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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE TRADEMARK TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

Proceeding	91194679
Party	Plaintiff John P. Avlon
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**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE TRADEMARK TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD**

In the matter of application Serial No. 77/514,179
Published in the *Official Gazette* on December 29, 2009

JOHN PHILLIPS AVLON,
an individual

Opposer,

v.

DEMARCUS FREEMON,
an individual

Applicant.

Opposition No. 91194679

United States Patent and Trademark Office
Trademark Trial and Appeal Board
P.O. Box 1451
Alexandria, VA 22313-1451

OPPOSER'S SECOND NOTICE OF RELIANCE

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 2.122(e), Opposer, John P. Avlon, hereby submits, and gives notice of its reliance on, the following printed publications:

Title	Publication Date	Publisher	Trial Ex. No.
Independent Nation (Hardcover)	2/24/04	Harmony	3
Independent Nation (Paperback)	2/22/05	Three Rivers Press	4
Policy 101 As Rudy Crams With The Pros	2/27/07	The New York Post	5
His Best Speech	11/21/08	The New York Post	6
Americans Elect Throws in the Election Towel	5/18/12	The Moderate Voice	7
CNN Hires Independent Analyst Writer John Avlon as Commentator	5/14/10	The Moderate Voice	8
Pop Music as an Economic Indicator	March 2010 – April 2010	The Futurist	9
Point of Contact	11/2/08	The Dallas Morning News	10
A Nation of Free Agents	9/3/06	The Washington Post	11
Rudy's Big Bank	5/1/06	Daily News	12
A House Divided	2/20/06	U.S. News and World Report	13

Seeking balance in an either-or world; Independents prime for calling the shots	4/20/05	Chicago Tribune	14
The Center Does Hold	4/18/04	The New York Post	15
The Middle Misread	4/6/04	The Washington Post	16
Holding the Center	2/24/04	The New York Sun	17

Exhibits 3-17 are relevant to at least the similarity of the parties' marks, likelihood of confusion, Opposer's priority of use and the scope of Opposer's services. Attached hereto are the relevant portions of those exhibits.

Dated: August 14, 2012

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN PHILLIPS AVLON

By: /Robert Barz/
One of His Attorneys

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned, an attorney, hereby certifies that a copy of the foregoing **OPPOSER'S SECOND NOTICE OF RELIANCE** is being electronically served to Herbert T. Patty, Esq. at htpattylaw@gmail.com and deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first-class mail this 14th day of August 2012 in an envelope addressed to Applicant's counsel at:

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 /Robert Barz/
Robert Barz, Esq.

Independent

Nation

HOW THE VITAL CENTER IS CHANGING AMERICAN POLITICS

JOHN P. AVLON

With a fighting spirit, fresh perspective, and flashes of humor, John P. Avlon tells the story of the vital center in American politics, from Theodore Roosevelt to the present day. *Independent Nation* is a rallying cry for the moderate majority of Americans who are tired of the intolerant voices on the far right and far left, choosing instead to walk an independent path between these extremes in the belief that what we share as Americans is far greater than what divides us.

“Effective leadership requires independence and courage to look beyond partisan politics for the best solution. John P. Avlon’s *Independent Nation* details the history of principled political leaders—from Theodore Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower to Daniel Patrick Moynihan and George W. Bush—who fearlessly took on special interests from both the left and right in defense of the national interest. It offers much-needed historic perspective on our pursuit of a more civil society.”

—RUDOLPH W. GIULIANI



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ISBN 1-4000-5023-5



JOHN P. AVLON

INDEPENDENT

NATION

HOW CENTRISTS CAN CHANGE AMERICAN POLITICS

“A rewarding portrait of a political trend the established parties have tried to ignore.”—*BARRON'S*





6 of 25 DOCUMENTS

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The New York Post

February 27, 2007 Tuesday

SECTION: Late City Final; Pg. 4

LENGTH: 375 words

HEADLINE: POLICY 101 AS RUDY CRAMS WITH THE PROS

BYLINE: MAGGIE HABERMAN

BODY:

Presidential hopeful Rudy Giuliani is going back to school - with weekly policy briefings from a team of experts who pore over everything from Iraq to tax cuts at his headquarters.

Dubbed "Simon University" by some in Giuliani's camp, the policy team is led by Bill Simon, an associate from Giuliani's Justice Department days and conservative businessman who ran for California governor in 2002.

"It's a pretty small group, and we convene a couple of times a week generally," Simon told The Post, describing the team as a growing work in progress.

The core team comprises:

* James Piereson, president of the conservatism-boosting William E. Simon Foundation.

* John Avlon, a speechwriter in Giuliani's City Hall and author of "Independent Nation" who works full time for the ex-mayor's exploratory committee.

* Michael Boskin, former chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers who's currently a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Giuliani's also gotten advice from former deputy mayors Joe Lhota, Bob Harding and Tony Coles and former adviser Richard Schwartz.

There's also Stephen Goldsmith, the former mayor of Indianapolis and a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank.

Several insiders described the briefings as similar to the lead-up to Giuliani's 1993 mayoral win, when he spent

three years after his 1989 loss beefing up on city issues.

Giuliani is the lone private citizen and one-time local office holder in a presidential field dominated by former and sitting senators, all of whom have some level of foreign-policy experience because of their jobs.

Giuliani has offered just one policy proposal, about an Iraq jobs program, and he's already been questioned about whether he'll be up to speed.

In a speech at the Hoover Institution in Washington yesterday, Giuliani was quizzed about foreign-policy credentials and insisted he has them. "What makes you think that the mayor of New York City doesn't need a foreign policy?" he quipped to laughter. Citing his globe-trotting over the last five years, Giuliani also insisted he understood world issues while at City Hall, saying, "It's something that I think I know . . . as well as anybody else who's running for president, probably better than a lot."

LOAD-DATE: February 27, 2007



2 of 25 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 2008 N.Y.P. Holdings, Inc.
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The New York Post

November 21, 2008 Friday

SECTION: All Editions; Pg. 14

LENGTH: 67 words

HEADLINE: HIS BEST SPEECH

BODY:

THE bride will be on the right at this ceremony. Fox News contributor and Bill O'Reilly favorite Margaret Hoover - great-granddaughter of President Herbert Hoover - is engaged to marry John P. Avlon, a former Rudy Giuliani speechwriter and frequent New York Post op-ed contributor. Avlon, a centrist who wrote "Independent Nation," proposed on bent knee in Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park in lower Manhattan.

GRAPHIC: UMA THURMAN PLAYS THE ROLE OF A CRIMINAL BY PUTTING HER HANDS ABOVE HER HEAD AT JURY APPRECIATION DAY YESTERDAY AT THE 60 CENTRE ST. COURTHOUSE. (Steven Hirsch)

LOAD-DATE: November 21, 2008



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The Moderate Voice

May 18, 2012 Friday 1:30 AM EST

LENGTH: 740 words

HEADLINE: Americans Elect Throws in the Election Towel

BODY:

Could this be an example of an idea whose time has not come or may never come the way our political system and the thirst for politics that also doubles as anger-funneling entertainment is set up? American s Elect has, in effect, thrown in the election towel. From an email (also is on this URL).

