ABSTRACT

The Path to Party Unity:
Popular Presidential Leadership and Principled Consensus

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This dissertation examines the role of presidential rhetoric in the process of partisan regime creation. I identify three types of presidential rhetoric: principled, ideological, and pragmatic. I contend that principled rhetoric is necessary to achieve the reconstruction of a new partisan regime. Furthermore, the two variant forms of presidential rhetoric—ideological and pragmatic—contribute to a specific pattern of regime destabilization and construction. That pattern begins with the emergence of an oppositional candidate employing ideological leadership while opposing the regime party and followed by a pragmatic response from the regime party. This combination of ideological rhetoric of the opposition party, which lacks broad appeal, and the broadly appealing pragmatic rhetoric of the regime party leads to an influx of interests and groups into the regime party's coalition. Far from strengthening the regime party, however, the pragmatic rhetoric employed tends to confuse the partisan consensus that bound the party together, and that confusion leads to a period of regime destabilization. The vulnerability

of the regime party creates an opportunity for a president employing principled rhetoric to reconstruct a new partisan regime.

To demonstrate these variations in presidential leadership, as well as the specific pattern of regime reconstruction, I employ two case studies of major regime reconstruction in American history, which both reveal a common pattern of destabilization and reconstruction. The first begins with the ideological rhetoric of William Jennings Bryan, the pragmatic response of William McKinley, the party destabilization of the progressive era, and the principled reconstruction of Franklin Roosevelt. I then turn to the ideological rhetoric of Barry Goldwater, the pragmatic response of Lyndon Johnson, the party destabilization of the late 1960s and 1970s, and the principled reconstruction of Ronald Reagan. This dissertation demonstrates the power of presidential rhetoric to unify a political party behind a principled conception of the common good, as well as the power of rhetoric to drastically shift partisan dynamics by fragmenting the party into ideological or pragmatic factionalism.

The Path to Party Unity: Popular Presidential Leadership and Principled Consensus

by

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A Dissertation

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CHAPTER ONE

Rhetorical Leadership and the Reconstructive Process

Introduction

This dissertation examines how principled presidential rhetoric affects partisan coalitional dynamics, and ultimately how it contributes to partisan regime reconstruction. I evaluate how presidents use political principles to define party unity in a way that creates a diverse but coherent partisan coalition; these principles provide clear and concrete public policy goals that advance the specific interests of coalition members. Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, for instance, made arguments about liberalism and conservatism that united diverse groups within their party, clearly demarcated differences between the parties, and advocated specific public policy programs that instantiated the principles guiding their rhetoric. Principled rhetorical leadership, when employed at a time of regime vulnerability, is necessary to create a new consensus between diverse coalitional groups that can come together around shared principles. This explanation of presidential leadership contributes to scholarship that focuses on partisan coalitional regimes that are united and endure by virtue of shared principles and goals. Since the concept was articulated by Stephen Skowronek, political scientists have attempted to explain the president's role in reconstructing partisan regimes. I intend to provide a rigorous account of the rhetoric necessary for such reconstruction.

My account of principled rhetorical leadership does more than clarify reconstructive rhetoric itself. It also clarifies the role rhetoric plays in other stages of the

reconstructive cycle more broadly by elucidating variant forms of rhetorical leadership that occur within and spur on the regime cycle. These rhetorical variations bring into relief certain patterns or tendencies within the process of regime degeneration and reconstruction. Beyond clarifying the character of reconstructive leadership, therefore, my typology of rhetorical leadership sheds new light on how presidential rhetoric contributes to a process whereby a dominant regime loses efficacy and new principles proffering a new coalitional consensus emerge, eventually forming the basis of a new partisan regime. Thus, a rigorous account of presidential rhetoric and its influence over coalitional maintenance explains the creation of a new partisan regime.

Literature Review

Classic Accounts of the Political Party: Pluralist and Choice Models

Contemporary literature relating to political parties developed out of two alternative accounts of how political parties organize and mobilize public opinion in support of public policies and politicians. Each could be described metaphorically by the direction of dynamic force within the party: are parties vitalized from the bottom-up, stimulated by the various groups comprising the party; or are parties directed from the top-down, set in motion by the political elites that articulate and pursue a party's basic goals and commitments? These different conceptions of the party, moreover, provide different explanations of the role and the influence of the president and his rhetorical leadership over the political party. Those conceiving of parties as bottom-up collections of diverse groups tend to emphasize the limited role of leadership over those groups. Alternatively, presidential leadership is far more important in those accounts that view

parties as principally top-down organizations. Each account derives from a seminal contribution to political party literature, while also pointing back to a firm foundation in American political thought.

The bottom-up conception of party traces back to James Madison's Federalist #10, which John Aldrich identifies as the "interest aggregating" explanation of parties.[1] I call this the pluralist model because, according to this theory, parties collect a plurality of diverse groups with little thought to philosophic coherence of these groups. V.O. Key represents the modern political science link back to Madison, since he focused on parties' capacities to generate consensus among a plurality of groups.[2] In this account, the president acts as the haggler-in-chief, and whether this role comes to him as the legislative agenda setter or as leader of a party, he garners support by wheedling and buying it.[3] In other words, power is relational, and the president must reckon with the diversity of interests and influences driving partisan dynamics. As Key put it: "Wall Street has the power. The labor barons have the power. The inner ring of Democratic (or Republican) politicians has the power. A clique of businessmen and military bureaucrats runs the country."[4] Presidential rhetoric, therefore, is limited by the need for consensus, and often is vague or subdued in a way reflecting the many (sometimes conflicting) preferences within the party; presidential leadership is most influential in a non-public context. Of course, Key is not suggesting that parties are incoherent pluralities, but his

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[1] John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), 8.

[2] V.O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1958); Robert Dahl, *Who Governs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

[3] Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*, 708.

[4] Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*, 5.

account of partisan consensus brings into focus the extent to which parties organize a *diversity* of interests.

Just as the bottom-up account reflects the thought of Madison, the top-down account also grew out of the influence of a scholar-statesman. Woodrow Wilson emphasized and drew out the starkly ideological character of political parties—offering them a degree of homogeneity not evident in the pluralistic, Madisonian party. By doing so, Wilson sought to offer the electorate a choice between parties with more clearly defined policy outlooks. This top-down account of parties is often called the choice model.[5] E.E. Schattschneider more explicitly theorized Wilson's account of partisan choice and responsibility. He rejected the pluralist interpretation of parties: "whatever else the parties may be, they are not associations of voters who support the party candidates."[6] The party is instead "a political enterprise conducted by a group of working politicians *supported* by partisan voters."[7] Paradoxically, the control of parties' agendas by political elites makes them democratic. When parties are controlled by exclusive groups of political elites, they can present the people with a straightforward and coherent political program, for which they can be held accountable; by contrast, the less elite and exclusive the party becomes, the more room opens up for a few wealthy and powerful

[5] There are other scholars taking a top-down view of parties that are not necessarily part of the "choice" school, and who do not focus on the president as a leader of the party. See, for instance: Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Aldrich, *Why Parties*. Additionally, there are other interesting contemporary accounts that have focused on the president as the leader of a party, but focus more on presidential leadership over the party organization rather than rhetorical or ideological leadership—most notably, Daniel Klinghard, *The Nationalization of American Political Parties, 1880-1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and Daniel Galvin, Presidential *Party Building: Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[6] E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942), 53.

