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The Two New Yorks Revisited: The City and The State

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On February 3, 1997, five members of the New York State Assembly from upstate districts introduced a concurrent resolution petitioning Congress to allow the division of New York into two states. The proponents defended the resolution in the following terms: “Due to the extreme diversity of New York State, it has become almost ungovernable. It is extremely difficult to write good law which is fair to all concerned when you have areas as diverse as Manhattan and Jefferson County, for instance.”¹

This was certainly not the first proposal for geographical division of New York State, and it is unlikely that it will be the last. Regardless of whether the idea emanates from upstate or from New York City, it stands as a symbolic gesture of intense political frustration. People from New York City and people from other areas of the state and their political representatives often view each other with emotions ranging from bemusement to hostility. “Rural folk and city dwellers in many countries and over many centuries have viewed each other with fear and suspicion. . . . [T]he sharp differences—racial, religious, cultural, political—between New York City and upstate have aggravated the normal rural-urban cleavages.”²

As creations of modernity, cities challenge traditional culture by incubating liberal social and political attitudes; as the nation’s most international city, New York represents the greatest challenge to the traditions of rural life. “From its earliest times . . . New York was a place of remarkable ethnic, cultural, and racial differences.”³ The differences between people in New York City and those in the rest of the state are both long-standing and easily summarized: city residents have been and are less Protestant, more ethnically diverse, more likely to be foreign-born, and far more likely to be Democrats than people in the rest of the state.

The rural-urban dichotomy, however, is not based solely in culture and demography; it is also a function of each area's different relationships with government. Given the social interdependence that defines their existence, cities need more activist governments than do rural areas. The urban economy, for example, requires public transportation systems. While 54 percent of city residents use mass transit to get to work, fewer than 14 percent of residents in other parts of the state do. Urban density makes government regulation of multifamily housing construction and maintenance a critical issue. While over 70 percent of city households live in rental units, many of which are government price stabilized, fewer than 30 percent of households outside the city reside in rental units. Moreover, the nature and extent of urban social problems require roughly two-thirds of all state spending on welfare and health care programs in New York City. These different public-sector needs generate rural-urban conflicts over the size and scope of government generally as well as conflicts over the degree of autonomy that city government should have.

For much of the state's history these conflicts were considered within a context that defined the city as downstate and everything else as upstate. Although this dichotomy still has substantial cultural and psychological import, it excludes important aspects of recent state politics. The city's suburbs, geographically downstate but in many ways philosophically upstate, have emerged as a potent political force, and the larger upstate cities now share many of the urban problems once associated exclusively with downstate politics.

With these caveats in mind, this chapter takes a threefold approach to examining the relationship of New York City to the rest of the state. First, it establishes the legal context for the political interactions between state and city governments in New York. Second, it explores the socioeconomic bases for the political interactions between city and state representatives. And third, it analyzes the city's relative influence within the arenas where the political interactions occur.

The Legal Relationship: State Constraints on City Autonomy

With 40 percent of the state's population, New York City plays an important role in the state's social, economic, and political life. Indeed, elected and appointed state and city officials interact constantly on a host of intergovernmental issues including school aid formulas, Medicaid costs, and tax policy. Such interactions, whether between the governor and mayor, state and city service agencies, or city lobbyists and state legislators, are constrained by both legal rules and political variables.

The primary legal principle guiding state-city relationships is quite direct: cities are public corporations created by state law with authority derived

solely from the state.⁴ As they have in other states, local governments in New York have sought relief from the legal straightjacket of state control in the principle of home rule, i.e., the practice of providing localities with some degree of governing autonomy. After years of effort, advocates for city autonomy saw home rule enacted in New York. An amendment to the state constitution, incorporated in 1923, and the City Home Rule Law, enacted a year later, codified home rule in New York by defining local government authority over local “property, affairs and government.”⁵ However, when the principles of state preeminence and home rule conflict, as they often do, state courts have ruled consistently that a “state concern” doctrine preempts home rule.⁶

Despite the formal adoption of home rule, therefore, the state government continues to exercise considerable influence on city policymaking. Such influence takes the form of general rules applicable to all local governments as well as specific mandates applying only to New York City. There are four basic types of state constitutional and statutory restrictions on New York City’s autonomy including: limits on the city’s revenue-raising authority; limits on the city’s debt-issuing authority, state mandates requiring city action, and provisions for state administrative supervision of city operations.