Statement by Americans Elect

May 17, 2012

There is a desire among Delegates and millions of Americans who have supported Americans Elect to see a credible candidate emerge from this process.

However, the rules, as developed in consultation with the Americans Elect Delegates, are clear. As of this week, no candidate achieved the national support threshold required to enter the Americans Elect Online Convention in June. The primary process for the Americans Elect nomination has come to an end.

Americans Elect, from the outset, has been a rules-based process, with the rules publicly available and open to debate by the Delegates. Our key priorities have been to: 1) honor the trust Americans Elect has built with the Delegates and American public; 2) require candidates to earn the nomination by building support among the Americans Elect Delegate community and American voters; and 3) create a basis for a solid future for the Americans Elect movement.

This decision honors these priorities.

Through the efforts of thousands of staffers, volunteers and leadership, Americans Elect has achieved its operational goals, including:

- Creating a pathway for nationwide ballot access for a balanced presidential ticket

unaffiliated with the nominating process of either major party to compete in the

2012 race;

- Building the technological platform for the first nonpartisan secure national online primary at AmericansElect.org;
- Attracting a significant base of more than 4 million supporters, including Delegates, petition signers and volunteers;
- Educating the national and local media on the Americans Elect mission; and
- Finishing an extensive candidate briefing program involving more than 100 potential candidates.

As always, we thank everyone who has helped build this organization and are grateful for the work, efforts, and trust so many people have placed in Americans Elect. We are continuing the Americans Elect mission of creating more choice in our political system, giving candidates unaffiliated with the nominating process of either major party an authentic way to run for office and giving the American people a greater voice in our political process.

I've always been one who has mixed feelings on third parties. I lived in India and post-Franco Spain, plus I visited and stayed briefly in Great Britain. Additionally, my favorite courses at Colgate University were the comparative politics courses (political science courses about other political systems) taught by my favorite professor, Dr. Marcus Franda. I've been fascinated with countries that had a wide variety of parties.

But without going into detail in this post as a student of American politics it seems clear our system is rigged against third parties. On top of that you have to add our current political culture where the center and bipartisanship are under attack and the fact that you need a charismatic, sound bite getting candidate who can get widespread new and old media attention to spark and communicate excitement so that policies and political personality override American's reluctance to vote for a party that isn't a D or R.

And, today, any third party candidate will have to have it in him or her to compete with America's talk radio political culture where the worst sin is stopping to think and weigh or to say on the other hand. This is a factor that is often not taken into an account. The personality will be important to attain the goal.

There most likely IS a third party in America's future that can be successful. But it will take (1) a special personality coupled with (2) tons of money in this Citizen's United polity world, (4) solid ideas and (5) disgust with the two major political parties.

We know the last of those factors is already there. As is the need for another party. Now if Americans want it they can fill in the rest of the blanks.

The lingering question is whether they really, truly, honestly want to

OF RELATED INTEREST: THREE MUST READ AND BOOKMARK websites by people who are serious students of third parties and independent voters:

John Avlon (whose book Independent Nation is a classic)

Resurrecting Democracy

The Hankster

LOAD-DATE: May 17, 2012



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May 14, 2010 Friday 11:43 AM EST

LENGTH: 964 words

HEADLINE: CNN Hires Independent Analyst Writer John Avlon As Commentator

BYLINE: JOE GANDELMAN, Editor-In-Chief

BODY:

May 14, 2010 (The Moderate Voice delivered by Newstex) --

/wordpress-engine/files//2010/05/0.jpgoe>

One of the big complaints that independent voters, moderates and centrists have long had about cable news is that they often only offer left and right or Democrats and Republicans commentary on issues and events. It's as if the center or those MANY Americans who don't belong to either party don't exist.

CNN, which has had independent voters on its panel discussions (I've been on several of them) has now formally rectified that problem on its network: it has hired independent analyst and author John Avlon as a staff commentator "now assuring that the network employee roster includes commentators that better reflect the realities of American politics where not only Democrats and Republicans but independent voters play key roles. Here's part of the official press release as run on TV Newser:

John Avlon, a political columnist who specializes in the analysis of the country's independent movement, will serve as a CNN political contributor, it was announced today by David Bohrman, CNN senior vice president of Washington programming and bureau chief. Avlon will appear on the full line-up of CNN programming as part of the network's diverse group of analysts and contributors.

"Elections are won and lost in the center and having a voice like John that understands centrist philosophy is critical for political conversations," said Bohrman. "With CNN's commitment to go above and beyond the political spin, John will be able to provide necessary perspective and insight to the network's viewers."

"I'm honored to join CNN as part of [the] best political team on television," said Avlon. "As an independent voter and a centrist, CNN is the network which best reflects my values. I'll continue to stand up to the extremes of both

sides"while trying to restore a sense of humor and historic perspective to our political debates"in the belief that most Americans want to move our country not left or right, but forward."

For the past year, Avlon has made regular appearances on CNN, including launching the "Wingnuts of the Week" segment on American Morning. In addition to writing about the independent movement as a senior political columnist for TheDailyBeast.com, Avlon has authored books on the subject, titled Independent Nation: How Centrists Can Change American Politics and Wingnuts: How the Lunatic Fringe is Hijacking America. He also served as chief speechwriter and deputy policy director for Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Additionally, Avlon has served as a columnist and associate editor for the New York Sun. Avlon received an MBA from Columbia University, and a B.A. degree from Yale University.

One of the key differences between Avlon and some other contributors and talking heads is this: in some recent reports Avlon would travel and do actual reporting and interviews, versus the more typical role of a talk head on a cable network where panel members will give their opinion and analysis. (Yours truly was on a MSNBC segment as a talking head several years ago and on CNN as part of an independent voter panel several times earlier this year).

Avlons writing is further proof to what weve often said here: because someone is an independent voter or moderate does not mean not taking a stand and not being passionate about issues, trends or events. Avlon has written some strong posts on The Daily Beast and his CNN Wingnuts segments blasted both sides " with some people on each side (notably Rush Limbaugh and Keith Olbermann) suggesting hes really a partisan for the other side. Go to the links and watch the videos.

Accusing an independent, centrist or moderate of really being on the other side is the typical attack line used on independents, centrists and moderates when someone disagrees with them and tries to discredit them rather than answer an argument or counter criticism: to some unless you totally agree with them you MUST be working for the other side, dishonest or manipulative. (I tell the story of the local Air America affiliated talk show host who invited me on his show several years ago, asked me questions and then he and his cohost mockingly talked over me when they asked me how anyone can be a moderate " suggesting that since I had worked as a staff reporter for the San Diego Union I was really a Republican since I was not as far left as they were and saying things such as oea moderate case of cancer;a moderate car crash?They didnt let me talk, talked over me each time I tried to answer and then cut me off and hung up " somewhat symbolic of how American politics in general may work.)