[7] Schattschneider, *Party Government*, 59.

special interests to take control and exercise power for their narrow purposes. Thus, the top-down, elite character of parties ensures that they remain democratic. Presidential rhetoric in this account is vital to party unity, because it is the primary means for the party to articulate a principled vision and a political program that organizes the party. The presidential nomination and election process provides an opportunity for the party to convey its purpose—to "frame the question and define the issue"—and thereby to test the people's commitment to such a purpose. Although Schattschneider would not contend that parties are simply homogenous, he explained that parties provide voters with a clear choice, and the clearer that choice, the more responsible they would be for implementing the policies of their platform. This suggests that the democratic character of parties follows from a top-down *unity* of political programming.

Developments in the Choice Model: Political Primaries and their Critics

These models of presidential leadership over the political party have precipitated several lines of scholarship. But perhaps the most significant influence of the choice school was in political practice, not in theory. Schattschneider's account of responsible party government, especially in the 1950 APSA report "Toward a More Responsible Two Party System," encouraged institutional changes that culminated the 1968 McGovern-Fraser Commission, which established in nearly every state the political primary as the principal method for parties to select their presidential nominee.[8] Removing the locus of deciding the party's nominee from the national convention to the primaries in states was intended to encourage presidential candidates to offer a unique and cohesive political

[8] "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties," *APSR* 44, no. 3 (1950), Part 2,Supplement.

program of their own, rather than a hodge-podge of peculiar preferences of state and local parties that the convention system tended to exaggerate.

In response to these changes, however, political scientists from the pluralistic tradition like Nelson Polsby and James W. Ceaser criticized the primary for subverting the party's traditional function of generating a bottom-up consensus. Rather than making parties more cohesive, they argued, the primary placed a premium upon ideological demagoguery among primary candidates that radicalized party factions, making consensus nearly impossible.[9] Ceaser and Polsby argued that these changes encouraged the decline of political parties—including the increase of "independents" and the loss of party cohesion—that was prevalent in the 1970s.

Today it is evident that parties have not declined, and in fact have become far more robust. Ceaser's and Polsby's insights nevertheless remain relevant. Parties today are fiercely polarized along ideological lines, and the political primary and its emphasis on ideological presidential leadership encouraged this very polarization. John Aldrich observes, for instance, that the primary encourages presidential candidates to make promises to the ideological extremes of the party in order to win the party's nomination, even though this moves the president away from the median voter that presidential candidates must appeal to in the general election.[10] This conflict points back to Ceaser and Polsby's central insight that ideological, top-down leadership encourages more disharmony than cohesion in the party by spurring on the most strident, compromise-averse elements within the party.

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[9] Ceaser, *Presidential Selection*; Nelson Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[10] Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, 169-201.

This criticism of the choice school is closely related to (and indeed, in some cases, overlaps with) another body of scholarship that evaluated the way that contemporary emphasis on presidential rhetorical leadership ultimately diminished the president's capacity to work with Congress or to influence public opinion in support of his legislative initiatives. This is the "going public" line of scholarship.[11] The "going public" critique parallels the pluralist one in that both argue that the choice school effectively undermines the very goals it seeks to achieve. Thus, just as pluralists argue that in seeking to increase party cohesion the political primary—the institutional reform associated with the choice school—weakens unity, the "going public" scholars assert that presidential leadership modeled on the bully pulpit actually makes presidential rhetoric less effective. Public opinion is far too ephemeral a foundation to give the president any lasting influence, and going public erodes the older, insider, and pluralistic foundations for presidential leadership. These insights spawned a vibrant contemporary literature dedicated to showing that the president's rhetoric has at best a qualified effect (and at worst none at all) at generating public support to achieve policy goals.[12] The proliferation of ideological gridlock and the widespread doubt about presidential effectiveness or influence over both congressional and public opinion reflect the largely negative evaluation of the presidentially-focused choice school of parties and presidents.

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[11] James W. Ceaser, Glen E. Thurow, Jeffrey K. Tulis, Joseph M. Bessette, "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Spring 1981); Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Samuel Kernell, *Going Public* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1986, 2007).

[12] George C, Edwards III, *The Strategic President: Persuasion and Opportunity in Presidential Leadership* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009); Brandon Rottinghaus, *The Provisional Pulpit: Modern Presidential Leadership and Public Opinion* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010); Brandice Canes-Wong, *Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Dan Wood, *The Myth of Presidential Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Developments in the Pluralist Model: Realignment and its Critics

Meanwhile, the pluralist model has its own intellectual progeny, though its contemporary iterations reflect largely the same ambivalence about presidential rhetorical leadership as its intellectual predecessors. The pluralist model blended well with the developing partisan realignment theory on account of their shared interests in coalitional dynamics and the periodic organization and reorganization of discrete electoral groups. Key actually took the first steps in developing this theory himself by articulating two different models of realignment that defined the field for years to come: critical realignments, which evince abrupt breaks in coalitional arrangements, and secular realignments, which witness slow sociological changes that prompt slowly developing coalitional changes.[13]

Political scientists have criticized realignment theory for a number of reasons, especially for failing to establish a consensus on periodization, leading many to doubt the intelligibility of a periodization schema.[14] The coalitional model of political parties now emphasizes a much more fluid process of coalition building and maintenance wherein groups within parties constantly vie for influence to implement their specific goals. Thus there is less reason to look for any overarching coherence to coalitional partnerships that defines electoral alignments.[15] David Karol and Daniel DiSalvo, for instance, represent

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[13] V.O. Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections," *The Journal of Politics* 17, no. 1 (1955); V.O. Key, "Secular Realignment and the Party System," *The Journal of Politics* 21, no. 2 (1959); Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1970).

