**Catholic Colonization of the Republican Elites**

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This presentation will discuss the rise of Catholic influence on the making of Republican positions since the Reagan era, as well as the rise of Catholic practitioners and converts among Republican leaders. This phenomenon is relatively new. In the past, Catholics aligned themselves with almost all Democratic ideas, they voted for Democratic candidates in the Presidential and congressional elections and many famous politicians of the Democratic Party were Catholics, thus symbolized by the Kennedy family. In more recent times, the ‘republicanization’ of the Catholics has become normalized and purports several explanations. The first is social. An upward Catholic mobility led a large portion of the Catholic electorate from the lower working classes to middle, and then to high-income brackets and levels of education- which, paradoxically, could have made them less religious or more distant from institutional inputs. Large portions of the Catholic population are Latino, Asiatic, and Afro-American and, therefore, remain Democratic for all the traditional reasons that explain such an affiliation. Because these parts of the Catholic population remain Democratic, the Republican Catholic today is likely to be white. These Republican Catholics could even come from a historically WASP background and yet are now tempted by the old-fashioned and deep-rooted Catholic style. In a sense, a lot of converts decided to become Catholics precisely because Catholicism is viewed as an ‘elitist’ religion, compatible with a preference for conservative order. The second, a classical explanation, is the rejection, by a large portion of Catholics, of the new liberal tendencies of the Democratic Party which first appeared during the 70’s, in the forms of sexual freedom, abortion, and later, gay rights. Suddenly, Catholics felt this party was no longer their home. The third explanation is ideological and most clearly underlines changes. New Catholic thinkers and lobbyists appeared and gained influence with their own explicit conservative ideas, parallel to the tenants of Neo-conservativism and the Religious Right. Step by step, their principle ideas and work became integrated in the Republican Party, which turned into a conservative Party. Now, the question is, what about the future? Is the ‘Catholicization' of the Republican Party over and if so, why?

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