Avlon will be on Bill Mahers show tonight. His two books are virtually REQUIRED READING for independents, centrists and moderates. We have the Independent Nation icon as one of the few on the right template of TMV since it is one of the best books ever written about independent voters in terms of style, content, analysis and readability. His new book Wingnuts: How the Lunatic Fringe is Hijacking America (Amazon icon at the bottom of this post) is a no-holds-barred look at the politics of polarization and demonization, its roots and extremes and is also written in a cant-put-it-down style but also crammed with solid content and analysis. (I will do an extensive review of this book in coming weeks).

The big news for independent voters is that a cable network has finally FORMALLY acknowledged that there is a point of view that isnt the sharp left or the sharp right and that there may be voters who dont consider themselves conservatives or liberals.

Theres voters to exist " and now that perspective will be offered to viewers who can accept it or reject it.

But by hiring Avalon CNN has acknowledged that as a corporation it sees it.

Newstex ID: MODV-0001-45007968

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LOAD-DATE: May 14, 2010



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The Futurist

March 2010 - April 2010

SECTION: WORLD TRENDS & FORECASTS; Pg. 10 Vol. 44 No. 2 ISSN: 0016-3317

ACC-NO: 22993

LENGTH: 1170 words

HEADLINE: Pop Music as an Economic Indicator

BYLINE: Tucker, Patrick

BODY:

ABSTRACT

That long hemlines accompany a bad economy is an old saying in the fashion industry. Today, most experts regard hemline theory as fanciful, but a number of social theorists agree that trends in fashion, movies, or music do reflect public sentiment, which can influence stock market direction. William Higham, author of *The Next Big Thing: Spotting and Forecasting Consumer Trends for Profit*, argues that the down economy and grumpy public sentiment forecasts an angry music wave in the coming year. However, economics is not the sole cause, says Higham. The next music fad will take more than one form, he believes. Jon P. Avlon, author of *Independent Nation*, agrees that the public mood is bad and getting worse, and mainstream media will only exacerbate the grumpiness. Visible changes in fashion, television, movies, and particularly pop music cannot only reflect a nation's economic circumstances, but predict them as well, according to scholars with the Socionomics Institute.

FULL TEXT

Culture

Changing tastes may reflect market mood.

That long hemlines accompany a bad economy is an old saying in the fashion industry. Today, most experts regard hemline theory as fanciful, but a number of social theorists agree that trends in fashion, movies, or music do reflect public sentiment, which can influence stock market direction. Theoretically at least, new fads could point to shifting economic conditions. But finding the exact correlation between changing music tastes and economic performance is

anything but easy.

William Higham, author of *The Next Big Thing: Spotting and Forecasting Consumer Trends for Profit* (Kogan Page, 2009), argues that the down economy and grumpy public sentiment forecasts an angry music wave in the coming year. However, economics is not the sole cause, says Higham. The next music fad will take more than one form, he believes.

"Consumers' current mood, which blends confused, afraid, angry, and determined, is due to a mix of financial hardship, anger at being let down by politicians and big business, continuing fear of world events, the speed of technological/social change, and a reassessment of work/life priorities," Higham told THE FUTURIST.

Jon P. Avlon, author of *Independent Nation* (Three Rivers Press, 2005), agrees that the public mood is bad and getting worse, and mainstream media will only exacerbate the grumpiness. The angry rhetoric rocking the airwaves and cable channels across the United States, the protestor clashes outside the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change, and the Tea Party rallies that have lately sprung up in Washington, D.C., are a "reflection of a larger trend, the fragmentation of modern media, which has had an ironic effect on the way we get our information," he wrote to THE FUTURIST. "The best ratings are achieved by [TV and radio] hosts who cultivate narrow but intense niche audiences. This has helped pump up the hate and hyper-partisanship we see today."

Higham argues that previous eras of socioeconomic flux had two distinct and separate effects on pop culture. Mainstream music (which appeals more to baby boomers) became more quiet, subdued, and quaint, whereas "alternative" music, marketed primarily to younger people, became louder and more primal.

"Socioeconomic problems drove rock in the 1960s, heavy rock and punk in the 1970s, gangsta rap in the late 1980s, and grunge in the 1990s. So the new consumer mood will, I believe, drive a rise in both more aggressively patriotic mainstream roots music (the soundtrack to Tea Party anger) and more angry, dissonant Alternative music (the soundtrack to environmental protest)," he said.

Visible changes in fashion, television, movies, and particularly pop music can not only reflect a nation's economic circumstances, but predict them as well, according to scholars with the Socionomics Institute.

In the October 2009 issue of *The Socionomist*, authors Matt Lampert and Euan Wilson claim that the commercial success of particular types of popular culture items - the music, movies, and TV shows that big-name clothiers and studios market to the public - can indicate stock market changes. When the public's "social mood" and popular culture are both good, then upbeat or even vapid entertainment fare becomes the rage and the economy is likely in or about to enter a bullish cycle. Teen or tween pop acts such as the Jonas Brothers, Miley Cyrus, and High School Musical epitomized the bull market for stocks following the 2002 recession, say Lampert and Wilson. Supporting their theory, they point to the commercial success of 1980s bubblegum pop musicians such as Michael Jackson and Cyndi Lauper during a period of economic growth.

When both popular culture and social mood are down, movies, television, and music will trend toward the dark, gritty, dissatisfied, and potentially innovative; in a word, bearish. Lampert and Wilson attribute the rise of Seattle grunge aesthetic during the early 1990s to the recession that began in 1987, and the rise of punk rock in the mid-1970s to falling affluence and economic stagnation of that decade, particularly the 1970 to 1973 period.

A diminished stock market, high unemployment, and unprecedented government intervention that characterized the 2008 and 2009 economic environment portends terribly for social mood going forward. Recent poll numbers indicate as much. Some 55% of Americans think the country is on the wrong track, and 66% say that they aren't confident that their children's lives will be better than their own (as opposed to 27% who are confident), according to a Wall Street Journal/NBC poll from December. Yet, popular music in the United States remained "planted in bull territory" during this time. The disconnect suggests a pop culture lag. Forecast: Expect further stock market losses and a downbeat music wave.

"The continued reign of light popular music is an indicator that stocks are high, not low," write Lampert and Wilson. "Coincident socioeconomic indicators convey compatible messages, and we can use one to validate the other.... At minimum, when social mood turns negative, lyrical themes will become dark and melody will diminish. Many performers who play discordant, experimental styles will find an audience. A genre even more aggressive than punk will ultimately emerge."

Whether music is becoming angrier, lighter, more primal, or more quaint is no easy determination in an environment where cultural trends can be measured using an ever-wider array of metrics. And music fads will remain an imprecise (at best) indicator of stock market performance into the foreseeable future, according to other sociologists.