[14] David Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); *The End of Realignment?* Ed. Byron E. Shafer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

[15] David Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Daniel DiSalvo, *Engines of Change: Party Factions in American Politics, 1868-2010* (New

two interesting examples within the coalitional model, in spite of their differences. The former conceives of parties as a collection of self-interested groups, whose changing preferences drive partisan policy positions; the latter thinks that parties are generally more cohesive, but explains the influence of partisan factions, which arise intermittently, whose ideological and material fervor drive periods of major partisan change. Both examples are ambivalent about presidential leadership. Despite their explicit attempt to theorize outside of an exclusively "bottom-up" or "top-down" model,[16] both come down on the side of a pluralist conception of the party. Neither emphasizes any ideologically coherent party unity, and in this sense both maintain a distinctive pluralistic conception of party: aggregating varied preferences of discrete groups within the party. In terms of the possibilities of presidential leadership and rhetoric, both reflect pluralist assumptions that presidents are at the mercy of the heterogeneous conflicting interests dividing the party, meaning that they are sometimes led by coalitional dynamics, and sometimes lead them. It is less clear if and why the president occupies a position as the leader of the party.

Synthesizing the Two Approaches in Partisan Regime Theory

While the pluralist and choice models of the political parties evolved separately, partisan regime theory is a third model of the political party which adopts insights from both alternatives. The theory emphasizes several salient themes that can be found in one or another of the models: how public groups cooperate to form a coalition, the importance of ideas that tie those groups together, and the role of the president in

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York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[16] Karol, *Party Position Change*, 7; DiSalvo, *Engines of Change*, 27.

expressing those ideas through public rhetoric. The concept of a regime refers to a specific political vision of governing values that form the basis of a political consensus which unites a specific coalition of different groups. That consensus on shared political principles provides an array of public policies that represent the interests of groups composing the coalition. This coalition is called the regime party because the issues and principles that unite the party coalition also frame the larger inter-party competition; the non-regime party generally competes on the terms established by the regime party.

Stephen Skowronek has been one the most influential political scientists in this field, and, by his account, presidential rhetorical leadership is crucial for the formation and maintenance of a partisan regime.[17] Skowronek explained how partisan regimes form, fragment, and reform in a cyclical pattern correlating with presidential elections. He maintained that presidential rhetoric helped manage the diverse policy preferences of a number of different groups by articulating a set of animating ideas that could bond diverse groups. His theory synthesized aspects of the pluralist and choice models to the extent that the president could articulate commonly held principles, values, or ideas that

[17] Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1997). Other scholars have followed Skowronek by emphasizing presidential leadership of a partisan regime. For example, see Daniel M. Cook and Andrew J. Polsky, "Political Time Reconsidered: Unbuilding and Rebuilding the State under the Reagan Administration," *American Politics Research* 33, no. 4 (July 2005): 577-605; Curt Nichols and Adam Myers, "Exploiting the Opportunity for Reconstructive Leadership: Presidential Responses to Enervated Political Regimes," *American Politics Research* 38, no. 5 (2010); David A. Crockett, *The Opposition Presidency: Leadership and the Constraints of History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press). Some political scientists in the regime theory literature focus on partisan regimes and the federal courts rather than the president; examples include Keith E. Whittington, *The Political Foundations of Judicial Supremacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Mark A. Graber, "The Nonmajoritarian Difficulty: Legislative Deference to the Judiciary," *Studies in American Political Development* 7, no. 1 (March 1993): 35-73; Howard Gillman, "How Political Parties Can Use the Courts to Advance Their Agendas: Federal Courts in the United States, 1875-1891," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 3 (Sept. 2002): 511-524. David Plotke's study of the New Deal political order does not focus on a specific institution like the presidency or the courts, but generally describes phases in the creation and degeneration of a partisan regime: David Plotke, *Building a Democratic Political Oder: Reshaping Liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

could tie together a complex web of commitments to a varied collection of coalitional groups.

Contemporary scholarship on the partisan regime model advances certain undeveloped aspects of Skowronek's initial formulation. Retaining realignment theory's emphasis on periodization, Skowronek explained that variations in political leadership result from a president's association with the dominant regime (either affiliated or opposed) and the relative strength of his partisan commitments (resilient or vulnerable). But this appeared to relegate presidential leadership to a matter of circumstance; reconstructive leadership, for instance, simply meant that a president not affiliated with the dominant regime came to power during a time of vulnerability. Subsequent scholars have attempted to clarify what exactly it means for reconstructive presidents to establish a new regime. Such additions seek, in effect, to show that reconstructive presidents *do* something; that, in other words, reconstructive presidents distinguish themselves by a set of unique actions. Showing the distinguishing acts of reconstruction would clarify the role of human choice in an account that appears to rely heavily on cyclical forces. Andrew Polsky, for instance, seeks to "lay out the process by which a regime is *constructed*" in order to "highlight the role of political agency."[18] Similarly, Curt Nichols and Adam Myers provide several discrete tasks that reconstructive presidents must accomplish in order to successfully reconstruct, which meant that presidents can be better or worse at reconstruction, and indeed some may very well fail to reconstruct despite the

[18] Andrew J. Polsky, "Partisan Regimes in American Politics," *Polity* 44, no 1 (2012): 53-54 (emphasis in the original).

opportunity.[19] Each of these authors describes what a reconstructive president does beyond being in the right place at the right time.

Furthermore, Polsky and Nichols/Myers each focus in particular on the president's rhetorical role as a leader of popular opinion in reconstructing a partisan regime. Andrew Polsky argues that reconstruction involves building a political coalition that "challenges core tenets of the established political order" and "defines broadly the terms of political debate."[20] Accordingly, a regime is a set of political goals and principles defining a policy program that unites the diverse interests of a partisan coalition. The president in particular "engag[es] in a discursive project" that "bring[s] together disparate policy seekers and voting blocs in different regions."[21] Similarly, Nichols and Myers describe the first goal of the reconstructive task as "rais[ing] the salience of a new political cleavage by altering political discourse and focusing on a public philosophy and set of policy issues related to that cleavage."[22] Articulating an innovative political philosophy provides an opportunity for a coalition of diverse preferences to form around a set of shared goals and principles. The second reconstructive task, "assembling a new majority partisan coalition," entails creating a new majority that "bring[s] together different groups within the social structure, many of which may not agree with each other on important issues."[23] Only after accomplishing these two can a reconstructive president institutionalize a new regime. Regime

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[19] Nichols and Myers, "Exploiting the Opportunity for Reconstructive Leadership: Presidential Responses to Enervated Political Regimes."

[20] Polsky, 57.

[21] Ibid., 62.

[22] Nichols and Myers, "Reconstructive Leadership," 815.

[23] Nichols and Myers, 816.

construction, therefore, begins with the president's capacity to articulate new political principles around which a new and diverse partisan coalition can cohere.