Article XVI of the state constitution limits local governments to state-specified taxing authority, which once granted, is subject to continual state review. For city officials to institute a tax or change the rates of any revenue, other than the property tax, they must first receive approval from the state legislature. This stipulation applies even if officials want to lower tax rates, as in 1997 when Mayor Giuliani proposed removing the city share of the sales tax on clothing purchases under \$500. Even the property tax, the only constitutionally defined local revenue, is limited to an annual total of 2.5 percent of the “average full valuation of taxable real estate” in the city.⁷

The rigid state control of the city’s revenue-raising capacity is coupled with strict constitutional limitations on the city’s authority to contract debt and provide for its long-term capital needs. Total city debt is limited to 10 percent of a five-year rolling average of the full valuation of annual taxable real estate.⁸ Because debt limits are calculated as a percentage of the value of real property and because that value has decreased substantially in New York since the mid-1980s, the city has been forced in recent years to search for alternative methods to finance such needed capital programs as school construction and bridge maintenance and repair.

State mandates, the other side of the fiscal restrictions coin, require local governments to undertake some action; partially funded or unfunded mandates require them to assume some or all of the costs for the action. Studies have shown that New York State imposes a comparatively large number of mandates that collectively have a substantial fiscal impact.⁹ State legislative mandates, for example, force New York City to expend billions of dollars

annually on Medicaid and welfare. Indeed, in 1995, Mayor Giuliani initially supported *less state spending* in the city in these policy areas in order to save the city's mandated matching costs.

State administrative involvement in the city takes a number of forms. City agencies operate under administrative regulations that mandate state preclearance for and review of agency actions.¹⁰ Public authorities, created by the state legislature and governed by boards appointed largely by state officials, have administrative control of important city services. The governor's appointees, for example, control a majority of the seats on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which runs the city's transit system. Moreover, state fiscal monitors, created as a consequence of the 1975 fiscal crisis, still emerge periodically as influential participants in city politics.¹¹ In the early 1990s, for example, the state Financial Control Board openly pressured the Dinkins administration to move in the fiscal directions the board desired.¹²

On balance, therefore, court interpretations of the state constitution, continuing and recent statutory restrictions, and the increased use of public authorities provide the government in Albany with substantial influence over New York City. As a result, city officials must come to the state capital "hat in hand" seeking the resources and waivers from controls they need to govern effectively.

The Political Relationship: Diversity and Balance

Legal primacy aside, the state and city interact within a web of political relationships. Politics concerns choices about who gets what share of scarce resources, and one group's share is often perceived as another's loss. Political relationships, therefore, involve the conflicts emerging from the socioeconomic differences among groups of people, which to a large extent determine the nature of their interaction with government. Given its diversity, New York State provides a firm empirical base to study the political conflicts emerging from group differences.

Demography and Political Conflict

In the 1990s, New York City remains more heterogeneous than any other area of the state (Table 1.1). Despite the constancy of the fact of demographic differences between the city and the rest of the state, however, the nature of these differences has changed over the years.

During the first half of the twentieth century, *religious and ethnic divisions* carried regional political implications. New York City was home to large numbers of Catholic immigrants who supported the Democratic Party, as well

TABLE 1.1.
New York City/State: A socioeconomic profile.

	New York City	New York suburbs ¹	Upstate cities ²	Rural counties ³
<i>Percentage which is:</i>				
African American	25.6	9.1	25.0	2.2
Latino	24.1	7.2	5.0	1.7
Asian	6.9	2.7	2.0	0.1
Foreign-born	28.5	12.3	5.0	3.1
Catholic	39.8	50.2	43.5	25.9
Unemployed	9.3	4.5	9.0	7.0
Below poverty level	19.3	5.0	23.2	12.0
Female-headed household	35.3	12.9	41.5	28.0
Without high school diploma	31.7	17.3	29.0	25.0
Speak English poorly ⁴	20.0	6.2	4.8	2.0

1. Nassau, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester counties (includes city of Yonkers).
2. Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse.
3. 22 counties not within Standard Metropolitan Areas (SMAs) and with fewer than 100 people per square mile.
4. Self-described on 1990 census form.

as Jewish immigrants active in liberal reform movements, while upstate was populated largely with the Republican descendants of northern European Protestants. This division, reflected in local political conflicts over Prohibition, legislative reapportionment, and aid to parochial schools, came to have national implications as the city's ethnic voters helped form the national urban electoral base for the Democrat's "New Deal coalition," while upstate remained firmly Republican.

