H. Ross Perot and George C. Wallace:
Defining the Archetype of Third-party "Success" in Presidential Elections

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The campaigns of George Wallace in 1968 and Ross Perot in 1992 are both considered exceptional "successes" of third parties in post-World War Two presidential elections. However, both men employed distinct strategies within differing political environments to reach their respective achievements. While Perot is typically hailed as the dominant example, this paper seeks to demonstrate that, given an agreed upon role of third parties in presidential elections, the distinctions between their campaigns, and their differing results, Wallace's stands as the superior model for post-World War Two third-party campaigns.

In the presidential election of 1968, former Alabama Governor George C. Wallace received 46 electoral votes running as a third-party candidate. Campaigning on a focused platform of race segregation and a rollback of federal power with a strategy centered on states of the Deep South, Wallace sought to gain leverage as kingmaker by denying major-party candidates Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey the necessary majority of electoral votes to claim victory. Though falling short of his goal, Wallace gained the most electoral votes of a post-World War Two third-party candidate and posed a large enough threat to give his concerns for Southern issues a place on the national stage in the Nixon administration. However, he took 13.5% of the popular vote overwhelmingly centered in the South, demonstrating a lack of appeal to the general electorate. Alternatively, in the presidential election of 1992, businessman H. Ross Perot challenged Republican George H. W. Bush and Democrat Bill Clinton for the White House. Well funded and finding a platform in public discontentment over the federal debt while using a national strategy that broadly sought support across multiple states, Perot garnered a noteworthy 18.9% of the popular vote but noticeably no electoral votes. While spending millions of his own dollars, appealing to independents, and appearing in televised debates with his major-party opponents, Perot stood no closer to his lofty goal than the day he began his campaign.

In 1970, Walter Dean Burnham defined "successful third parties" as those who attain at least 5% of the votes.[1] In a system restrictive and unrewarding of independent presidential runs, by this definition, Wallace and Perot found remarkable accomplishment. Perot's prominent national figure and share of the popular vote elevates him as the "more successful" in the eyes of many. Scholarship covering third-party runs,

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[1] Walter Burnham, *Critical elections and the mainsprings of American politics*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970), 28.

though mentioning of Wallace, typically present Perot as the defining post-World War II non-major-party presidential candidate. This statement is a simple definition, however. While it reflects general support beyond the usual margin, it does not define third-party success in context of any goal or achievement beyond garnering the attention of a marginal, albeit respectable, faction of voters. Making a numeric showing in a solitary election does not necessarily translate into any measurable political benefits. Success as defined by Burnham cannot necessarily be correlated with "impact." Pure numbers do not define triumph, particularly by definition of the third-party role in presidential elections. To attain a position within the presidential-selection process requires third parties to align their goals and strategies to force an absorption of their platforms into those of a major-party or push the respective major-party to the left or right. Such a path to both "success" and "impact" is absent when examining Perot's campaign but reflected in Wallace's strategy, though relying on several caveats. While Perot remains the frontrunner by overall numbers and being remembered, Wallace best reflects the model fulfilling the role of third parties in the presidential election system.

This paper seeks to compare the 1992 campaign of H. Ross Perot to that of George C. Wallace in1968 in the aspects of support, goals, and ultimate results within the context of a defined role of third parties in presidential elections. In doing so, it seeks to show that H. Ross Perot is erroneously hailed as the definitive successful third-party candidate of post-World War Two elections. Due to the resulting impact brought about by a distinct campaign that title belongs to George Wallace. By analyzing both campaigns in the context of a defined role of third-party/independent presidential candidates, this paper proposes to:

1. To narrow the definition of third-party "success" to fulfilling the defined role of third parties rather than just a noteworthy showing in the polls.
2. Confirm Wallace and his campaign as the "model" of third-party success within this definition, dispelling the elevation of Perot in such regards.
3. Present Wallace as the narrow but more legitimized strategy model in which third parties might find actual success.

This paper is not a side-by-side comparison of Wallace and Perot's campaigns' success level for the purpose of determining a winner. Their campaigns and their distinctions serve as differing models. The political and social environments in which they ran are dissimilar. It is highly unlikely that Perot could have run in the form of Wallace and achieved a fraction of his support given the issues and attitudes of the time. Additionally, the exploration of their experiences and successes beyond the election context is better suited for other research and does not fit within the parameters of this paper.

The Significance of Determining a Model of Third-Party Success

Despite a system with a bias against third-party candidacies, public support for them remains relatively high. Gallup polling of the past decade has revealed a desire among many American voters for a third option outside the two usual contenders. Gallup first posed the question in 2003; "based on your view, do the Republican and Democratic parties do an adequate job of representing the American people, or do they do such a poor

job a third major-party is needed?"[2] Since that time, support of a "third-party" becoming mainstream has varied in the past decade but remains generally strong. Standing at a low of 40% in 2003, favorability reached a high of 58% in 2007, dropped to 47% in mid 2008 and reached another 58% high in 2010. Those in favor stand at 46% in the latest 2012 poll.[3] Noteworthy is the fact that Gallop conducted the 2012 poll shortly after the major parties' conventions, a period when voters tend to view the two major parties more favorably.[4] This quantitative evidence demonstrates a desire to expand beyond the two major parties domination, giving democratic legitimacy for third-party pursuits in the presidential elections. Those who find their ideas outside the major-party lines will likely desire more than a voice expressing disdain for the status quo. They will desire an effective method for pushing such platforms into executive policy. If a third-party seeks to accomplish such a task, it must look to historical examples as models to gauge the odds of mounting a "successful" campaign. Therefore, narrowing a definition of "third-party success" to defined parameters encompassed by a historical example is important to the democratic process of presidential elections.

