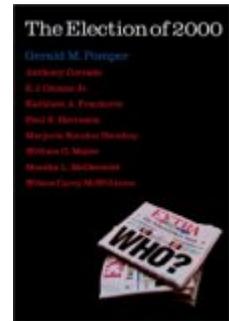




Gerald M Pomper; et al. *The Election of 2000: Reports and Interpretations*. New York and London: Chatham House Publishers, 2001. vii + 216 pp. \$21.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-889119-46-5.

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An Election Recollected

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It is difficult to forget the 2000 U.S. elections. The hypothetical recounting goes on even now, in the summer of 2001, with little end in sight. What happened before the election and on Election Day itself is less clear, maybe even less salient. What did happen is the subject of *The Election of 2000*.

The book is Gerald M. Pomper's latest installment in a series of post-election volumes that began after the 1976 election. As in the past, he brings together a number of scholars and other people close to the business to offer perspectives on the election. Most of the essays focus on the presidential contest and these dovetail quite well. Indeed, the whole clearly is greater than the sum of its parts. This said, it is useful and important to trace what the different authors do.

E.J. Dionne, Jr., of the *Washington Post* begins the book with an essay on what may be the most effective context of the 2000 election—the performance of President Clinton. His conjecture is straightforward: Clinton, while seeking consensus, bred discord. In effect, according to Dionne, Clinton polarized the American public and this found expression in the elections of 2000. Although long on argument, the essay nevertheless is a thoughtful prologue to the more descriptive analyses that follow.

The body of the book begins with the presidential election campaign. William G. Mayer recounts the nomination process and Marjorie Randon Hershey details the

dynamics of the general election campaign. Both provide a feel for the action that occurred over the election cycle, though Hershey does an especially good job of capturing the ebbs and flows. Mayer, seemingly out of necessity, covers more ground in his treatment of the nomination season, including most of the standard normative issues.

The CBS News survey team of Kathleen A. Frankovic and Monika L. McDermott next considers public opinion during the campaign. Relying on the many polls at their disposal, they offer a sense of what happened over time and what the public was ultimately thinking on Election Day. The analyses are basic but telling. Indeed, the authors find that public opinion on the issues was mixed, pretty much from the start of the campaign to the very end. According to Frankovic and McDermott, however, the public was not as much divided as it was ambivalent about the future course of government action.

Anthony Corrado then provides an accounting of campaign finance in both the presidential and congressional elections. The chapter contains the usual overview of the rules as well as data on the sources of campaign expenditures. However, Corrado goes into great detail about the nomination process, which probably is the most interesting part of his contribution. It also nicely complements Mayer's earlier essay.

At this point, the book turns to the actual election results. Pomper himself writes on the presidential election and Paul Herrnson addresses the congressional elections, necessarily at the macro-level. Both offer description and

analysis and are remarkably thorough: Although they unearth little new ground, they leave little ground untilled. In these chapters, Pomper and Herrnson have provided primers on the 2000 elections.

The book ends with an essay by Wilson Carey McWilliams on the meaning of the election. It is broadly cast, as much about the human condition in the U.S. as about the election. There is absolutely no hard data but lots of speculation, and so there is plenty of room for disagreement with what McWilliams has to say. If nothing

else, what he does say forms a basis for discussion.

The Election of 2000 adds little to our knowledge of elections or the electoral process. However, it is what we've come to expect from Pomper every four years: A useful set of descriptions and analyses of what happened in the election. As such, the book is perfectly suited to undergraduate courses on elections. For scholars of voting behavior and elections, it may not be required reading but it probably belongs on our bookshelves.

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