By the 1960s, much of the ethnic tension had been superseded by *racial distinctions* between an increasingly African-American and Latino New York City and the European-American rural areas and suburbs. In the 1950s and 1960s, millions of white residents, encouraged by federal subsidies, left the cities of the northeast and midwest to settle in suburbs. One of the largest migrations was the eastern and northern exodus from New York City. Initially settling in Nassau and Westchester Counties, the suburban migration would eventually expand into Suffolk County on the east end of Long Island, and Putnam and Rockland Counties to the north.¹³ Indeed, by the 1990s, Catholic ethnics were dispersed widely around the state, particularly in the suburbs, where, although they are often hostile to city interests, they are less conservative than the original suburban populations.¹⁴

While large numbers of white families were leaving New York City for the suburbs, the mechanization of southern agriculture, the racist policies of the Deep South, and the expectation of employment in the cities were producing a northern migration of African Americans. Following train lines north, blacks transformed themselves from a rural to an urban population and in so doing transformed national and state politics. "Between 1950 and 1974, as a result of the net out-migration of whites and in-migration of blacks and Hispanics, New York's black and Hispanic population rose from about 13 percent to 42 percent."¹⁵

By the 1990s, "people of color" made up a majority of New York City's population. From a macro perspective, the city's racial make-up is quite distinct from that of the rest of the state. A more focused analysis, however, yields a more nuanced picture. Although largely white, the suburbs include areas like Mount Vernon and Yonkers in Westchester County as well as communities in Nassau and Suffolk Counties with significant minority populations. In recent years, African Americans have been relocating to inner-ring suburbs, although racial discrimination makes that process more difficult than it was for their European-American counterparts.

Upstate cities also include large "minority" populations. Between 1980 and 1990, for example, the African-American population in Buffalo increased by more than 5 percent and now accounts for roughly one-quarter of that city's population. During that same ten-year period, Rochester saw a 16 percent increase in African Americans who by 1990 made up nearly one-third of the population.¹⁶ Because the negative impacts of racism are not geographically bounded, these upstate cities experience the same social and economic problems manifest in race relations downstate. Therefore, the general demographic picture affirming that New York City remains the most racially heterogeneous area of the state, while correct overall, may be masking important social nuances with cross-regional political implications.

The New York City experience with *foreign born* residents is *sui generis* in the state and perhaps in the nation. For most of its history, the city has been the port of entry for immigrants from around the globe. At the turn of the twenty-first century, over 30 percent of the city's population was foreign-born. The most recent arrivals are largely from the Caribbean, Asia, and Eastern Europe. By 1996, "more than 11 out of every 20 New Yorkers [were] immigrants or the children of immigrants."¹⁷

The city's role as port of entry continues to have political implications. Like mayors before him, Rudy Guiliani has become a national spokesperson for the rights of immigrants. The mayor resisted those elements of federal welfare reform that impacted negatively on legal immigrants. Moreover, with strong support from the Democratic State Assembly, he lobbied to change the governor's original plan to implement the welfare act in New York by arguing against proposals to remove immigrants from home relief.

Economics and Political Conflict

Economic status is a primary influence on group relationships with government. "Politics generally comes down, over the long run, to a conflict between those who have and those who have less. In state politics the crucial issues tend to turn around taxation and expenditure."¹⁸ In considering the city's political relationships with the state then, it is useful to examine the economic resources the city has and the economic demands the city makes on state government.

New York City's economy in the 1990s was characterized by a fundamental contradiction. While the city acts as the financial center of an increasingly global economy, it is also the regional center for seemingly intransigent social and economic problems. And in a related paradox, while the city's financial sector provides state government with large amounts of revenue, the extent of its social problems demands correspondingly large amounts of state expenditures.