While presidential reconstruction is evidently predicated upon the president's rhetorical role as a leader of popular opinion, there remains much to be said about the character of reconstructive rhetoric and the content of partisan regimes. For instance, certainly discursive narratives form an important part of reconstruction, but the fact that some narratives endure more than others suggests that narrative is a necessary but not sufficient description of reconstructive leadership. The New Deal and the Reagan Revolution were far more constructive in the coalitional sense than the Return to Normalcy, the Fair Deal, the New Republicanism, or the Great Society. Similar questions arise with the concept of "altering" the partisan cleavage. What exactly does it mean to alter the partisan cleavage? How does a president do this well? William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Strom Thurmond, Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and George McGovern all tried to change the partisan cleavage in the 20th century, but none did so successfully. Why do some attempts to raise the salience of new issues fail?

These contemporary accounts provide valuable insight on the distinctive features of reconstruction—broad, principled narratives and coalitional realignments—but fail to show how these traits are distinctive to the leadership of reconstructive presidents. Consequently, explaining reconstruction still seems to depend heavily on historical and cyclical circumstances. In response to these accounts, I show that the rhetorical leadership of a reconstructive president depends on a unique form of rhetoric that can turn a historical opportunity into a new partisan regime. Furthermore, identifying the

distinctive form of reconstructive rhetoric also brings to light variant forms of rhetoric which themselves influence partisan change instead of simply reflecting it.

My focus on the distinctive traits of presidential rhetoric accepts and builds on the work of advocates of the partisan regime model in synthesizing the pluralist and choice models of the political parties, while responding to each in ways that deepen our understanding of presidential leadership. For instance, while pluralist critics of the choice model, as well as the "going public" scholars, suggest that modern presidential leadership is simply ideological and divisive, my thesis demonstrates that presidential leadership is not always so, and indeed at times it is vital to uniting a partisan coalition. Furthermore, "going public" scholars demonstrate the dubious effect of presidential rhetoric by focusing specifically on opinion and policy polling. But my thesis explains the scope of presidential rhetoric more broadly. Beyond the public opinion captured in polls, presidential rhetoric can shift inter-party competition by raising the salience of new issues and programs in a way that reflects the emergence of new partisan coalitions; these shifts have effects that are not simply indicated in public opinion polls, but also in long term partisan dynamics that I attempt to demonstrate through historical case-studies. Far from downplaying the role of diverse coalitions and groups that are central to the pluralist model of political parties, however, I build on the pluralist scholarship in order to offer a more systematic account of presidential rhetoric in establishing and maintaining diverse coalitional support by focusing on presidential rhetoric with respect to coalitional dynamics. In sum, I seek to advance the regime theory's attempt to synthesize the distinct strains of thought in political parties' literature that grew out of Key's pluralistic model and Schattschneider's leadership model.

Theory

In the next sections of this chapter, I discuss the features of presidential rhetoric that are necessary for regime reconstruction. Using four particular rhetorical categories—means of persuasive appeal, intra-party appeal, inter-party appeal, and policy advocacy—I identify three types of rhetorical leadership: principled, ideological and pragmatic. To further develop my thesis, I then discuss how these three types of leadership contribute to a pattern of regime destabilization and construction that explains the reconstructive presidencies of the 20th century. In this context I identify four distinct moments: regime opposition with its ideological rhetoric, a pragmatic response, followed by a period of destabilization, and finally regime construction through a principled consensus. Table 1 identifies the four characteristics by which I describe rhetorical leadership

Table. 1. Typology of Rhetorical Leadership

Categories	Principled	Ideological	Pragmatic
Persuasive Appeal	Principle	Ideology	Self-Interest
Inter-Party Appeal	Discriminating	Polarizing	Non-Polarizing
Intra-Party Appeal	Diverse	Homogenous	Pluralistic
Policy Advocacy	Specific	Inflexible	Vague

These three types do not comprehend the universal possibilities of presidential rhetorical leadership. Presidents do not fall simply into one of these three types of rhetorical leadership. Rather, these types describe three inflection points on a spectrum of presidential leadership that varies from ideological leadership on one end to pragmatic leadership on the other. Principled leadership sits as a mean between either extreme because it appeals to coalitional groups on the basis of political principles, but it explains those political principles in a way that demonstrates sensitivity and flexibility to specific and diverse preferences; principled rhetoric moderates political principles to make them

less abstract than ideological rhetoric, while elevating groups' preferences beyond simple material or policy outcomes. Presidents can and do vary in the extent to which they exhibit the traits of ideological or pragmatic leadership. I illustrate this spectrum in Figure 1.

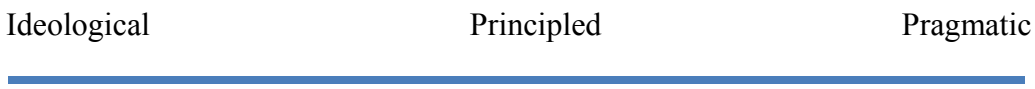

Fig. 1. Spectrum of Presidential Rhetorical Leadership

Principled Leadership

Principled leadership appeals to political principles as the primary means of persuading a diverse coalition to work together. This is the most recognizable aspect of the reconstructive task. I have noted above the way in which Skowronek, Polsky, and Nichols and Myers all place the appeal to an innovative public philosophy at the center of the reconstructive task. Polsky describes the appeal to an innovative public philosophy in terms of a narrative, and Nichols and Myers refer to it as an attempt to shift the axis of partisan cleavage. I present a different concept to describe the appeal to principles: the principled consensus. I argue that principled leadership attempts to draw out the shared principles of diverse groups in order to persuade those groups to work together. In this sense, principled leadership seeks to create a consensus—an agreement that is accepted for different reasons—on the principles that will guide the goals and the policy program of a partisan coalition. The idea of principled leadership, in essence, refers to leaders' attempts to persuade coalitional groups on the basis of their convictions in a particular philosophic attitude toward liberal, democratic governance. Examples include presidents

and candidates running on broad ideas of liberal or conservative principles of activist or limited government, or more specific principled arguments for sundry policy positions, such as an argument about the dutiful responsibilities of fiscal restraint or a dovish, diplomatic foreign policy posture. Meanwhile, the idea of consensus is meant to capture how the principled appeal must draw together a diverse electoral coalition required by the extended charter of the American Republic. Consensus implies the cooperation of varied parts, while narrative and shifting the axis of cleavage both emphasize top-down articulation of political principles as the means of uniting a coalition.[24] Thus, the principled consensus must reconcile a diversity of policy preferences, principles, and geographic sections by articulating shared principled positions that can patch together narrower, factional conflicts.