Defined Role of Modern Third-Party Candidates

Given the immense roadblocks in the current system, there stands a question of what third parties' full potential and role *are* and how they might best meet them. They have commonly and sometimes derisively been viewed as vehicles of protests, seen as limited to pushing issues voters view and generally finding little success in doing so. It is from this traditional position, however, that third parties find their greatest chance for success. Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus explain, "The power of third parties lies in their capacity to affect the content and range of political discourse, and ultimately public policy, by raising issues and option that the two major parties have ignored."[5] A strict interpretation of this explanation would define third-party candidates as simply voices of alternative ideas. Without political weight to support such ideas, third-party candidates serve as education tools, offering viable and popular viewpoints. In this case, acting as a well-funded activist group could perhaps serve their interest better than fronting a candidate directly in a presidential election. Thus, the third-party candidates' role must be treated as including a deeper political element not present in activist groups, protest groups, or other interest groups.

Though perhaps incapable of winning an election directly, posing a legitimate threat to a major-party candidacy by limiting electoral strategies for victory, forcing resource expenditure in areas usually unchallenged, and/or sapping enough votes to swing close states lends credence and attention to the third-party's platforms. In turn, to stem the loss of crucial votes, major-party candidates are forced to adopt third-party platforms to sustain their chances at victory. The general goal, therefore, of third-party candidates can be defined as ensuring that ideas outside of the major parties are considered and, if legitimate, adopted into their platforms. Steps to completing this feat are:

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[2] Gallup Polls, "Gallup Poll Social Series: Governance," *Gallup News Service.* (2012)

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Steven Rosenstone et al., *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major-party Failure*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 8.

1.   Recognize that victory defined as winning the presidency is impractical.
2.   Therefore, seek to force a major-party adoption of their new platforms under threat of loss in the election.
3.   Seek to shift a major-party alignment on already adopted issues under threat of loss in the election.

Precisely, this is playing the often-touted role of "spoiler." A term usually used in conjunction with third-party candidacies, particularly Ralph Nader's 2000 run, many third-party candidacies, including arguably Nader's, have not held the potential to fulfill this role.[6] A candidate wanting to play spoiler must actually hold the potential to disallow a major-party candidate victory. Third-party campaigns must do more than spout ideas that are alternative to those of the major parties. They must play the political game, strategically attempting to position themselves where the major parties may no longer ignore them. They must lend their ideas weight by threatening to divert votes from major-party candidacies in margins that may deny them victory. These margins ultimately must hold impact in the Electoral College given the system in which they operate. This does not necessarily translate as essential for a third-party candidate to win electoral votes directly. Their margin of support, however, must draw enough votes within particular states to threaten to swing those states from one major-party candidate to the other.

By this definition, a third-party campaign lacking particular draw from any specific group and without a strong emphasis on galvanizing issues cannot be considered a successful third-party campaign as it cannot, by characterization, accomplish these objectives. Perot's campaign, albeit a national movement with a remarkable draw of voters, held no reasonable chance of winning due to the Electoral College. He possessed a support base too diffused to impact any particular states and thus held no recognizable potential, nor seemingly desire, to shift either major-party candidate into accepting his arguably ill-defined views. While prominent in being an alternative to Bush and Clinton, Perot did not and would not, by nature of his campaign, fulfill the role of a third-party candidate as previously defined. Alternatively, Wallace fit these parameters perfectly, stating up front his goal of playing a spoiler to push his ideas into the major-parties' platform.

Origins and Restrictions of the Two-Party System

Amidst under-funding, perceived extremism, and mismanagement, third parties find themselves primarily marginalized by an election system that all but ensures two-party domination. In the early years of the nation, George Washington warned in his farewell speech of 1796 against the formation of political parties.[7] While admitting that the organization of such groups is a natural course of action for humans, he described the dangers that political parties pose in their inclination to seek power over other groups, exact revenge on opponents, and "gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual."[8] Despite Washington's caution, Alexander Hamilton's creation of the Federalist party and Thomas Jefferson's formation of the Democratic-Republican party set an early foundation of a two-party divide.

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[6]Matthew Soberg Shugart, "Elections: The American Process of Selecting a President: A Comparative Perspective." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, 3 (2004): 643.
[7] George Washington, "Farewell Address, September 19, 1796." *The Writings of George Washington* (1907): 218.
[8] Washington, 218.