"I think there might be a correlation," says Higham, "but it would be a brave man to bet [his] portfolio on a number one hit album." - Patrick Tucker

SIDEBAR

The popularity of bubblegum pop acts like the Grammy-nominated electro hip-hop duo LMFAO represents a future stock market collapse; a listening public that is "confused," "afraid," "angry," and "determined"; all; or none of the above.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Sources: The Socionomist (October 2009), www.socionomics.net.

The Next Big Thing: Spotting and Forecasting Consumer Trends for Profit by William Highham. Kogan Page, 2009. 261 pages. \$29.95.

Personal interviews.

GRAPHIC: Photographs

LOAD-DATE: March 1, 2010



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THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

November 2, 2008 Sunday
FIRST EDITION

SECTION: POINTS; POINT OF CONTACT; Pg. 1P

LENGTH: 445 words

HEADLINE: POINT OF CONTACT

BODY:

Our Q&A with John Avlon, author of "Independent Nation: How Centrists Can Change American Politics."

In 2004, we heard about parties and their bases, particularly the Republican base. This year, we're hearing about independents. Why the shift?

Because independents are the electorate's largest, fastest-growing segment. Both John McCain and Barack Obama won their nominations largely by running against playing to the base and preaching about reaching across the partisan divide. It's not just the right thing to do, its smart politics.

Independents now outnumber Republicans or Democrats in six states: Colorado, Iowa, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts. In some of the fastest-growing states - California, Florida and Nevada - their numbers have increased 300 percent over the past 20 years, while the parties have flat-lined.

The parties are deeply divided, but Americans are not - and independents' explosive growth directly results from this disconnect.

You've studied independents. Who are they?

Independents tend to be fiscally conservative, socially progressive and strong on national security. They put patriotism ahead of partisanship and the national interest over special interests. This is the common-sense center - not the screamers on either side. Independents, particularly, are growing among voters 45 and under. They don't want an inflexible ideology.

The parties have become more polarized since the late 1960s, and it doesn't fit the way most people live today. We

are in a culture with individualized choice everywhere, and yet conventional partisan politics is the last place Americans are expected to like a choice between Brand A and Brand B. The parties are playing by Industrial Age rules; they haven't woken up to Information Age reality.

McCain was doing well with independents after the conventions, but he now trails among them. Why?

He's suffering from Bush backlash. Mr. McCain's 2000 campaign was heroic to many independents, and he has forged coalitions as a senator. But independents broke with President Bush because he's been fiscally liberal, socially conservative and failed to unite America. This was compounded by the overspending, corruption and ideological excesses in Tom Delay's Congress.

Mr. McCain's been running against that record, but he's trying to defy political gravity. His problems were compounded by Sarah Palin, who's energized the base at the expense of the center.

But here's what conservatives need to appreciate if they go into the wilderness: Mr. McCain's running ahead of the damaged Republican brand because of his independence, not in spite of it.

E-mail John Avlon through www.independentnation.org.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO(S): John Avlon.

LOAD-DATE: November 2, 2008



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Copyright 2006 The Washington Post

The Washington Post
washingtonpost.com

The Washington Post

September 3, 2006 Sunday
Final Edition

SECTION: Outlook; B02

LENGTH: 1123 words

HEADLINE: A Nation of Free Agents

BYLINE: Marc Ambinder

BODY:

For the first time since presidential candidate Ross Perot won nearly 19 percent of the vote in 1992, technology, egos and politics are colluding to lower the barriers to entry for credible independent candidates for national office.

Signs abound that voters are moving beyond the two major parties and testing the free-agent market. And politicians are responding; the put-yourself-above-partisanship orientation is spreading, even during this midterm election season, when candidates typically seek to rouse the passions of their partisans.

This trend goes far beyond Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Conn.), who could become the first mainstream incumbent elected as an independent senator in 30 years. Take conservative Sen. James M. Talent (R-Mo.). The first television ad of his reelection campaign began with a narrator cautioning that "most people don't care if you're red or blue. Republican or Democrat. They don't use words like 'partisan' or 'obstructionist.'" Or Sen. Lincoln D. Chafee (R-R.I.), who told voters in an ad that "I believe that neither Republicans nor Democrats are always right. I angered Republicans when I voted against the war in Iraq, and Democrats when I voted for legal reform."

The message is clear: Our candidate will work for you, not for a party.

Gallup polls suggest that voters' willingness to reelect incumbents is at one of the lowest levels in half a century. Independent voters comprise about 10 percent of the electorate, but the percentage of persuadable independents has shot

up to about 30 percent. In the 27 states that register voters by party, self-declared independents grew from 8 percent of the registered electorate in 1987 to 24 percent in 2004, according to political analyst Rhodes Cook. Consistently, about 30 percent of U.S. voters tell pollsters they don't belong to a party.

John Avlon, author of "Independent Nation," has noted that nearly 39 percent of Iowa voters are registered independents. And among new registrants in New Hampshire, 85 percent decline to identify with a political party. A swing state such as Pennsylvania has nearly 1 million independent voters; Florida has almost twice that many who refuse to register R or D.

One theory -- held mainly by Republicans -- is that these new independents are just closet liberals who are ashamed to be identified as such. Instead of adopting a cleaner euphemism (say, "progressive"), these voters mask their Democratic identity with an inoffensive term such as "moderate." A second view suggests that these voters hail from American suburbia, their wide, manicured lawns separating them from the old-line Democratic city machines and inward-looking pockets of conservatives.

Neither explanation tells the full story. These non-affiliated voters tend to be less fiscally liberal than the Democratic mean and less socially conservative than the Republican mean. And regardless of whether non-affiliated voters lean in any particular direction, there is evidence that their influence is growing just as key instruments of party control are breaking down.

Republicans couldn't prevent a nasty gubernatorial primary in Florida. An upstart almost succeeded in upending the governor of Nebraska. A state senator was inches away from petitioning himself onto the ballot against the Republican governor of South Carolina. Democrats in Massachusetts tried to anoint a front-runner, the state's attorney general, who is now third in the polls in the gubernatorial race. Conservative activists are challenging their establishment through a proxy war in Rhode Island; Chafee is in real danger of losing his GOP primary to insurgent Steve Laffey, the mayor of Cranston. These same forces defeated Rep. John J. "Joe" Schwarz (R-Mich.), who was endorsed by President Bush, first lady Laura Bush and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

Both parties have well-financed internal agitators who yank tight the chains of ideological discipline -- think of MoveOn.Org on the left and the Club for Growth on the right. Democrats are re-fighting the decades-old battle between centrists and liberals. The Republican base is fracturing around fiscal probity, immigration and cultural issues.

As the distance between the parties widens, plenty of voters are left outside both circles.

The Democratic and Republican parties profess not to worry, but they are tripping over themselves to figure out how to reach these free agents. Presidential hopefuls for 2008 in both parties have settled on pragmatism as a grand narrative. Both McCain and Rudolph W. Giuliani self-consciously parade their independence. The Democratic candidate of the moment, former Virginia governor Mark R. Warner, unabashedly renounces orthodox philosophy as he travels around the country, as does Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.). Potential presidential hopeful Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) regularly calls on voters to reject the ideological thinking she attributes to Republicans.