The concept of a principled consensus, however, points to an iterative dynamic wherein a president articulates principles that reflect the specific preferences of his coalition, while simultaneously the articulation of those principles affects coalitional preferences in a way that encourages greater unity in the coalition. In this way, presidents can articulate broad principles that are shared by a diverse coalition, but presidents are also limited by those principles. In other words, the unity provided by the principled consensus allows presidents to pursue specific policy goals that may not advance all the preferences of their coalition, but advance the "cause" associated with the principled

[24] It is worth noting that the authors I refer do not simply speak of top-down leadership. Polsky distinguishes himself from the "bottom-up orientation of electoral realignment theory," while acknowledging that narrative cannot be "strictly a top-down model either" (65) since presidents borrow ideas and follow signal from different groups within the party. Nichols and Myers emphasize the president's role shifting the axis of partisan cleavage, which is a concept attributed to E.E. Schattschneider, who presented the idea in an entirely top-down way. Nichols and Myers explain that a president must also be ready to compromise on issues where diverse wings of the party disagree—which implicitly suggests that there is some bottom-up influence on presidential leadership.

consensus. Since the coalition still comprises diverse groups, if the president appears to deviate from those things that are shared, and toward those that favor one group over another, the consensus can begin to fray. In this sense, the need to maintain unity creates incentives for the president to act within the limits of the principled consensus. Thus, the political principles are articulated by the president from the top down in order to provide a degree of coalitional unity, but at the same time the principles themselves reflect a broad and overarching agreement that indicate the diverse groups impose limitations and structure the actions of the president from the bottom up.

While principled leadership uses political principles as a means to persuade a coalitional majority, it also has a distinctive explanation of inter-party competition as well as a distinctive appeal to intra-party groups. In terms of inter-party competition, principled leadership simultaneously seeks to clarify the differences between the parties, while incorporating groups from across the old coalitional boundaries. Consequently, it must clarify the failure or corruption of its partisan counterpart without assailing the preferences of their coalitional groups *per se*—or at least those targeted for conversion. That means that principled leadership is discriminating: it delineates the differences between the old and new regimes, while incorporating as much of the competing regime as possible. To do so, it claims to represent principles which more effectively capture the principles and preferences of new and old coalitional groups. In other words, discriminating leadership means finding opportunities to draw out similarities between prior partisan commitments and new partisan commitments. Thus, principled leadership is also distinctive because it uses principled rhetoric to persuade groups to cross over traditional partisan boundaries, while still maintaining a specific, principled program.

Intra-party diversity refers to the Madisonian character of the American partisan coalition, and the variegated preferences that differ according to divergent interests, principles, and sections. Without intra-party diversity, no party can become a majority coalition. Consequently, principled leadership must find an articulation of principles that is general enough to encapsulate the varied and more particular preferences of the coalition. By articulating principles with which these diverse groups can identify their own principled goals, the president attempts to mitigate the tension that is likely to result from a political program that will necessarily be viewed more favorably by some coalitional members than others. For instance, social and economic conservatives are likely to disagree about what government programs ought to be limited, and how to arrange the priorities of conservative programming, but, as Reagan believed, both can recognize at some level the shared principles of limited government and self-rule that underlie both economic and social conservatism; principled leadership effectively sheds light on these points of agreement. The principled leader's intra-party appeal, therefore, attempts to draw together coalitional groups with different preferences and different principles, albeit under a common and uniting theme.

Finally, the principled leader will advocate specific public policies that relate to the specific preferences of his coalitional members. As noted above, this does not mean that he advances the preferences of all groups equally, but he advances the policies that reflect the most urgent political issues of the day, and that also afford him the opportunity to explain and highlight principled congruity. Specific policies make political principles concrete because they form a link between the interests of specific groups, and the principles of the whole coalition. A given policy can simultaneously represent the self-

interest of one coalitional partner, while also instantiating general principles shared by all. Thus, while a flat tax may be an important priority for economic conservatives, there may be economic policies that would be more relevant to social conservatives: ones that could both reduce federal spending while also enhancing the power of local governing institutions. This explains, for instance, the importance of federalism within the Ronald Reagan conservative era. Specific policy proposals, therefore, allow a principled leader to balance diverse preferences with common principles, and in so doing he advances both specific preferences of certain groups as well as the principles shared by the whole coalition.

Ideological Leadership

If presidents exhibiting principled leadership attempt to balance diverse interests under the auspices of common political principles, then ideological leaders tend to sacrifice diverse interests for the sake of political principles. A Democrat who adamantly and inflexibly insists on an environmental policy that would materially disadvantage working-class constituents could be said to opt for ideological purity over an electorally diverse coalition. Where principled presidential leadership balances a dynamic between top-down leadership and bottom-up influence, ideological rhetoric imposes an ideological vision from the top down. Such rhetorical leadership seeks to have a dramatic impact on the programmatic focus of the party and its coalitional make-up, but political success without a coalition comprehending diverse interests is nearly impossible.

Ideological rhetoric insists upon political principles in the abstract, or upon the priority of political principles as such rather than political principles as they may be understood by coalitional groups with diverse preferences. Consequently, such leadership

fails to recognize the ways in which the extended republic places a higher premium on consensus than on ideological coherence. In a sense, this kind of leadership illustrates the limits of a top-down choice model of presidential leadership because it emphasizes ideological unity to such an extent that it moves only a narrow and homogeneous portion of the partisan coalition. It is also an extreme form of principled leadership—one that incorporates political principles as a means of appeal, but one that also lacks those characteristics of principled leadership that expands their application. Ideological leaders do not act as if they have considered how to explain their ideas to those that have not already accepted them; they assert and reassert ideological maxims which only mean something to those true believers who have already accepted the ideology.

Ideological rhetoric amplifies an abstract political ideology rather than explaining its principles to varied groups. This affects the ideological leader's approach to inter-party and intra-party dynamics. Since this leader views partisan dynamics in strictly ideological terms, his inter-party rhetoric tends to be polarizing instead of discriminating. Leaders of this kind draw stark lines between the competing parties, rather than sifting those things that distinguish the parties for the sake of drawing out what is shared. The ideology is defined almost entirely in oppositional terms, and trying to accomplish this prompts the ideological leader to polarize the electorate by castigating the partisan opposite. Indeed, because of the unreflective stance of these leaders toward their own ideology, they often attempt to explain their political principles by demonizing the alternative rather than saying anything positive about their own account. Such leaders would oppose the competing party *simply* because it is filled either with liberals or with conservatives. For similar reasons, their intra-party appeal speaks only to narrow and

homogeneous coalitional groups that already accept and therefore do not need to be persuaded of the veracity of the ideology. For instance, when William Jennings Bryan travels to New York to tout the potential of free-silver to deliver western farmers from domineering eastern interests, he only amplifies the preferences of western populist Democrats. That does not mean that ideological leaders do not intend to speak more broadly, but since their method of persuasion is so narrow they lack the ability to appeal beyond those that have already imbibed deeply and are convinced of the worth of the ideology. Finally, these leaders make inflexible public policy proposals, which reflect the emphasis on ideological homogeneity and the preferences of a narrow coalition. They assume the self-evident worth of proposed policies. That is because the ideological character of the contest means that policies either comport with ideological orthodoxy—in which case explaining nuances is superfluous—or policies deviate into ideological heterodoxy—in which case the candidate feels it sufficient to point to the opposing policies' negative ideological association, making any explanation of its material consequences and deficiencies irrelevant. Ideological leaders advocate policy in an inflexible way because policy merely stands in for the abstract ideological preferences reflecting a narrow and homogeneous portion of the coalition.