Though the positions of the major parties have evolved through the years, they have marked a clear division of stances in their rhetoric. As such, the Republican and Democratic parties seemingly hold a monopoly on addressing issues, creating third parties exclusion due to the two major parties "one-on-one, us-versus-them" domination.[9]

The nation's founders did not intend to create a two party system. However, several elements emplaced, some of more modern implementation, exclude third-parties from effectively competing in national elections. Of the elements propping up the two-party system, the Electoral College serves a potent feature. A modern topic of debate with advocates for its abolition and perpetuation, the 1787 Constitutional Convention's adoption of the Electoral College and its weighted system of voting precluded direct election of the president by the nation's citizens. Put in place when the then much smaller national population spread across hundreds of miles, many in rural areas, national campaigns by presidential candidates remained virtually impossible.[10] The framers of the Constitution feared that the inability for information of out-of-state candidates to effectively spread across the nation would lead inevitably to citizens naturally springing for their home state candidate, a "favorite son" vote.[11] They feared that such a system was unlikely to produce a candidate with a sufficient majority of the popular vote to legitimately take the role of president. Further, if a sufficient majority were achieved, it was likely to be done through a combination of the more populous states, severely reducing the less-populated states' weight in selecting the president. The system advocated the use of select electors from each state, to be selected by a method determined individually by each state, to select the president.

Today, with the exceptions of Maine and Nebraska, all states select their electors using a statewide winner-take-all popular vote. Maine and Nebraska select two of their electors through statewide popular vote and the remaining electors by popular vote in each congressional district.[12] The number of electors each state receives is a total of its representatives, which is based on population, plus its two senators. Of the 538 available electoral votes, a candidate must win a minimum majority of 270 to claim victory. Should no candidate reach the 270 threshold, the House of Representatives votes to select one of the candidates.[13] The basics of the Electoral College display a chief reason why third-party candidacies struggle so greatly in their bid for the presidency. Any votes not carrying a majority within an individual state or states are futile given the winner-take-all system. Even strong second-place finishes ultimately result in no direct reward. Without proportional representation in the way electoral votes are awarded, third parties face a very steep challenge. Not only does such a system severely damage third-party chances at victory, but it also significantly reduces the clout they might hold by sapping votes from the major parties to create a "protest vote" within the popular vote.

Third parties find an additional challenge in ballot-access laws. Since the 19th century individual states have set standards as to who may appear on state ballots and

[9] Ted Jelen, *Ross for boss: The Perot phenomenon and beyond.* (New York: SUNY Press, 2001): 3.

[10] William C. Kimberling, *The Electoral College*. Vol. 1. (Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Election Administration, Federal Election Commission, 1992): 2.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Robert Turner, "The Contemporary Presidency: Do Nebraska and Maine Have the Right Idea? The Political and Partisan Implications of the District System," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 35, no. 1 (2005): 118.

[13] Kimberling, 3.

what is required to attain such a position.[14] With no national standard, such laws vary among states, most requiring that a minimum number of signatures be obtained by petition, proving a desire for such a candidate amongst voters. Others require that a monetary fee be paid, at times in addition to a petition. Louisiana, for example, holds relatively relaxed laws, requiring a mere $500 or a petition of 5000 signatures to be submitted.[15] Alternately, Oklahoma is notoriously restrictive of non-major-party candidates being placed on the ballot, requiring tens of thousands of signatures from separate districts.[16] Both major parties, due to enormous monetary resources, a far simpler time of filing petitions, or meeting previous election vote thresholds, do not face such a struggle. Forcing third parties to pursue ballot access with 50 different standards remains a major obstacle. Even candidates able to meet all requirements for ballot access must devote so many resources to achieve the feat, their ability to campaign is significantly eroded. Green party chairman Phil Huckleberry admits his party often devotes more time, money, and effort towards getting on ballots than campaigning in most of the states in which they qualify.[17]

An additional obstacle to third-party progress is debate access. Beginning in 1960 and occurring in every presidential-election since 1976, televised debates have become a staple in the presidential election process.[18] The Commission on Presidential Debates, an organization founded by the Democratic and Republican parties to establish standards for debates, exclusively presides over debates and has since 1988. A private company, the CPD sets its own requirements for a candidate to appear in televised debates.[19] Though the CPD allowed Ross Perot a place on the debate stage in 1992, he was not allowed to return in 1996 despite strong popular vote showings in the previous election.[20] In 2000, the CPD established a rule requiring debate participants to hold at least 15% support in national opinion polls as well as be on the ballot in enough states allowing them to reach the 270 electoral votes.[21] This threshold is intentionally difficult for third-party candidates to meet and reduces their media attention, legitimacy on the national stage, and opportunity to present their ideas to voters.

Wallace's 1968 Attempt at Becoming Kingmaker

George Wallace's campaign of 1968 nearly produced an electoral-vote total large enough to deny either Republican Richard Nixon or Democrat Hubert Humphrey a victory. As the 1968 election loomed, the issue of civil rights came to the forefront alongside American involvement in Vietnam.[22] Having served several terms as a Democratic governor of Alabama and making an unsuccessful run in the 1964 Democrat presidential primaries, Wallace saw an opportunity in the social and economic upheaval of 1968 America. Championing the individual states' right to school segregation,

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[14] Daniel Lee, "Take the Good With the Bad: Cross-Cutting Effects of Ballot Access Requirements on Third-Party Electoral Success," *American Politics Research*, 40, no. 2: 269.