Meanwhile, the parties are spending millions on the latest fads, such as "micro-targeting" to divine voting behavior from auto purchases. But technology cuts both ways: More than ever, voters have the technological resources to consider their political choices more deeply and to seek out new alternatives to those provided by the conventional media and the two parties.

Also, would-be candidates can raise money more easily. The Internet revolution permits geographically separated free agents to find new allies -- Democrat Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign was just the beginning. Getting on the ballot has always been a challenge for independents; now it's much easier, via the Web, to find voters to sign ballot-access petitions.

Another signal that the potential for a system shakeup is serious: The smart people in both parties are seeking to

profit from it. Strategists behind the polarizing presidential elections of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have co-founded an Internet startup, HotSoup.com, that aims to harness the anxiety in the electorate. A flash movie on its Web site poses these questions: "Why don't leaders lead anymore?" and "Does anyone care about my opinion?"

Co-founder Mark McKinnon, Bush's media adviser, told the Los Angeles Times that "there's a real appetite out there for less partisanship . . . for less screaming and yelling." Which is much the way Lieberman summed up his appeal as he began the second half of his race against Ned Lamont: "People are fed up with the petty partisanship and angry bickering in Washington. It is continually blocking progress on major problems and wasting America's greatness."

He may be on to something.

mambinder@nationaljournal.com

Marc Ambinder is associate editor of the Hotline.

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LOAD-DATE: September 3, 2006



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May 1, 2006 Monday
SPORTS FINAL EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; DAILY POLITICS; Pg. 6

LENGTH: 724 words

HEADLINE: OPEN: RUDY'S BIG BANK. Ex-mayor expands 'brand'

BYLINE: BY BEN SMITH

BODY:

"There are a lot of high-class investment-banking boutiques out there, but we really thought there was room for another one that we could build off the back of this brand.

The "brand" is Rudy Giuliani. The latest "high-class investment-banking boutique" is Giuliani Capital Advisors, a 110-person investment bank run by Steven Oesterle, whose comment appears above.

And the Bank of Rudy is thriving.

Today, while Giuliani meets Republicans in Iowa, the investment bank will announce hiring its latest managing director, a sign of rapid growth.

Court filings show Giuliani Capital Advisors has collected millions of dollars in fees and expenses from bankrupt companies. The filings open a rare window into the former mayor's new empire, which includes a law firm and the consultancy Giuliani Partners.

Many retired politicians get rich by dabbling in business, but Giuliani has emerged as something else: a tycoon. For all the speculation about his running for President, his business interests are vast and absorbing. Even his political trip to Iowa is scheduled to coincide with a paid speech in Des Moines.

The political buzz is good for business, but many wonder if he can step off the money trail and back onto the campaign trail.

OPEN: RUDY'S BIG BANK. Ex-mayor expands 'brand' Daily News (New York) May 1, 2006 Monday

"He's building a real business, and I would assume that he's earning personally millions of dollars," said the investor Wilbur Ross. "A lot of times where he's brought in is where there's moral turpitude because he's the Good Housekeeping seal of approval on messy situations."

Much of Giuliani's work is confidential.

"We're in the private sector," said Giuliani aide Sunny Mindel. "We have clients about which you may not know anything."

After high-profile work for Mexico City and the pharmaceutical industry, Giuliani let his firm's profile sink below the buzz about his political future. It's been a year since Giuliani Partners issued a press release.

Court papers and other filings offer a glimpse at the banking business, in which Giuliani Partners has a controlling stake.

The firm's biggest bankruptcy client appears to be Delta Air Lines, which hired the company last September at a monthly rate of \$400,000. That's an industry-standard fee that still rankled pilots, who took pay cuts in the bankruptcy. In a January filing, Giuliani Partners requested \$20,343 for lodging and \$9,471 for business meals.

The firm charged Aloha Airlines about \$3million for work on its restructuring, and the same amount to the U.S. Airways creditors committee.

Giuliani Capital Advisors lists 36 deals on its Web site, most for midsize companies.

The firm advises other clients, Oesterle told the Daily News, and has its own investments. It owns 20% of a company selling energy-efficient lights to cities.

Giuliani Capital Advisors also collected a typical retainer for the lighting deal, \$150,000. That's more than Giuliani made in a year when he took over City Hall.

If he were to take over the White House? That pays \$400,000, a month's fee for Giuliani Capital Advisors.

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Giuliani is keeping the political torch lit. In fact, he's staffing up, hiring John Avlon, a former City Hall speechwriter, as communications director for his political action committee.

The move is a sign that despite courting his party's Christian right, Giuliani hasn't abandoned his urban, centrist roots.

Avlon is now a columnist for the New York Sun. His book "Independent Nation" makes the case for "the vital center," and he's a critic of President Bush's domestic policy. Among his model centrists is the man who popularized the phrase "vital center," Bill Clinton.

"It's an honor to be asked to go back and work with the mayor," Avlon said.

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Brooke Masters' biography of Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, due out in July, includes a catalogue of his ex-girlfriends. If he's elected governor, their résumés qualify them to form his first cabinet with his wife, Silda Wall Spitzer, who was a lawyer at a top Manhattan firm.

At Princeton University, Mr. Spitzer dated Anne-Marie Slaughter, who is now dean of Princeton's Woodrow

OPEN: RUDY'S BIG BANK. Ex-mayor expands 'brand' Daily News (New York) May 1, 2006 Monday

Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and the former Nadine Muskatel, now an oncologist and professor at Harvard Medical School. At Harvard, he dated Runa Alam, now a private equity fund manager.

Of the three women, only one, Slaughter, has written a check to his campaign for governor.

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GRAPHIC: RUDY GIULIANI AP

LOAD-DATE: May 1, 2006



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U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

February 20, 2006

SECTION: EDITORIAL; Pg. 72; Vol. 140, No. 6

LENGTH: 835 words

HEADLINE: A House Divided

BYLINE: Mortimer B. Zuckerman, Editor in Chief

HIGHLIGHT:

BODY:

Our national conversation has become too shrill, too polarized, too inflamed, too predictable, too divisive, and altogether too inimical to our national interest. On the larger canvas of our political culture wars, the stinging exchange of letters between John McCain and Barack Obama over ways to root out lobbying corruption on Capitol Hill is no more than a mere skirmish. It was all the more depressing, however, because these two senators represent the best hope for a real revival of centrism, the rational bipartisan consensus that expresses the nation's will with force and eloquence and that has served America so well in its worst crises.

It is not just that President Bush is one of the most polarizing presidents in recent history. Conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans both are endangered species today, the ideological gap between the parties is growing, and the once large overlap between centrist Democrats and Republicans has virtually disappeared. And this polarization is not confined to the beltway. It has seeped out into the public at large, which now believes that the differences reflect fundamental views about who we are as Americans.