At the top of New York's economy is a world-class city that "accounts for half of all securities traded on a global basis, leading London and Tokyo by a wide margin."¹⁹ The city's share of financial institutions and resources has led to "a single, shared global insight: New York is where the money is."²⁰ With just over 40 percent of the state's populations, the city accounted for: 44 percent of the state's personal income; 52 percent of state jobs in finance, insurance, and real estate; and more than 70 percent of "nonfamily households" in the state with incomes of \$100,000 or more.²¹ A 1992 study indicated that city residents paid roughly 39 percent of total state revenues and receive back roughly 39 percent in value of state services. In fact, when commuter taxes are added to the equation, the city accounted for nearly 45 percent of state revenue.²²

Conversely, the city has a greater concentration of social and economic problems than rural areas and other cities in the state and far greater difficulty than the suburbs (see Table 1.1). As a consequence of the concentration of social and economic problems, over 60 percent of all the state's household on public assistance and 72 percent of all Medicaid personal care cases reside in the city, and two-thirds of all state funds allocated for these two programs are spent in the city.²³ Maintaining state spending on social welfare programs, therefore, will be of primary interest to a population with such needs, just as reducing such spending is of interest to people further removed economically and geographically from the problems.

Such contradictions are not new. The city's economy has always included large numbers of people at polar ends of the economic continuum, as the wealth produced by the city's business sector existed side by side with the poverty of newly arrived immigrants. In the past, that economic chasm was bridged by a growing middle class employed largely in the city's then substantial manufacturing sector.

Since the 1970s, however, part of the middle-class bridge has left the city as have many of the manufacturing jobs that supported them. The income gap between rich and poor, which grew wider across the country in the 1990s, is greater in New York than in any other state, and a large part of it results from the bifurcation in the city's economy.²⁴ Moreover, the gap between low-income people and other city residents has become increasingly rigid as poor families, locked into poor neighborhoods with substandard schools, see their economic plight perpetuated from one generation to the next. With the highest unemployment figures in the state and with over 30 percent of its school-age population not finishing high school, the city may be seeing several more generations locked into economic stagnation.

The city's socioeconomic dichotomy, a result of national and international economic transformations and segregated housing and job markets, produces intense political reactions among the victims that, in turn, generate increased resistance from beneficiaries of the status quo. The resulting deep political divisions provoke maximum conflict potential and allow minimum conflict accommodation among the diverse groups and the public officials representing them.

In summary, New York City remains generally distinct from the rest of the state in terms of the overall diversity of its population and the extent of its socioeconomic problems. In the past, these characteristics encouraged the city's representatives in Albany to be the state's primary spokespersons for liberal social and economic programs. In the future, we should expect that city representatives, particularly those who represent communities with severe social and economic problems, will take the lead in fighting the political battle against retrenchment of the welfare state. It is useful to note, however, that the social problems that plague the city are also present in upstate cities and in some parts of rural communities. In many of these areas, the counterbalance of growth at the top of the economy is not present as it is in New York City. As the century ends, it may be only the psychological depth of the upstate-down-state chasm that keeps cross-regional coalitions from redefining state politics.

The Political Arenas

The political conflicts generated by the diverse interests outlined above are most directly evident within the three political arenas: of the state legislature, statewide electoral contests, and the relationships between the mayor and state government officials. It is within these three venues that the city's political resources are particularly effective in pushing an urban agenda by counterbalancing both the influence of the state's other regions and the legal primacy of state government.

New York City and Legislature Politics

Since 1975, control of the state legislature has been divided with the Democrats firmly in charge of the Assembly and the Republicans holding a majority in the Senate. Under a highly partisan system, majority party conferences charge their legislative leaders with developing unified policy positions and representing them in negotiations with the other house and the governor. To assist the leaders in their task, the conferences grant them the authority to select the chairs and majority members of committees, to fill lower leadership positions, and to allocate staff among members. The majority party conference, therefore, effectively makes the policy decisions for each house.

The majority conferences reflect the regional nature of party politics in the state. While the Republican majority in the Senate includes mostly suburban and rural members, there is a decided “downstate cast” to the Democratic conference in the Assembly. Since gaining control of the Assembly in 1974, more than 60 percent of the Democratic conferences each session and all five Assembly speakers have been from New York City.