[15] National Association of Secretaries of State, "State Laws Regarding Presidential Ballot Access for the General Election." (September 2012): 14.

[16] Ibid., 27.

[17] Paul Singer. "Ballot access tests third parties." *USA Today*, (July 08, 2012).

[18] Sidney Kraus, *Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy*, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers., 2009): 2.

[19] Jamin Raskin, *Overruling Democracy: The Supreme Court Vs. the American People*, (New York: Routledge, 2003): 221.

[20] Raskin., 222.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Lewis Gould, *1968: The Election that Changed America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1993): 15.

magnifying the negative sentiment of an over-expansive and out-of-touch federal government, and pushing "law and order" in a time of chaos, Wallace became an alternative voice for disenfranchised voters. "There's not a dime's worth of difference" between the Republican and Democrat parties became the rallying point for those disenchanted with the major parties over the issues facing the nation.[23] While not overtly racist in his public campaigning, Wallace's push on the issues, particularly states' rights over school segregation and "law and order," took on a thinly veiled racial connotation.[24] His message particularly resonated with less-educated lower-class and middle-class whites, a group that felt a decrease in power and status at a time of desegregation and urban unrest. Additionally, young voters and independents, distrustful of the two major-party candidates, trended towards Wallace's campaign. [25]

As he began his campaign, Wallace strategically pursued the role of "spoiler" and "kingmaker" within his strategy. It was his hope that by winning enough states of his own and ensuring a relatively even split between Nixon and Humphrey amongst the others, he could prevent either Nixon or Humphrey from winning the necessary 270 electoral votes for a straightforward victory.[26] Understanding that he could not win the presidency, Wallace hoped that he "would hold the power to say just who would be the next President."[27] Additionally, he would "make no secret that I would want something in return before I make my choice."[28] Wallace planned to use his electors as bargaining chips, pledging them to the candidate who promised to absorb his platform in their his policies. As a guarantee, Wallace obtained notarized affidavits from his electors in every state swearing they would vote for him or for which candidate he directed them to vote.[29] This strategy would place Nixon in a position practically requiring negotiation as otherwise, according to law, the vote for president would go the House of Representatives. Then holding a Democratic majority, the House would almost certainly have selected Humphrey. The South, a place far more receptive to Wallace's message and possessive of a fair amount of electoral votes, became the target area of Wallace's strategy.

Upon the declaration of his candidacy in April 1968, Wallace drew 11% support nationally.[30] Within the next several months, his support had nearly doubled and unsurprisingly revealed a strong showing in the South, a region the Nixon campaign also looked to do well in despite a historical opposition to Republicans.[31] Nixon sought to employ a "Southern strategy," an attempt to draw conservative white Democrats angered by the Democratic Party's embracing of the civil rights movement into the Republican electorate. The split of the conservative vote became a staple for Wallace as he attempted to take the electoral votes of a state himself or prevent Nixon from gaining them. Wallace's popular vote support peaked at 21% in September 1968 but saw a steep decline

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[23] Stephen Craig, "The Decay of Mass Partisanship," *Polity*, 20, no. 4 (1988): 710.

[24] Gould, 65.

[25] Warren Miller, and Teresa Levitin, *Leadership and Change: The New Politics and the American Electorate*, (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, 1976): 70.

[26] Judy Carlson, *George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, Inc. , 1981): 79.

[27] Gould, 66.

[28] Gould, 66.

[29] Carlson, 80.

[30] Theodore White, *The Making of the President 1968* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers , 2010): 425.

[31] Lawrence McAndrews, "The Politics of Principle: Richard Nixon and School Desegregation," *The Journal of Negro History*, 83, no. 3 (1998): 188

in the following month.[32] His pick of retired General Curtis Lemay for vice-presidential candidate, controversial for his advocating the use of nuclear weapons, damaged the campaign.[33] Further, the AFL-CIO revealed to its members supposed anti-labor legislation pushed by Wallace as Alabama's governor. Union workers, particularly up north, who originally saw appeal in Wallace's bigotry moved back into the Democratic fold. This loss of support, which largely returned to Humphrey, suppressed the small inroads Wallace had made outside the South.[34]

Ultimately, Wallace took a majority of the vote in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Arkansas, and Louisiana for a total of 45 electoral votes. A faithless elector from North Carolina, won by Nixon, cast his vote for Wallace bringing the total to 46. Nixon won the election with 301 electoral votes to Humphrey's 191.[35] Though he did not succeed in obtaining the margin needed to deny Nixon a straight victory, Wallace came closer than appears in surface examination. Wallace took second in Tennessee, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Additionally, the election turned out closer than originally expected with the states of California, Illinois, and Ohio too close to call until the next morning. Nixon was declared the victor in all three by margins at or beneath 3 percentage points.[36] Several hypothetical scenarios exist which would have thrown the election in the House of Representatives (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1   *1968 voter swings casting election to House of Representatives[37]*