What is going on? Several currents are driving the tide. Party primaries, with low turnout, have come to be dominated by ideologues supported by special-interest groups that fund negative advertising. Winning elections has turned more on getting out the base vote--Karl Rove's winning strategy in 2004. Turnout is stimulated by wedge issues, which inflame the activists and often leave moderate voters unhappy at their choices. American opinion is less polarized than the parties' positions on highly charged social issues like abortion,

gay marriage, and school prayer.

Then there are the media. When TV broadcasting first hit its stride, Walter Cronkite on CBS and his counterparts on ABC and NBC created a kind of town hall meeting, a trusted consensus of values for the mediation of issues. Today, only 50 percent of Americans say they are very or fairly confident of the accuracy of the major media. The roots of the big change seem to me to lie in the way cable and radio have developed. In the old days, broadcasters were restrained by the "fairness doctrine," which more or less confined media to the middle of the ideological spectrum. That doctrine was effectively repealed with the advent of the cable news channels, which built audience by presenting programs with sharp partisan viewpoints, with opinion and invective served up as news. On-air conflict is described as "good TV," presumably trumping relevance, accuracy, and fairness. CNN's perceptive former anchor, Aaron Brown, put it well: "The fact is it's easier to cover the extremes; they make the most noise."

Talk radio aggravated the trend. It is listened to by about one sixth of the adult public and is overwhelmingly conservative, somewhat balanced by the liberal rationalism of National Public Radio. The Internet that has become such an important source of information for college students and graduates is largely polarized, too, coagulating on specific news blogs that thrive on gossip, speculation, and polemics. The cumulative result has been a decline in democracy toward a fragmented populism. People mobilize around smaller special interests and remove themselves from the search for the common good.

Heartbeat. With a mass media no longer able to provide the kind of cultural glue it once did, what holds a nation together? What is "public opinion," really, in an era of populism and fragmentation where a new aristocracy, the opinion makers, has such influence? The determination of what constitutes "public opinion" is crucial. John Lukacs, in his book *Democracy and Populism*, makes a strong case that it is "the accumulation of opinions that governs." The power of "public opinion" and "popular sentiment," selectively defined in polls and focus groups, too often overwhelms individual opinion.

The trends fit into a broader culture of relativism and spin where Oprah Winfrey defended a lying memoir as valuable, short-changing the importance and relevance of truth (before she had her own moment of truth and placed the wretched author under the klieg lights). When the values that prevail are those of the marketplace, and our political dialogue is timed to the drumbeat of the sports stadium, we are in trouble.

America has always flourished when it listens to the heartbeat of the people, when centrist leaders have sought consensus, as John P. Avlon vividly documents in his new history, *Independent Nation*. Today, America has unprecedented responsibilities, but it is difficult for a superpower to discharge these duties with its domestic political house in disarray. How different it was during World War II, which we fought as a united nation, against two enemies--Germany and Italy--that had not attacked us. Today, sadly, our divisions encourage our enemies, dishearten our allies, and sap our resolve. We must change gears.

GRAPHIC: Picture, no caption

LOAD-DATE: February 14, 2006



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Chicago Tribune

April 20, 2005 Wednesday
Chicago Final Edition

SECTION: COMMENTARY ; ZONE C; Pg. 27

LENGTH: 852 words

HEADLINE: Seeking balance in an either-or world;
Independents prime for calling the shots

BYLINE: Kathleen Parker, Tribune Media Services.

BODY:

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall catch hell from both sides."

--Sign on the office wall of Justice Department attorney Burke Marshall, 1964

In today's food-fight environment, where extremes dominate debate and choice is defined by either-or, finding a comfortable place to land is increasingly difficult.

Like most people I know, I tend to run screaming from both ends of the spectrum. Too conservative for the left wing and too liberal for the right, I find myself scrambling for the center aisle.

Yet, people in the middle often are held in contempt as fence-straddlers. If you're an opinion columnist, you're forced to pick a side. People want to know: Are you conservative or liberal? "It depends" is considered a weak answer, morally relativistic, lacking in backbone.

Abortion provides a convenient if unpalatable example. I've written dozens of columns through the years, more or less urging a pro-life position--having a baby forces a review of one's assumptions--while clinging to a pro-choice conclusion. Abortion is a terrible thing, I say, the violent termination of a life and a decision many women (and men) regret with time and perspective.

Nevertheless, I can find no way to justify government-enforced maternity. Under penalty of what? By whom? Under what circumstances? The practical applications of the moral ideal become nightmarish as we extrapolate to the real. Thus, one might hope to seek compromise. Can't a female who's old enough to samba deduce that she's pregnant and decide within, oh, six to eight weeks? This is, after all, not a "Gee whiz, I dunno" question.

In the spirit of compromise, I also can argue passionately in favor of tougher education standards when it comes to

Seeking balance in an either-or world; Independents prime for calling the shots Chicago Tribune April 20, 2005
Wednesday

abortion. If we can demonstrate how to use condoms to high school students, surely we can make vivid the pros and cons of abortion as birth control. In time, given what can't be ignored when abortion is studied up close, we'd accomplish the goal supported by most Americans (64 percent, according to Luntz Research Companies, August 2003) and articulated by President Bill Clinton: to make abortion safe, legal and rare.

My middle road, of course, makes me equally contemptible to those who dwell in the peripheries--both to the pro-lifers who view all abortion as murder, and to the slippery-slopers who consider objecting to "partial-birth abortion" tantamount to embracing the Vatican's view of the pill. Caught between extremes of community morality and individual choice--amid near-hysterical ideological partisanship from parties that have been hijacked by radicals--people like me are adrift.

Apparently, I'm not alone. Indeed, given current trends, we may declare that we have reached a perfect storm of political backlash. Americans who cleave to neither extreme--some 50 percent of whom identify themselves as "moderate"--are fed up with the Ann Coulter-Michael Moore school of debate and are looking for someone to articulate a commonsense middle path. They may have found their voice in John P. Avlon, a columnist and associate editor for the New York Sun, once the chief speechwriter for former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, whose 2004 book, "Independent Nation," has just been released in paperback.

Avlon insists that centrism is the more patriotic political position because it adheres more strictly to American values and founding principles than to ideology. A balance between idealism and realism, centrism is a yin-yang proposition that rejects shrill extremes and embraces reason, decency and a practical perspective. To those who insist that centrism is the death of dissent, Avlon argues that centrism is dissent--from outdated political orthodoxies.

"Extremists and ideological purists on either side of the political aisle condemn compromise," he writes. "But inflexibility either creates deadlock or dooms a cause to irrelevance."

That's from the introduction to "Independent Nation." The balance of the book is a compendium of short biographies of several U.S. presidents, senators and governors and their personal journeys as they illuminate the theme of centrism. Avlon says his purpose in writing the book was to give today's centrists a framework for understanding their frustration with extreme politics and a place for the politically homeless to hang their iPods. Or their heart monitors, as the case may be.