Pragmatic Leadership

Whereas the ideological leader stresses principles to the exclusion of interests, and appeals to homogeneity to the exclusion of diversity, pragmatic leadership occupies the other end of the spectrum. The pragmatic leader persuades by appealing to the self-interest of coalitional groups, not common political principles, and he sacrifices partisan unity for the sake of partisan heterogeneity. While Richard Nixon could speak acerbically

about liberalism, his continuation and expansion of a liberal welfare and regulatory apparatus, and foray into an inflationary monetary policy, were classic examples of the pragmatic desire to have one's cake and eat it too. Accommodating as many material interests as possible outweighs the importance of ideological consistency for leaders of this kind. This leadership demonstrates the limits of a consensus, pluralist model of presidential leadership because it stretches the meaning of consensus so far that there is little uniting the partisan coalition. It accomplishes this by deemphasizing anything which may divide people, and instead emphasizes the president's capacity to satisfy the material and peculiar self-interest of a plurality of different groups.

Because material self-interest is the principal means of garnering support, a pragmatic leader's inter-party appeal is heterogeneous. His indifference to ideological consistency means that he can appeal across partisan or ideological lines, and therefore he blurs the stakes of inter-party competition in order to collect as heterogeneous a coalition as possible. Thus, his inter-party appeal is non-polarizing in the sense that he stresses commonality and overlap, while downplaying those issues, preferences, or principles that may divide the parties. Lyndon Johnson, for instance, ran in 1964 as President of All the People, pursuing a non-partisan, non-ideological path that emphasized his transcendence of a liberal and conservative divide. His attempt to mute partisan and ideological distinctions reflects his attempt to draw support from as many quarters as possible, especially those Republican conservatives dissatisfied with their party's nomination of Goldwater. Meanwhile, his intra-party appeal is pluralistic because he aggregates a plurality of groups without offering much rationalization for their unity. His coalition comprises a conglomerate of diverse interests, with little to no shared purpose or interest

uniting that diversity. Thus, William McKinley promised to satisfy diverse interests—industrial workers and capitalists, as well as eastern industrialists and Midwestern farmers—without taking into account their conflicting interests—income taxes and collective bargaining rights, for instance—that other members of the coalition find objectionable. To mute these potential conflicts, however, pragmatic leaders tend to speak vaguely about public policy, because the more specific they become, the more risk they run of treading on a fault line that may divide their pluralistic coalition. Patriotism, unity, non-partisanship, shared interests are all themes that take the place of specific programmatic proposals. Often these uplifting themes occur within a negative, personalistic campaign that diverts attention from ambiguities and latent conflicts by calling attention to the unappealing aspects of the opponent. While pragmatic leadership may unite diverse groups for short periods of time, discarding political principles also creates potential conflict by deliberately diminishing any coherent philosophy or shared values underlying the coalition. By aggrandizing coalitional self-interest, pragmatic leadership only raises the expectations for the party to meet those demands, and when the party falls short—even partially—there is little left to unify the party. Moreover, the diversity of the pragmatic appeal only increases the chances that the party will fail by multiplying the number of interests within the coalition, while also increasing the likelihood of interests conflicting with one another.

The Reconstructive Process: Regime Destabilization and Creation

These three types of leadership have emerged within a particular pattern of regime destabilization and construction that explains the reconstructive presidencies of the 20th

century, the first in 1932 and the second in 1980.[25] Recent scholars have endeavored to clarify the process of regime degeneration that leads to presidential reconstruction. For instance, Nichols and Myers describe a process of "declin[ing] efficacy" that they call "enervation." Enervated regimes suffer from the fracture of their "coalitional underpinning," spurring a "resurgent opposition" that engages in a "national debate about the adequacy of the majority's coalitional leadership and the regime's institutional preferences."[26] These authors draw attention to an inverse relationship between the regime party's waning strength, and the growth of an effective opposition party. This implies, interestingly, that the process of regime degeneration is, simultaneously, a process of regime reconstruction. That is, from a certain perspective the rise of a reconstructive presidency is the ultimate step of a reconstructive process that begins as an opposition party asserts an incipient counter-narrative that constitutes the earliest indications of regime enervation.

Looking at partisan dynamics as a process of regime construction instead of degeneration, however, has certain advantages. First, it brings into focus the productive role of failed reconstructive leaders, which partisan regime literature has not adequately explained. Nichols and Myers do address the possibility of failed reconstruction, but only

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[25] It is the case that Skowronek argues that institutional thickening—the non-cyclical proliferation of inertial institutions that made reconstruction increasingly difficult—foreclosed Reagan's reconstruction, which meant that he was not, strictly speaking, reconstructive in Skowronek's view. All the same, within Skowronek's account, he is a president operating in reconstructive time, and therefore can be evaluated on the basis of his reconstructive leadership. Furthermore, political scientists have challenged Skowronek's argument. Daniel Cook and Andrew Polsky, for instance, find evidence that despite thickening, Reagan was an effective regime builder (Cook and Polsky, "Political Time Reconsidered," 577). Insofar as President Reagan, arising at a time of vulnerability for the dominant regime, employed principled rhetoric in a way that established a new consensus and set the terms of inter-party competition, I too speak of him as a reconstructive leader.

[26] Nichols and Myers, "Reconstructive Leadership", 813.

in the context of Skowronek's "hard cases."[27] Specifically, they look to the example of Grover Cleveland and William Jennings Bryan to explain an instance when Democrats had an opportunity to reconstruct, but failed to do so. Consequently, by their account, failed reconstruction is anomalous. In contrast, I argue that failed reconstruction should be understood as the attempt and failure to engage in reconstructive politics by altering the partisan narrative in order to affect a major partisan coalitional shift. My approach reveals how failed reconstruction is not simply a matter of poor timing, but also employs a rhetoric unsuited to the reconstructive task. Furthermore, focusing on failed attempts at reconstruction rather than on missed opportunities reveals the way that the rhetoric associated with failure forms an integral and regular part of at least one relevant pattern of the reconstructive process, and explains the two reconstructive examples of the twentieth century.