Given the city’s influence, it is not surprising that for a quarter century, the Assembly has emphasized a liberal approach to government, which includes support for social spending and protection of civil liberties. Democrats in the Assembly continue to be significantly more liberal than Republicans, and New York City Democrats remain the most liberal of the regional groupings (Table 1.2). This was quite evident in the Assembly’s opposition to a number of Governor Pataki’s initiatives, including ones to cut benefits for welfare families, increase tuition for SUNY/CUNY students, mandate drug testing for welfare recipients, and increase sentences for juvenile offenders. The liberal approach was also evident in the Assembly’s strong support for continued rent regulations, the perennial effort to secure a larger proportion of state school aid for city schools, and a series of bias-related crime bills that defined sexual orientation as a protected category.

The Democratic conference, however, is not ideologically monolithic. Party conferences in the legislature reflect the diversity of party interests in the electorate, and issue positions that may appear “rock solid” on the floor are often the result of negotiations among conference factions. As a rule, upstate Democrats are less liberal than their New York City counterparts. In fact, a number of upstate Democrats campaign with Conservative party cross-endorsement. The Democratic leadership simply cannot afford to ignore the interests of these upstate members, however, if the party is to hold its majority in the Assembly. Indeed, in seeking to overcome Assembly opposition to the 1995 tax cuts, the Pataki administration targeted upstate districts represented by moderate Democrats for “attack ads” in what proved to be

TABLE 1.2.
The New York State Legislature: An ideological profile.

Liberalism scale ratings 1995–96					
Assembly			Senate		
Democrats		Republicans	Democrats		Republicans
90.1	Overall	29.1	75.4	Overall	7.3
93.7	NYC	60.8	82.8	NYC	14.0
88.0	Suburban	41.2	na	Suburban	6.8
82.3	Upstate	19.1	51.8	Upstate	5.4
96.8	Black and Hispanic caucus				
90.1	Upstate cities				

Note: Liberalism is measured by ratings given legislators by the ADA, American for Democratic Action. They choose bills that support liberal ideas (more state assistance to the poor, more regulation to protect consumers, and protection of civil liberties and civil rights), and give legislators higher scores if they vote for more of such bills.

a largely successful effort to influence the party conference from inside on the tax issue.

The diversity within the Democratic conference is not solely regional. Although the New York City delegation includes a decisive majority of white “liberals” and African-American and Hispanic members who emphasize civil liberties and social welfare programs, it also includes a small group of “moderates” who represent white working-class areas of the outer boroughs and who emphasize more conservative social agendas. In recent years, three of these downstate Democrats have accepted Conservative party cross-endorsement, which has proven important to electoral success in their white-ethnic districts.

In summary, despite some internal tensions, the Assembly Democratic Conference takes issue positions reflective of its New York City base. The strong “liberal direction” of some of these positions, which are often unpopular in upstate districts and in some city neighborhoods, is a function of the Democrats’ large majority in the Assembly. If that majority were to shrink, the politics around policy formulation would, in all likelihood, become more accommodative of moderate positions.

In contradistinction, the majority conference in the Senate is composed largely of upstate rural “conservatives” and suburban “moderates.” Of the 35–26 Senate majority the Republicans held in 1997, for example, nineteen were

from upstate areas of the state, 11 were from suburban districts, and only five were from New York City. Nevertheless, even in so “nonurban” a body, New York City is not without impact.

The city’s influence in the Senate arises from the critical nature of its vote block. With only a slim legislative majority, the Senate leadership must be constantly aware that the party’s continued success is a function, in no small part, of electoral support for Republican senators from in New York City and that maintaining this support requires addressing at least some of their city constituents’ needs.

In extraordinary cases, a small block can gain political leverage by threatening to act as a swing vote, i.e., join their votes with those of the minority party and create a new majority on the floor.²⁵ This does not occur often because potential swing voters are as willing as others to negotiate within conference and settle for a compromise that keeps in place the benefits of strong leadership. Moreover, legislative leaders can impose sanctions on rebellious members. Such rebellions, therefore, are likely to occur only on issues of conscience or when the fear of external sanctions outweighs concerns over leadership authority, such as in the recent battle over rent regulations.

In January 1997, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno announced that, without basic changes in the system of rent stabilization, the Senate would allow the program to expire later that summer. The consequences of such an abrupt termination to a long-standing policy escaped neither city tenants protected by the regulations nor the five Republican Senators who represented them.²⁶ The Assembly speaker and the Senate minority leader immediately announced their support for continued rent regulations.