Extremists won't agree with Avlon that centrism is a patriotic position, but who cares? They've held the nation hostage long enough. Meanwhile, independents are the fastest-growing group of voters across the country, especially among the young, hundreds of whom have e-mailed Avlon since his recent appearance on "The Daily Show" with Comedy Central's Jon Stewart. A Pew Poll published last week in the Economist broke down voters as 39 percent independent, 31 percent Democrat and 30 percent Republican.

Socially liberal and fiscally conservative, independents could be a powerful reckoning force by 2008. Politicians better wise up and tone it down.

Kathleen Parker is a syndicated columnist for the Orlando Sentinel, a Tribune newspaper. E-mail: kparker@kparker.com

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The New York Post

April 18, 2004 Sunday

SECTION: All Editions; Pg. 28

LENGTH: 635 words

HEADLINE: THE CENTER DOES HOLD

BYLINE: Adam Brodsky

BODY:

Independent Nation: How the Vital Center Is Changing The Face of American Politics by John Avlon, Harmony Books, 400 pages, \$24

'INDEPENDENT Nation' is neither the best nor worst book ever written.

That, at least, is the kind of reaction the book itself might urge. You see, this book abhors extremes.

Instead, it worships Centrists - moderates, middle-of-the-roaders, independents. It extols compromise, give-and-take, practicality. It argues for a third way, a middle course that is neither "right nor left" but that allows America "to move forward."

In a compilation of some two dozen short tales focused on the politics of a range of 20th-century figures, New York Sun columnist John Avlon provides abundant evidence that Centrism wins in U.S. politics.

* Theodore Roosevelt, says Avlon, reached beyond "the traditional base of the Republican Party," arguing, for example, that "the best way to save the integrity of capitalism" in an era of creeping socialism was "by moderating its excesses." His bipartisan politics earned him the "greatest popular mandate of any president up to that point."

* President Kennedy's triumph in 1960 was built on both his Cold War and fiscal hawkishness, despite his party's growing reputation as a home for foreign-policy accommodationism and big-government liberalism.

* George W. Bush's "compassionate conservatism" and the GOP's "big tent" convention in 2000 beat out Vice President Al Gore's old-school, class-warfare liberalism.

Such victories are understandable, because most voters (by mathematical definition, in fact) fall within the consensus middle. As Avlon notes, independents, Centrists and moderates outnumber extremists across the spectrum.

And while those on the fringes might lack enthusiasm for moderates, they're not likely to back any candidates from the opposing party.

This is a political lesson, of course, that the pros know well: Appealing to a party's base - the special interests and stalwarts - may be wise during primaries. But general elections are won "in the middle." Swing voters pick presidents, and candidates can usually be expected to veer toward the center the minute primaries end.

Most readers will probably know this already, too. So it's a shame that Avlon relegates to just a few pages the notion that there is a "higher purpose" - beyond winning elections - to Centrism.

"Centrists try to transcend . . . self-interested politics, attempting to find a mutually beneficial balance of rights and responsibilities," Avlon explains.

Successful extremists cause violent swings of the pendulum, "allowing resentments and backlashes to build. Centrism calms these violent passions, appealing to reason and the human need for balance and harmony."

There's irrefutable wisdom in that. The trouble is, Avlon so praises those in the political middle that he himself, in effect, becomes an extremist - albeit, one who defends Centrists.

In his blanket devotion to consensus and incremental change, Avlon gives short shrift to crusaders for new and better ideas, those who stick to their principles despite political realities.

The virtue of democracy is that the best ideas, even if considered extremist at that moment, can ultimately become mainstream if their proponents convince enough folks on the merits.

Still, "Independent Nation" provides a compelling distillation of recent political history through the prism of Centrist politics. It's well-written and fun to read, particularly for junkies of the genre.

And its timing couldn't be better: In November, President Bush's more Centrist politics as a "compassionate conservative" will go up against the radical anti-war and extremist-liberal record of his Democratic opponent, Sen. John Kerry. The book's lessons should be a guide to their prospects.

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GRAPHIC: Avlon: Presidential elections are won in the middle.

LOAD-DATE: April 20, 2004



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April 6, 2004 Tuesday
Final Edition

SECTION: Style; C03 , BOOK WORLD

LENGTH: 914 words

HEADLINE: The Middle Misread

BYLINE: Kenneth S. Baer,, the author of "Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton," and former senior speechwriter for Vice President Gore

BODY:

INDEPENDENT NATION

How the Vital Center Is Changing American Politics

By John P. Avlon.

Harmony. 387 pp. \$24

Centrists may be the most maligned group in American politics. Polemicists on the left (Michael Moore, Al Franken) and the right (Sean Hannity, Michael Savage) dominate the bestseller lists; middle-of-the-road authors stock the remainder bins or get drowned out in the shouting. Partisans espouse purity and sacrifice for lofty ideals; centrists bargain and compromise. At best, centrists are bland and uninteresting. At worst, they're slick, or -- as Howard Dean charged -- sellouts.

Yet John P. Avlon argues in his new book, "Independent Nation," that "Centrism is the rising political tide in modern American life." According to the National Election Studies, the number of self-described independents almost doubled between 1950 and 2000. For this growing number of Americans, writes Avlon, their beliefs on hot-button

issues from school prayer to abortion and gun control aren't represented by either the Republicans or the Democrats. And that is why in election after election throughout the past century, Americans have chosen the candidate who has followed the centrist path. In a nation divided between red states and blue states, it seems that the key to victory lies in a candidate's ability to be purple.

Avlon, a columnist for the New York Sun and former chief speechwriter for Rudy Giuliani, believes that centrism is not about splitting the difference between the extremes, but rather is a "principled political philosophy with a distinct set of political strategies." He argues that the two major parties are paralyzed by the "religious right" and the "lifestyle left," and this divide has driven voters to the great independent middle. The result, Avlon maintains, is a political system that doesn't speak to the "commonsense balance between idealism and realism intuitively understood by most Americans" and prevents workable solutions to vexing problems such as how to protect the environment and stimulate the economy, balance the budget and acclimate non-English-speaking immigrants.

After quickly making this case about the political present, "Independent Nation" serves up a score of case studies from the political past to act as a guide to the "four classic contexts that Centrist leaders must learn to navigate." There is the "incumbent under attack from both sides," such as Theodore Roosevelt, followed by the young leaders who reach beyond their party's base (Presidents Kennedy and Clinton). Recognizing the difficulties that centrists have in winning a party's nomination, Avlon next offers as inspiration the presidential nomination of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 and the New York primary win (for the Senate) of Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Last, there are courageous independents who defy party orthodoxy: Sen. Margaret Chase Smith of Maine, the Republican who stood up to Joseph McCarthy, and Avlon's own former boss, Giuliani.

These biographical sketches are interesting (although also sparse in their detail), but "Independent Nation" fails to make the case that there is a coherent centrist movement and ideology. Strip away Avlon's exuberant prose, ringing assertions and cute turns of phrase that speechwriters (including this one) are often guilty of, and what remains is a book whose own deficiencies unintentionally mirror the problems that analysts and strategists often encounter when trying to pin down the political center.