Second, the perspective of regime construction also highlights the dubious success of orthodox innovators, and brings into relief their role in destabilizing rather than reinforcing the regime party. Orthodox innovators are the regime party presidents in Skowronek's schema who reaffirm the partisan commitments of the existing regime while striking out on their own by articulating an innovative political program that demonstrates the continued relevance and vitality of the dominant regime amidst evolving circumstances and conditions. Lyndon Johnson, for example, presented the Great Society in an attempt to reaffirm and update the New Deal, not to reject it and reconstruct a new partisan consensus. But examining the leadership of orthodox innovators in conjunction with an emerging opposition party makes it clear that their

[27] Nichols and Myers, "Reconstructive Leadership," 812.

innovating is, to some degree, a response to the ideological rhetoric of their opponent. Consequently, their innovating is inextricably linked to pragmatic rhetoric that undercuts the partisan consensus by confusing its principled foundation. Thus, while the Great Society was not entirely a response to Barry Goldwater, Johnson explained the Great Society in such a way that would be most effective to defeat Goldwater, but which also muted the potentially divisive policy priorities within the Great Society.

Third, examining the reconstructive process brings into relief a distinctive character of reconstructive leadership. That is, looking at the emergence of an oppositional philosophy at the height of the regime party's strength, as well as the regime party's response to that rhetoric, demonstrates that reconstructive presidencies are not made up of whole cloth. Instead, reconstruction requires presidents who are capable of tempering the ideological rhetoric associated with an emerging oppositional party, and reconciling its new principled vision with the disaffected partners of the old regime party. In other words, my approach highlights the rhetorical tasks of reconstructive presidents: to articulate a principled consensus that integrates the ideological rhetoric that first challenged the regime party with a more moderate coalition that includes vulnerable elements of the old regime that could join the new consensus.

Finally, examining the reconstructive process highlights rhetoric as an explanatory variable of the developments of political time. Variations in rhetorical leadership explain how regimes lose cohesion and eventually give way to a new consensus. This is especially clear in the specific pattern of regime construction that applies to the reconstructive presidencies of the twentieth century, Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. That pattern, which I summarize in Table 2, proceeds in four stages

that are precipitated by these variations in rhetorical leadership: the emergence (and failure) of an ideological opposition candidate, a pragmatic response by the regime party, a period of regime party factionalism and infighting that develop in response to pragmatic inclusiveness, and the emergence of principled rhetoric and a new partisan consensus.

Table 2: Process of Regime Reconstruction

Sequence	Moments in Reconstructive Process	Rhetoric Type
First	Oppositional Emergence	Ideological
Second	Pragmatic Response	Pragmatic
Third	Regime Party Destabilization	Both
Fourth	Regime Construction	Principled

I describe these four stages of the reconstructive pattern in more elaborate detail in the following sections of this chapter, including sections on ideological opposition, pragmatic response, regime destabilization, and principled leadership. In sum, this process highlights the distinctive character of principled rhetoric, as well as the way different types of rhetorical leadership prompt developments in political time which culminate with a reconstructive presidency.

Ideological rhetoric and regime opposition. The first moment of regime construction occurs when the non-regime party refuses to accommodate the dominant regime consensus and opposes the principles underlying it. Prior to this change, the non-affiliated party's readiness to accommodate the regime party's rhetorical framework demonstrates the strength of the regime party. E.E. Schattschneider would describe this as the second party accepting the main issues and rhetorical framework established by the dominant party; this happened, for example, when Republicans competed with Democrats about the efficacy of New Deal programs in the 1950s or Democrats

competed with Republicans about cutting the size and cost of government in the 1990s. Or, as Samuel Lubell put it in a more vivid metaphor, it occurs when the non-affiliated party orbits the regime party as the planets orbit the sun. The regime party is most resilient when the non-regime party competes on the terms that the regime party establishes, indicating that the non-regime party believes that only when it reaffirms the basic commitments of the dominant regime can it compete.

But there comes a point when the second party no longer accommodates the dominant regime, and in opposing it attempts to establish a new partisan cleavage or to shift the orbit of the political solar system. This is the advent of what will develop into a new regime. This moment occurs when the opposing party nominates a candidate who openly challenges the governing philosophy and political principles of the dominant party; when William Jennings Bryan repudiated the party of Grover Cleveland, or Barry Goldwater repudiated the "dime-store New Deal" policies of Dwight Eisenhower, the non-regime party took its first major step toward forming a new consensus by opposing the dominant regime. The elevation of an opposition candidate—regardless of how he fares in the general election—signals a turning point within the party wherein insurgent, non-accommodating elements amass enough influence within the party to bring forth a non-consensus candidate. This candidate actually attempts and fails to perform those tasks of regime construction.[28] The emergence of an opposition movement—even if

[28] Consider how the definition of reconstruction, according to Skowronek, Nichols and Myers, and Polsky, could apply to oppositional candidates that are never actually elected. Skowronek refers to repudiating the "pre-established commitments of ideology and interest" as "failed or irrelevant responses to the problems of the day" (Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make,* 36); Nichols and Myers to "1. Shifting the main axis of partisan cleavage, 2. Assembling a new majority partisan coalition" (Nichols and Myers, "Reconstructive Leadership," 808); Polsky to ("[challenging] core tenets of the established political order" and "[define] broadly the terms of political debate" (Polsky, "Partisan Regimes in American Politics," 57).

oppositional elements fail in the polls and they wax and wane in their control over the party—is the first step in the reconstructive process.

Because these candidates initiate a process of regime construction, their failure is almost certain because the regime party remains relatively strong. Their candidacy indicates the earliest attempts at chipping away at the strength of the regime party, but the regime party has not sufficiently eroded to allow the reconstruction of partisan coalitions. These oppositional candidates fail because their rhetoric falls short of the reconstructive tasks. Candidates of this kind tend to employ ideological rhetoric that effectively amplifies the oppositional ideology of a narrow section of the opposition party, but they fail to articulate this ideology in a way that can garner a consensus among diverse groups. They attempt to shift the party's base away from its old sources of power, which were steeped in accommodating the regime party. Doing so necessitates alienating many within the party and without. Thus, though Bryan all but deposed Cleveland-style Democrats from leadership within their party, and Goldwater forced Nixon to embrace a more ideologically bellicose position to separate himself from his earlier association with liberal Republicans, Bryan and Goldwater themselves failed to establish anything like a majority party. Their failure is, therefore, productive as a fitting first attempt to articulate new principles that form the foundation for a new partisan base on which the party can build a new consensus. This ideological leadership, in other words, reflects new governing principles emerging out of the fervor of a narrow portion of the minority party. Ideological leadership, therefore, begins a process of regime construction that ultimately culminates in a reconstructive president who can adopt this ideological message while adapting it in a way that generates a new principled consensus.