Scenario 1	TN	SC	NJ
Nixon			-61261
Humphrey			
Wallace	+47801	+38363	

Scenario 2	TN	SC	OH
Nixon			-90429
Humphrey			
Wallace	+47801	+38363	

Scenario 3	CA		OH	IL
Nixon	-223347	*or*	-90429	-134961
Humphrey				
Wallace				

Scenario 4	TN	SC	MO
Nixon			-20489
Humphrey			
Wallace	+47801	+38363	*+1 FE

+1 Faithless Elector to Wallace

Dozens of scenarios may be drawn after-the-fact, declaring multiple "if only" paths to victory. Wallace's original goal of taking 100 electoral votes could have been achieved in the South by winning Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and Florida. A victory in Texas would have brought 28 additional electoral votes. The border states of Kentucky and Maryland also could have provided 9 and 10 additional electoral votes, respectively.[38]

Though on the ballot in all 50 states and adamant that his message and support were not restricted to just the South, Wallace knew well where his base strength was found. In only eight states outside the South or border states did Wallace garner over 10%

[32] White, 425.

[33] Gould, 148.

[34] Ibid.

[35] National Archives and Records Administration, "1968 Election for the Forty-Sixth Term" Last modified 2012. http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/votes/1965 1969.html#1968

[36] National Archives and Records Administration, "Historical Election Results: 1968" Last modified 2012. http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/map/historic.html#1976

[37] Ibid.

[38] National Archives and Records Administration, "Historical Election Results: 1968" Last modified 2012. http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/map/historic.html#1976

of the vote.[39] While attempting to appeal nationally and to blue-collar workers in the Midwest, Wallace's platforms and strategy were more issue-focused and regionally based. While Wallace did not "succeed" in terms of winning the election or preventing a straightforward victory of either major-party candidate, his strategy proved solid, taking more electoral votes than any other post-World War Two third-party candidate. More importantly, the threat Wallace posed to the Republican campaign caused Nixon to make quick backtracks on racial integration, taking a more tolerant stance on segregation behind closed doors and publicly advocating the restoration of federal funds to segregated schools.[40] Further, he advocated an alternative to "busing" that would allow parents to choose which school to send their children. Wallace was already an advocate of "law and order," and his embrace of this platform cemented Nixon's commitment.[41]

Overall, Wallace still achieved the results he desired in several regards. Issues facing a particular sector of voters were forced into major-party platforms under threat of an election loss in the Electoral College. How much more Wallace could have negotiated with Nixon, or perhaps Humphrey, had he held the necessary delegates to stop either from reaching the 270 electoral vote threshold remains unknown. It seems safe to say that his clout would have been significant, particularly with the Nixon camp. Regardless, despite its shortcoming, Wallace's campaign fulfilled the accepted role of a third-party in presidential elections. He sought to gain the political leverage necessary to force ideas into the platform of a major-party. Nixon had been pushed further to Wallace's positions of intolerance, Humphrey had been denied the presidency, and Wallace took full credit. It is this approach and strategy that places Wallace's campaign as the archetype for the defined third-party role within presidential elections.

H. Ross Perot's 1992 Challenge for the White House

Ross Perot's 1992 campaign garnered the largest percentage of the popular vote total by a third-party candidate since Theodore Roosevelt's "Bull Moose" Party run in 1912. A downturned economy and dropping faith in the functionality of the major parties and government created an environment favorable for Perot's "moderate" movement. By the spring of 1992, incumbent George H. W. Bush had dropped from his poll spike following a swift victory in the Gulf War. Additionally, he saw his conservative base shrinking from failure to uphold his "no new taxes" pledge. Newcomer Bill Clinton had endured a trying primary season to gain the Democratic nomination and held a minimal national image.[42] As opposition, Perot, a "folksy" Texas businessman with no experience in public office, agreed in an interview on Larry King Live to run for president provided supporters could get him on the ballot in all 50 states.[43] A flurry of grassroots support as well as multiple appearances on televised talk shows pushed Perot into the spotlight. His supporters eventually achieved ballot access in all 50 states, and by June 1992 his popularity had surged, placing him as the leader in several national polls. He held appeal nationally as the general face of anti-politics, a hero not of the two major parties.

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[39] Ibid.

[40] McAndrews, 188.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Roper Public Opinion, "Job Performance Ratings for President Bush," *Roper Center for Public Opinion* (2013).

[43] Applebome, Peter. "THE 1992 CAMPAIGN: Independents; Perot, the 'Simple' Billionaire, Says Voters Can Force His Presidential Bid." *The New York Times*, March 29, 1992.

