the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world. In *Metaphorical World Politics*, Francis Beer and Christ'l De Landtsheer present an edited collection of essays that explore the way in which metaphors mediate relationships between countries. *Metaphorical World Politics* provides historical index of the metaphors that have guided and shaped American foreign policy in the public arena for the past 50 years.

A major strength of the book is the blend of rhetorical and international relations theory: the introduction argues that "the power of metaphor is the power to understand and impose political order. Metaphors reflect, interpret,