The five Senate Republicans from the city were faced with a clash between party loyalty and constituent interest. With twenty-seven Democratic Senate votes solidly in support of continued rent regulations, four Republican votes would serve as a swing vote on the issue. Two of the Republicans announced their support for continued rent regulation; the others attempted with varying degrees of success to deflect the issue in public statements. In the end, it became clear that pressure from this block of potential swing voters coupled with gubernatorial misplays and a firm Assembly position convinced the Senate Majority Leader to reach a compromise settlement favorable to city tenants.

The rent regulation issue highlights two important points: One, even without the threat of a swing vote defeating him on the floor, the majority leader would have faced the prospect that, because of the intensity of the issue to so many city voters, “success” on his original proposal may have cost the Republicans their majority in the 1998 elections. And two, New York City’s friends, who largely control the Assembly, are few but strategically located within the Republican-controlled state Senate.

New York City and Statewide Elections

The unwritten rule for winning statewide elections in New York is simple: Republican candidates must maximize their winning margins in upstate New York, secure the suburban vote, and hold down their losing margins in New York City; Democratic candidates, on the other hand, need to carry the city by a wide margin, run close in the suburbs, and hold down their losing margins upstate. Since the end of World War II, successful gubernatorial candidates from both parties have built their campaigns around this strategy. Republican governors, like Thomas Dewey and Nelson Rockefeller, attended to city interests and were rewarded with sufficient urban support to win seven statewide contests between them (Table 1.3). Rockefeller, in particular, developed good working relationships with union leaders and prominent Democrats in the city, which served him well in his four gubernatorial campaigns. Democrats Averell Harriman, Hugh Carey, and Mario Cuomo based their combined six victories at least in part on the overwhelming support of New York City voters.

Historically then, the city's focused vote block has been an important statewide political resource. Indeed, the fact that a city resident has served as governor for fifty-eight of the last ninety-seven years is further evidence of this importance. The development of the suburbs and the proportionately smaller turnout of the city's increasing number of low-income voters, however, have decreased the salience of the city vote over the years. As recently as 1950, city voters accounted for nearly one-half of the votes cast in statewide elections; in the 1990s, that total dropped to barely 30 percent while the

TABLE 1.3.
New York City/State: Republican gubernatorial victories

Vote	NYC	Suburbs	Upstate cities	Rural counties	NYC % of state
<i>Percentage or vote won by republicans:</i>					
1994 Pataki	27	53	49	65	30
1970 Rockefeller	47	58	47	59	41
1966 Rockefeller	39	53	40	52	41
1962 Rockefeller	44	64	49	65	42
1958 Rockefeller	43	65	56	68	41
1950 Dewey	44	68	54	69	49
1946 Dewey	46	76	60	73	51
1942 Dewey	37	68	59	71	48

Note: Voting data for upstate cities reflects county vote.
See Table 1.1 for definitions of areas.

suburban vote rose from 12 percent to nearly one-quarter of the total. In an era where the allocation of state resources is increasingly seen as a zero-sum game, the fact that the city is losing statewide electoral influence relative to the suburbs has important political implications.

In 1994 George Pataki won election with a smaller percentage of the New York City vote than any other successful gubernatorial candidate in the twentieth century. He accomplished this largely by winning a substantial majority of a notably large upstate turnout. Whereas previous Republican governors had averaged roughly 40 percent of the city vote, Pataki captured just over one-quarter of the city. Continuing upstate economic problems combined with the absence of the once powerful anti-Cuomo factor in rural areas, however, may mean that the city vote was more important to Pataki in 1998. Indeed, many of the governor's initiatives, such as using his control of the Metropolitan Transit Authority to lower automobile tolls and mass transit fares in the city as well as his support for economic and recreational development on Manhattan's West Side Point, can be viewed as an attempt to broaden his city support base for the 1998 election.

The Mayor in Albany

Much of the city's influence in the period between statewide elections is played out in the ongoing relationships between the mayor and state officials. The governor and mayor have conflicting responsibilities. It is the mayor's job to secure the city's interests in Albany; it is the governor's job to consider the city's interests within the context of the entire state. "As the two leading elected officials in a populous and nationally influential state, the governor and mayor cannot avoid friction or even overt collision; their cooperation is always tense."²⁷

Mayors push the city's agenda in a variety of ways. The mayor makes several largely symbolic but nevertheless important trips to Albany each session to lobby for or against legislation impacting the city's interests. Mayors have used their local political skills to try and influence state legislators from city districts and their media access to make the city's policy positions more broadly known around the state. In the 1960s, Mayor John Lindsay attempted to create a coalition of the "big six" city mayors in the state as an urban lobbying force in Albany. Mayors have also had a continuing institutional presence in the state capital in the form of the city's Legislative Affairs Office. This office monitors policy proposals to ascertain their impact on the city and lobbies for the mayor's legislative initiatives in Albany and against initiatives perceived as harmful to city interests.