The swell of popularity and support did not last, however. Vagueness on the issues facing the country, blunders in addressing gay groups and the NAACP, refusal to spend money on TV ads, and suspicions of his opponents caused a drop in poll numbers. Negative press and rising demands of supporters further weakened his campaign. Perot's advisors and managers, frustrated with his refusal to take their advice, warned of further decline of support and threatened to withdraw their services.[44] As polls slipped and advisors were fired, Perot announced in July that he would no longer seek the presidency. Explaining that he did not wish to split the vote and have the House of Representatives select the president, Perot encouraged his supporters to find another candidate to nominate.[45]

In October, however, Perot decided to reenter the race as an official candidate fronting an economic plan. In this phase of his campaign, he employed novice staffers and spent millions of his own fortune on half-hour and hour-long TV spots in which he conveyed his economic ideas. This method of campaigning, made possible by Perot's personal wealth, was innovative for the time.[46] Unconventionally, Perot did few public appearances or traditional campaign rallies. However, he participated in all three presidential debates throughout October, criticizing Bush and Clinton, coining memorable phrases, and performing well according to polls. Personal emotions, suspicions of his opponents, and prior exit from the election returned to harm Perot, however.[47] Though remaining consistently in double digits, he struggled with support stagnation, down significantly from his earlier lead and unable to expand his base.

On Election Day, Perot's final tally of 18.91% of the popular vote gave him larger support than predicted in the preceding days. He achieved a second-place finish in Maine and Utah and over 20% of the vote in 28 states.[48] However, Perot did not place first in any state and therefore received no electoral votes. Further, the states he performed best in were largely solidly for Bush or Clinton and/or worth few electoral votes (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2   *Top 8 States Supporting Perot*[49]

	Clinton %	Bush %	Perot %	Electoral Votes
Maine	38.77	30.39	30.44	4
Alaska	30.29	39.46	28.43	3
Utah	24.65	43.36	27.34	5
Idaho	28.42	42.03	27.05	4
Kansas	33.74	38.88	26.99	6
Nevada	37.36	34.73	26.19	4
Montana	37.63	35.12	26.12	3
Wyoming	34.1	39.7	25.65	3

Though more appealing to Whites, males, and non-Southerners, Perot drew general support from most demographics and regions. He had spent nearly $60 million of

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[44] Holmes, Steven. "The Opposition – News Analysis; Perot in Trouble Internal Strife, Missed Opportunities And Missteps on Issues Stall a Drive." *The New York Times*, July 14, 1992

[45] Cuomo, Mario. "Perot Quits Race Perot Drops Out Of The Race Clinton To Give Acceptance Speech Tonight." *Daily News Wire Services*, July 16, 1992.

[46] Carolyn Barta, *Perot and His People*, (The Summit Group: Fort Worth, TX, 1993): 330.

[47] Holmes, Steven. "The 1992 Campaign: Undeclared Candidate; Perot Makes Plea for Racial Harmony."*The New York Times*, June 19, 1992.

[48] Federal Election Commission, "Federal Elections 92: Election Results for the U.S. President, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives." Washington D.C. (1993): 15-32.

[49] Ibid.

his own funds to finance his campaign and, while gaining the attention he so desired through innovative campaign techniques, he stood no closer to his goal the presidency.[50]

Bases of Support

Disadvantaged by the system, third parties candidates must figuratively shout to be heard. An analysis of their campaigns reveals Perot and Wallace approached their "shouting" in two different ways. Wallace ran a specific campaign to be a spoiler, effectively forcing his opponents to give him attention and hoping to be a large enough threat to leverage his stances into one of their, most likely Nixon's, platforms. Alternatively, Perot spent extensive resources far and wide, gathering a following to raise him to national attention, a place in the televised debates, and both a literal and figurative stage to voice his ideas of protest. While effectively announcing his ideas, Perot's campaign did not employ a strategy specifically defining his platforms nor lending them weight beyond "not being Bush or Clinton."

Both men benefited from an environment beneficial to a third-party run. In both years, voters showed lack of faith in the major parties to effectively address the issues facing the nation at the time. In 1968, Democrat Humphrey faced an uphill battle following the chaos of his party's nomination process and the Democratic National Convention. The prominent issues of civil rights and American involvement in Vietnam provided an environment of controversy, emotion, and strong opinions.[51] An escalating national debt and deficit along with rising social issues had voters looking for answers beyond the major parties. As candidates, Wallace was a fiery orator with the ability to stir a crowd to a near frenzy with his impassioned speeches. Additionally, his governorship of Alabama provided him with political experience and Southern appeal.[52] Similarly, Perot, though not a dynamic speaker, provided a folksy appeal and witty criticism of his opponents as well as the operation of government. More significantly, he could provide millions of dollars from his own accounts along with experience as a successful businessman. In these regards, Wallace and Perot share similar circumstances and characteristics. It is in their electoral goals and strategy, reflected in their support from voters, where they diverge. It is here that defines Wallace as the maximum success within the defined role of third parties in a presidential election and Perot as a noteworthy anomaly, a "none of the above" option with no real goal, hope, or desire of leveraging his platforms into the mainstream.

Of primary interest with Perot's performance is the diversity of his support base. They were not particularly distinctive in their make up in regards to the regular variables measured. Exit polls showed that gender, martial status, education, income, union membership, religion, employment status, and region had little effect on the likelihood of one to vote for Perot. While men, non-Jews, and non-Southerners were more likely to vote for Perot than women, Jews, and Southerners, the overall disparity was not significant. Similarly, there was little difference in Perot's support across ideological self-identification with 17% of conservatives, 21% moderates, and 18% of liberals supporting his candidacy.[53]

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[50] Herbert Alexander, and Anthony Corrado, *Financing the 1992 election*, (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1995): 128.
[51] Gould, 193.
[52] Carlson, 78.
[53] Herb Asher, *Democracy's Feast: Elections in America*, (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1995), 159.