First, Avlon makes the elementary mistake of confusing independents with centrists. The former is not necessarily the latter: Independents who supported Jesse Ventura differ markedly from those who support Joe Lieberman, Ralph Nader or Pat Buchanan, even though all have made a career of appealing to independents. A more careful researcher could have examined the reams of polling data which show that most "independents" lean rather decisively to one party or another, and that the number of true independents is relatively small.

Second, Avlon confuses strategy with ideology. Despite his assertions, centrism is not a political ideology, but the obvious strategy in our two-party system. That's why so many of Avlon's heroes -- Woodrow Wilson, Eisenhower, Richard Nixon and Clinton -- successfully captured the White House, yet have little in common ideologically. To win a general election in the United States is to capture the center: By definition, winners are centrists.

Avlon is not alone in his misdiagnosis. The debate over the path of the post-Clinton Democratic Party has been muddied by this same confusion. Many Democrats and Republicans believed Clinton lacked core values beyond a belief in "triangulation" -- splitting the difference between right and left.

I disagree. Clinton truly was a "new" Democrat, possessing a fully developed public philosophy with beliefs about equality, the relationship between citizen and state and America's role in the world distinct from the prevailing liberal orthodoxy. The appeal of this philosophy won Clinton the political center. But after he departed, many party strategists made the mistake of believing that Clintonism was a tactic; they set out, after the 2000 election, to split the difference with Bush and refrain from offering a comprehensive alternative. This crucial misunderstanding cost Democrats the Senate in 2002, and it is one that Avlon has repeated in his ambitious but deeply flawed book.

Chris Lehmann is on vacation.

LOAD-DATE: April 6, 2004



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The New York Sun

February 24, 2004 Tuesday

SECTION: ARTS & LETTERS; Pg. 20

LENGTH: 1113 words

HEADLINE: Holding the Center

BYLINE: By ED KILGORE

BODY:

One of the main tenets of contemporary political wisdom is that America is deeply polarized along partisan lines, reflecting deep cultural differences between "red states" and "blue states." And indeed, in the administration of a president who promised to change the tone in Washington, the atmosphere in the nation's capital is truly toxic.

Republicans, led by hyper-ideologue Tom DeLay, run Congress in a partisan fashion unseen since the days of "Tsar" Reed and "Iron Joe" Cannon. Governor Howard Dean built his presidential campaign on his belief that Democratic centrists have cravenly surrendered to George W. Bush, and that further partisan polarization is necessary for Democratic success in 2004. Despite the recent demise of his presidential campaign, he won broad approbation among many opinion leaders on the Left.

Into these prevailing winds of political wisdom sails New York Sun columnist John P. Avlon with "Independent Nation," a brave and compelling case for the past persistence and future dominance of American centrism. In this country centrism is not just a concept but an enduring tradition, Mr. Avlon argues, whose adherents have policed the partisan extremes of both political parties and been responsible for some of the country's greatest accomplishments.

Most of the book is devoted to a series of brief but instructive vignettes on centrist politicians from both parties - successful and unsuccessful - ranging from Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson to Bill Clinton and John McCain. A few especially valuable chapters resurrect such forgotten political moments as Earl Warren's stunning 1946 victory in both the Democratic and Republican California gubernatorial primaries and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's ideological struggle against Bella Abzug in New York in 1976.

There is much pithy analysis throughout, especially of recent events, including this comment on the 2000 presidential campaign: "The irony is that as Bush was embracing the style and rhetoric of Centrism while keeping much of his policy content conservative, Gore was doing precisely the opposite. The populist slogans and embrace of the liberal left stood in contrast to largely Centrist policy proposals."

Mr. Avlon's book will be particularly useful reading for those partisans who deplore any airing of intraparty differences. In presidential elections, Mr. Avlon points out, intraparty fights about policy and what we now call "message" have more often led to general election victories than defeats. Presidents Wilson, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, Carter, Clinton, and Bush all benefitted from tough nomination fights.

But what makes this book more than a collection of history lessons is Mr. Avlon's stout argument, particularly in his first and last chapters, that centrism is a coherent political tradition with a future as well as a past. Rejecting the oft-cited argument that centrists are typically political opportunists who abandon their party's principles in pursuit of an ephemeral election victory, the author finds a series of common threads that unite this tribe over time and across party boundaries.

To summarize Mr. Avlon's case, centrists share: a commitment to real-life problem-solving through innovative public policies; a hostility to extremist positions and the type of partisan warfare that makes effective governance impossible; a proclivity to create new and unusual coalitions of voters and other political actors to deal with issues on which conventional party politicians are disabled; and a spirit of independence from the special-interest groups that, over time, tend to affiliate with and eventually dominate every political party.

Though Mr. Avlon never quite says so, his typology of centrism works for two very different types of politicians. First, there are those who seek to reform existing parties while adhering to - and indeed, in some cases, rediscovering - traditional party principles. This class of centrists - who might be called "party reformers" - includes TR, Wilson, JFK, Mr. Clinton, and (in 2000 at least) Senator McCain.

Then there are those who simply act outside the party base to create a temporary majority across party lines, usually on the basis of personal or local appeal, without really aiming to produce any long-range transformation. This category, best described as "mavericks," includes most of the figures highlighted in Mr. Avlon's book, especially such Republicans as Earl Warren, Nelson Rockefeller, Senator Edward Brooke, and Mayor Giuliani.

Several 1990s-era independent governors, including Angus King, Lowell Weicker, and Jesse Ventura, would probably also be classified as mavericks.

"Party reformer" centrists can come from anywhere, but they distinctively aim at changing, not just dissenting from, party orthodoxy. "Maverick" centrists often represent regional factions that are out of tune with national party majorities, and tend to come out of states where the other party is dominant and party heresy is the only route to political victory. This distinction is important in assessing Mr. Avlon's case for the future of centrism.

He notes that independents have become the plurality party in America, and that an actual majority of voters now consistently identify themselves as moderates rather than as liberals or conservatives. He also argues, persuasively, that the enduring partisan parity of the country reflects the electorate's fear of letting either party extreme dominate the country, rather than a deadlock between deeply but evenly divided factions.

With the center of gravity in both major parties still listing to the left or right, there should be plenty of open ground for the party or the candidate who is willing to move towards the center. Mr. Avlon even lays out his own idea of a reformist agenda that could seize that ground, ranging from stout defense of fiscal responsibility and environmental protection to advocacy of tort reform, campaign finance reform, and tax simplification.

As a Democrat concerned about my party's potential drift away from the vital center of American politics, I believe Republicans will continue to cede that ground for the foreseeable future, despite the efforts of some in the GOP to graft "the style and rhetoric" of centrism onto a hard-right agenda. But it's unclear whether the open ground in the center will be claimed by serious party reformers, local or regional "mavericks," or merely the occasional third-party candidate.

In the meantime, John Avlon's history of the 20th-century tradition of American centrism will give members of both parties plenty to ponder - and possibly some ideas about how to plot new chapters for the 21st.

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