The interactions between the mayor and state officials are inherently political. While the governor holds the legal upper hand in the relationship, a

persuasive mayor can influence the governor's political fortunes with city voters. In that regard, however, political party appears to play a limited role in the relationship between the two executives. Indeed, several of the better working relationships have been between governors and mayors of different parties while some of the more intensely negative ones have involved executives from the same party. Democratic Governor Herbert Lehman and Republican Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia had a notably positive working relationship as did Republican Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Democratic Mayor Robert Wagner. On the other hand, Rockefeller and John Lindsay, a Republican mayor for his first term, were open political enemies, and the relationships between Democratic governors Hugh Carey and Mario Cuomo with Democratic mayors Abraham Beame and Ed Koch were often tense and difficult.

Personality issues notwithstanding, there may be more systemic explanations for this counterintuitive dynamic. Party labels often mean something very different to executives than they do at the legislative level. As mentioned above, the historic need for Republican governors to hold down their margin of loss in the city has encouraged them to broaden their political base and address city interests, a process which can only prove helpful to Democratic mayors and distressing to Republican party loyalists. Moreover, sharing partisan affiliations may actually further strain inherent institutional tensions by generating intraparty leadership competition between the state's chief executive and the mayor from the world's media capital.

Despite Guiliani's support for Cuomo's reelection in 1994, he and Governor Pataki built a good *public* working relationship over the course of the governor's first term. Early on, the governor concluded a watershed-preservation agreement between the city and a number of upstate communities that removed, at least for the time being, the threat that the city would have to borrow billions of dollars in capital funds to construct a major purification system for its water supply. Moreover, gubernatorial vetoes prevented the city from having to implement expensive wage and pension bills enacted by the legislature at the behest of the city's police and teachers. In turn, Guiliani's specific criticisms of Pataki's welfare plan and property-tax cut proposal have been tempered by consistent praise of the governor's overall record.

The mayor's relationship with the legislature, however, has been far rockier. Over the last quarter century, Democratic mayors have been able to rely on generally strong support for their initiatives from the Assembly majority. As a fusion mayor, however, Guiliani has a more complex relationship with the legislature.²⁸ "Fusion mayors encounter upstate Republican legislators who doubt the mayor's party loyalty and New York City Democratic legislators who regard him as a city hall interloper."²⁹ While Democrats in the Assembly are focused on helping their constituents in the city, they are not especially

interested in accomplishing this in ways that accrue political benefits to a Republican mayor. Such hesitancy was only enforced in Guiliani's initial relationships with the legislature, which included calls for less social spending in the city. Further complicating the picture, Senate Republicans had every reason to doubt Guiliani's party loyalty in wake of the mayor's endorsement of Mario Cuomo in 1994. Since those early days, however, the mayor's relationship with state legislators improved as political mutuality of interests overcame personality issues.³⁰

Conclusions

Over the course of the twentieth century, the relationship between New York City and State has been one of constancy and change. The city remains the most heterogeneous area in the state, although the nature of the heterogeneity has changed. The city continues to generate wealth for the state, although it makes expensive demands on state social service resources, and it continues to be a center of Democratic party and liberal politics in the state, although there are internal pressures to restructure its welfare state. Moreover, the once all-encompassing upstate-downstate division has been complicated by suburban growth and the appearance of downstate economic and social problems in upstate cities.

In Albany, elected representatives of these diverse forces contest for their constituents' share of state resources. In recent years, an inconsistent state economy and a more conservative national political climate have threatened the social programs so critical to many city residents. The election of a Republican governor in 1994, with notably little support in the city, coupled with a Republican Senate, focused largely on suburban and rural interests, makes the Assembly the "last bastion" of city interests in Albany. There is good reason to suspect a continuation of the kind of geographically based partisan politics characterized by the current tripartite breakdown of political power.