Table 1.3	*1992 Party Identification*[54]						
	Strong Dem	**Weak Dem**	**Ind Dem**	**Ind**	**Ind Rep**	**Weak Rep**	**Strong Rep**
Bush	3.1	13.4	6.1	22.2	61.9	60.1	86.9
Clinton	92.8	68.5	70.6	40.8	10.8	14.9	2.3
Perot	4.1	18.1	23.3	37	27.3	25	10.8

In the category of party identification, a more significant gap opens with 13% of Democrats and 17% of Republicans supporting Perot. However, noteworthy in this regard is the weaker party loyalty of Republicans in the election year in general. While 92.8% of "strong Democrats" voted for Clinton only 86.9% of "strong Republicans" did the same for Bush.[55] It may not have been so much Perot's lure as a rejection of their usual party that swayed Republicans to look for an alternative. As such, Perot's support came largely from voters with weaker party identification, pure independents, and many younger voters. With support so widely spread across the political spectrum, it can be concluded that the ideological position of voters and their view of government's role is not a significant factor in their support of Perot.

Additionally, support from Perot is not largely based in any particular issue. There was a lack of clarity amongst voters on where Perot fit into the traditional ideological spectrum, particularly in the category of economics. His push for cutting the deficit caused voters to see him as more conservative yet he also called for considerable tax increases, a stance typically associated with liberals. An issue emphasized in the 1992 election was the decline of traditional values. Voter opinion on this issue varied significantly between those who supported Bush and Clinton but seemed to hold little influence on Perot's supporters who split evenly at 17% supporting "tolerance" and 17% believing "new lifestyles are eroding society" (Table 1.4).[56] The issue of gay rights revealed a similar pattern. While Bush and Clinton supporters showed ample differences in support on such an issue, Perot drew virtually evenly from those both supportive and opposing of gay rights (Table 1.5).[57] Without such noteworthy support on a particular issue, the largest variable seemingly leading to support for Perot is party identification or lack thereof. This seems to point to a conclusion that Perot's base was driven by frustration with the political systems, its major parties and their candidates. Thus, his vote support largely banked on a broad disdain for politics and politicians, not on any specific issue or from any specific group.

Table 1.4	*The Decline of Traditional Values*[58]	
	Tolerance	Erosion
Bush	14	42
Clinton	69	40
Perot	18	17

Table 1.5   *Support for Gay Rights*[59]

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Asher, 163.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Asher, 163.

[59] Ibid.

	Supportive of gays	Neutral	Not supportive
Bush	13	30	57
Clinton	71	3	26
Perot	17	66	17

This assessment of Perot's candidacy reveals several discrepancies in relation with the third-party model for presidential campaigns. First, Perot was not running to play spoiler; he truly sought the presidency. His widespread but unfocused appeal in conjunction with his campaign methods attests to this. Second, Perot advocated few specific solutions, instead mostly criticizing his opponents and the function of Washington. Third, because of these two aspects, he could wield no real power in having his ideas influence the major parties. His voter base was too broad, too evenly drawn, and too general to impact the election in a way that would significantly and specifically harm either Clinton or Bush. While some studies have suggested he harmed Bush's bid, polls display Bush entering the election at a disadvantage and final results reveal that it is unlikely that Perot cost Bush any noteworthy number of votes that were not already outside his grasp. Perot did manage a second-place finish in Maine and Utah. Both states, however, were easy victories for Clinton and Bush respectively. Seventeen states were won by Bush and Clinton by margin of 5 percentage points or less. Of those, Bush took six while Clinton won the remaining 11. Clinton's 11 states won by 5 percentage points or less totaled 86 of the electoral vote. [60] Assuming Perot drew enough would-be Bush voters to allow Clinton to gain a narrow victory in all 11 states, an extremely unlikely scenario, Clinton would still eke out an electoral victory. If all 86 electoral votes "narrowly" won by Clinton were shifted to Bush's column and the electoral votes from states "narrowly" won by Bush are left within his own control, Clinton would finish the election with 284 electoral votes, down from his actual 370, but still enough for a definitive victory. In the end, it seems that Perot as a third option made no specific impact on the final results of the election.

Considering these aspects, Perot, in context of a defined third-party success, served as little more than a recognizable protest vote for undefined change. Through this, he brought attention to the problems facing the nation but did not provide any focused solutions of his own and certainly did not attempt to force their espousal by a major-party candidate. Aside from broad avocation on cutting the deficit and tax increases, Perot focused on a general "clean up the mess in Washington" message that found wide appeal. It is the generality of his criticism, however, that most likely led to Perot's noteworthy poll numbers. It is also this generality that places Perot outside the bounds of a defined successful third-party/independent presidential campaign. His appeal on the basis of "broken Washington" and lack of support based on particular issue stances could not leverage the major parties within the confines of the election. In fact, Perot temporarily abandoned his campaign in July 1992, claiming that he did not want to throw the election to the House of Representatives. Skeptical supporters suspected other reasons for his suspension but this claim is upfront about Perot's intentions, or lack thereof. He held no desire to play spoiler, even if his strategy would have allowed for it.