There is, however, an alternative scenario based on reformulated political coalitions. The spread of economic and social problems to the suburban inner rings and the ubiquity of these problems in upstate cities may eventually lead to the development of a cross-regional progressive coalition favoring redistributive policies. Such a coalition would find much of its conservative opposition not in another region of the state but from wealthier areas of the same cities and suburbs, which provide it with support. Under such a scenario, cross-regional partisan battles would supersede the geographical partisanship so apparent today.

Notes

1. New York State Senate, *Introducer's Memorandum in Support*, A3663, February 5, 1997, referred to Local Governments Committee.
2. David Ellis, *New York: State and City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), p. 198.
3. Neal Peirce and Jerry Hagstrom, *The Book of America: Inside the Fifty States Today* (New York: Norton, 1983), p. 40.
4. The common legal term for state preeminence is *Dillon's rule*.
5. See Article IX, *New York State Constitution*; and *New York Laws of 1924*, chapter 363.
6. For a discussion, see Richard Briffault, "Intergovernmental Relations," in Gerald Benjamin, ed., *The New York State Constitution: A Briefing Book* (New York: The Temporary State Commission on Constitutional Revision, 1994), pp. 119–38.
7. *New York State Constitution*, Article VIII, Section 10.
8. *New York State Constitution*, Article VIII, Section 4.
9. See Steven Gold and Sarah Ritchie, "The Role of the State in the Finances of Cities and Counties in New York," in Jeffrey Stonecash, John White and Peter Colby, eds., *Governing New York State, 3rd ed.* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 67.
10. Wallace Sayre and Herbert Kaufman, *Governing New York City* (New York: Russell Sage, 1960), pp. 564–84.
11. For a thorough discussion of the state fiscal monitors, see Robert Bailey, *The Crisis Regime* (Albany: SUNY, 1984), pp. 15–46.
12. See Robert F. Pecorella, *Community Power in a Postreform City* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), pp. 120–22.
13. The Regional Plan Association now considers the metropolitan area around New York City to include three states and twenty counties. See Robert Yaro and Tony Hiss, *A Region at Risk* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996), pp. 19–21.
14. See Lee Miringoff and Barbara Carvalho, *The Cuomo Factor* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Marist Institute, 1986), chap. 3.
15. Twentieth Century Fund, *New York World City* (Cambridge, MA: Oelgeschlager, Gunn and Hain, 1980), p. 62.
16. Ester Fuchs and J. Phillip Thompson, "Racial Politics in New York State," in Stonecash, White and Colby, p. 32.
17. David Halbfinger, "Immigrants Continue to Reshape the City," *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1997, B3.
18. V. O. Key, *Southern Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1949), p. 307; quoted in Jeffrey Stonecash, *American State and Local Politics* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace, 1995), p. 7.
19. Yaro and Hiss, pp. 26–31.
20. Kirk Johnson, "Crisis in Asia Brings World to New York," *New York Times*, January 12, 1998, B1.
21. Census data
22. Richard Perez-Pena, "The Tax Pipeline to Albany: Does It Flow North or South?" *New York Times*, May 10, 1997, p. 1.

23. Citizens's Budget Commission, *New York City and New York State Finances: Fiscal Year 1997–98* (pocket ed.), table VII; New York City Comptroller's, *News Report*, May 27, 1997; *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1995, table K–24.

24. Richard Perez-Pena, "Study Shows New York Has Greatest Income Gap," *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1997, p. 1.

25. For an example of the swing vote phenomenon, see Robert F. Pecorella, "Federal Mandates, State Policy Coalitions, and Hazardous Waste Management in New York State," in Stonecash, White and Colby, pp. 338–43.

26. There was also opposition to Bruno from several suburban Republican senators whose districts had rent-stabilized housing.

27. Wallace Sayre, "The Mayor," in Lyle Fitch and Annmarie Hauck Walsh, eds., *Agenda for a City* (New York: Sage, 1970), p. 586.

28. Fusion mayors in city history are those elected by a coalition of Republican and Liberal party support. Mayors Seth Low, John Purroy Mitchell, Fiorello LaGuardia, John Lindsay, and Rudy Guiliani are the five fusion mayors elected since Greater New York was formed in 1898.

29. Sayre, "The Mayor," p. 587.

30. David Firestone, "Study in Harmony," *New York Times*, April 13, 1997, p. 33.