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[60] Federal Election Commission, Washington D.C.: 1993. s.v. "Federal Elections 92: Election Results for the U.S. President, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives."

Alternatively, where Perot's support base consisting of "status quo opposition" spread broadly throughout the nation, Wallace's detailed platforms found appeal and support from more specific demographics. Similar to Perot, Wallace drew large support from self-declared independents. Unlike Perot, however, Wallace's voter demographic was very much distinct. First, males formed the clear majority in Wallace's support, making up 57.9% of his base.[61] While Perot also held appeal to male voters, this is a common trend with more conservative candidates and was not nearly as noteworthy with Perot. A gap of 14.2 percentage points, as in Wallace's case, is difficult to ignore. Additionally, more than half, 56.1%, of Wallace's vote came from the regional South.[62] Also, those raised in the South but living in other areas of the nation largely supported Wallace. Those in rural areas and small towns, characteristic of the South, also largely backed Wallace over his two major-party opponents. This support can mostly be drawn back to Wallace's stance on issues and the ever-present racial element.[63] When asked about their stances on segregation, Wallace voters stand diverse from those of Nixon and Humphrey. 37.5% stood in favor of strict segregation, 49.1% desired something "in between" and a mere 13.4% favored desegregation (*Table 1.4*). Comparatively, 36.2% of Nixon voters and 52.9% of Humphrey voters desired desegregation.[64] Further, voters with negative views of the civil rights movement makes up a distinct base for Wallace. Those who believed the rate at which civil rights leaders pushed was "too fast" made up 90% of Wallace's support, compared to 68.6% of Nixon's and 51.1% of Humphrey's (*Table 1.5*)[65]. In a different vein, Wallace voters supported pursuit of victory in Vietnam far more than those who sided with either Nixon or Humphrey.

Table 1.6   *Racial Politics*[66]

	Desgregation	In between	Segregation
Nixon	36.2	53	10.8
Humphrey	52.9	38	9.1
Wallace	13.4	49.1	37.5

Table 1.7   *Judgment of Rate at Which Civil Rights Leaders Have Pushed*[67]

	Too fast	About right	Too slow
Nixon	68.6	26.9	4.5
Humphrey	51.1	37	11.9
Wallace	90	10	0

This large appeal to Southern voters, rural voters, and lower class whites allowed Wallace to construct a regionalized base strong enough to win electoral votes. Wallace won his home state of Alabama with 65.9% of the votes. He won surrounding deep Southern states: Georgia with 42.8% of the vote, Mississippi with 63.5%, Arkansas with 38.9%, and Louisiana with 48.5%.[68] In states outside the Deep South, Wallace held some

[61] Carlson, 88.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid, 96.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] National Archives and Records Administration, "1968 Election for the Forty-Sixth Term" Last modified 2012. Accessed January 30, 2013. http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/votes/1965_1969.html

appeal to blue-collar workers and conservative Democrats wary of Nixon. Even without winning these electoral votes, Wallace was a thorn in Nixon's side. This effect brought Nixon's concessions to Wallace's platforms before Wallace potentially split the electoral vote and leveraged his electors. Wallace's upfront embracing of the role of "spoiler" in conjunction with a distinct regional/cultural appeal allowed him to perform the role of a third-party candidate. He did not truly seek the White House nor did he truly seek national appeal. He sought the concentrated votes that would allow him a position of leverage so as to place his platforms into the mainstream.

Conclusion

Both Perot and Wallace took dissimilar stances in very different political environments. Perot could not have found success in 1992 on a racially charged platform of "law and order" and states' rights any more than Wallace would have found success in 1968 on a broad "Washington is broken" platform. It, however, does demonstrate the strength of the distinction in Wallace's campaign, support, and outcome as compared to Perot's. There is a method, a strategy, a model that best works to fulfill a defined role of a third-party candidacy within the confines of a presidential election. If third-party candidates are to be relevant elements within presidential elections as seemingly desired by a number of voters, it would seem that success must be measured beyond playing only a voice of opposition. It is a narrow chance for the alignment of such circumstances to come about again and allow the employment of such a model in the vein of Wallace. However, as society, economy, environment, and foreign neighbors change with events and time, the possibility of such circumstances in which a third-party candidate might act does not remain impossible.

Third parties can have their ideas and platforms addressed or entered into the mainstream through other methods, specifically at lower-level politics or post-election influence. However, as third parties continue to run presidential candidates, potential success is not modeled by the much-touted 1992 campaign of H. Ross Perot. Hailing Perot as the third-party/independent model of success is inaccurate and contradictory to the role third parties should play within the structure of the presidential election process. By defining success as attention and widespread appeal but without any notable, direct effect within the election, Perot remains the frontrunner. However, such a definition is hollow of any measurable political impact. Though aided by circumstances, embracing of unfortunate positions, and falling short of his ultimate goals, Wallace's 1968 campaign remains the leading post-World War Two historical model of third-party success.

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