Pragmatic leadership and regime destabilization. The second moment of the reconstructive process, occurring almost simultaneously with the first, responds to the emergence of an ideological opposition. The unpopularity of the ideological rhetoric prompts the regime party to recognize its opportunity to expand its coalition to include alienated members of the non-affiliated party (that means that the alternative candidates manifest leadership occupying both ends of the rhetorical spectrum between ideological and pragmatic). Presidents in this historical moment tend to be "orthodox innovators" in Skowronek's schema because they appear to renew the regime party. And because their victory occurs in the face of the emergence of an oppositional party, they rout the opposition in a way that appears to indicate that the dominant regime, and its own principled commitments, commands new levels of support and authority.

These orthodox innovators, however, employ pragmatic rhetoric, which actually creates specific problems for the regime. Because the opposition leader stresses inter-party polarization and the preferences of narrow intra-party groups, the regime party leader emphasizes broad, non-ideological and non-partisan unity to accommodate as many non-regime defectors as possible. But accomplishing this inter-party proselytizing requires him to mute political principles and amplify material self-interests in order to hold together a plurality of groups whose disagreement about political goals and principles had placed them in two different political parties in the first place. Consequently, the regime party wins with a significant electoral majority, but that victory stands upon vague and self-interested terms. That raises doubts about how much of the pragmatic leader's success results from commitment to the dominant coalition, and how much of it reflects dissatisfaction with the ideological rhetoric of the opposition party.

Consequently, the significant electoral victory, appearing to show the resilience of the regime, actually represents its apogee. The presence of flooded ranks within the partisan coalition confuses the principles that unite the party, and this creates the occasion for intra-party factionalism that destabilizes the party and creates opportunities for reconstructive leadership.

Regime Conflict. The pairing of ideological and pragmatic leadership creates conditions that lead to internal conflict within the dominant regime. The pragmatic leadership in the regime party invites groups with new and conflicting principles within the dominant regime and obscures the principles that founded the regime party. Ideological insurgents from within the regime assert a more radical, factional version of regime principles in response to the party's pragmatism, while more moderate and traditional factions within the party resist the narrowness of the ideological factions. These conflicts create opportunities for the oppositional party—itself still working through conflicts between ideological and pragmatic factions—to seize power. Within Skowronek's schema, those who take advantage of these opportunities are known as preemptive presidents—presidents of the non-regime party who come to power without reconstructing a new partisan consensus. In other words, they preempt reconstructing a new regime by appealing to the very principles of the old regime from whom they seize power. According to Skowronek, preemptive presidents come to power during a period of regime strength, inasmuch as the opposing party affirms its governing principles. These oppositional leaders are fairly pragmatic themselves, eschewing the kind of ideological purism of the oppositional candidate. Examples include Woodrow Wilson in 1912 and 1916 or Richard Nixon in 1968 and 1972. Both demonstrated far more ideological

flexibility than their oppositional predecessors—William Jennings Bryan and Barry Goldwater. At the same time, neither returned to the old accommodationalism that predated their ideological predecessors. Contrary to Skowronek, who sees in their ascendancy a sign of the strength of the partisan whose principles remain in force, they come to power out of the increasing factionalism that divides the regime party whose pragmatic success curiously produces the perils that lead to its own demise. These presidents do not preempt regime reconstruction; rather they serve as as a pragmatic waypoint between accommodating the old regime and heralding the principles of a new one.

Regime Destabilization. This third moment of the reconstructive process is the most difficult to generalize. It suffers from the most tumult because of the increasing factionalism in both parties, and therefore the period remains highly subject to contingent circumstances such as historical exigencies as well as institutional changes. Economic prosperity in the early twentieth century countered regime destabilization while World War I stunted the growth of the oppositional party, and therefore extended the regime party's strength until the Great Depression. Institutional reform, moreover, accelerated regime destabilization in the 1970s as the nation-wide institution of the political primary encouraged insurgent factionalism within the regime party. At the same time, Watergate and other factors associated with the "decline of parties" exerted a countervailing pressure that buoyed the regime party and slowed the movement toward reconstruction. This variability notwithstanding, the combination of ideological opposition and the regime party's pragmatic response precipitates this period of significant instability, in

which both parties compete for the presidency, and ideological and pragmatic leadership varies among the presidential candidates of both parties.

Finally, this third moment of the reconstructive process continues indefinitely. Nichols and Myers, for instance, note that Skowronek's cycle of "political time" is "probabilistic rather than strictly deterministic."[29] That means reconstruction depends upon the completion of certain tasks that, in turn, require the election of a president capable of completing those tasks. Thus, the indefinite period of regime destabilization points back to the role of historical and institutional circumstances unique to each historical period, but it also highlights the need for a president singularly capable of employing principled rhetoric. The dysfunction of the regime party becomes clear with the election of what Skowronek called a disjunctive president—a president representing the regime party whose policies and principles are no longer adequate to address the problems of the day. Although the dysfunction of the regime and the problematic leadership of a disjunctive president create opportunities for reconstruction, however, in themselves they are not sufficient conditions for reconstruction. Principled rhetoric is necessary to create a new partisan consensus. A reconstructive leader depends upon more than the circumstantial opportunity; he requires the ability to exercise principled rhetorical leadership in a way that highlights the dysfunction of the regime by articulating clear and productive principles and policies. Sometimes—as in the 1920s—the regime party regains its footing and extends its duration, forestalling reconstruction. At other times—as in the 1970s—the regime party's attempts at pragmatism become increasingly disjunctive at a time when an oppositional candidate possesses the requisite rhetorical

[29] Nichols and Myers, "Reconstructive Leadership," 810.

capabilities to articulate principles that could form a principled consensus. The indefinite duration of this period underscores the variability of human choice behind the principled rhetoric necessary for regime reconstruction.

Principled leadership and reconstruction. Regime reconstruction breaks the extended period of regime destabilization by articulating a consensus that can unite the conflicting coalitional groups. In this way, the emergence of reconstructive leadership is the culmination of a process that first began with the emergence of the ideological opposition. The reconstructive leader sorts through the intra-party and inter-party strife of the previous years in a way that organizes inter-party conflict around a novel rhetorical framework. Thus, reconstruction requires principled rhetoric to adopt and moderate the oppositional ideology so that it incorporates many diverse elements, including groups from the old regime party, as well as groups from the non-affiliated party. In other words, the new regime is established upon a diverse coalition that responds to the cross-cutting conflicts that destabilized the old partisan consensus. For instance, Franklin Roosevelt essentially adopted Bryan's populism while domesticating it in a way that could accommodate Al Smith's appeal to urban wage earners and centrist business interests, as well as retain southern conservatives. Similarly, Ronald Reagan adopted Goldwater conservatism, though he expanded its appeal to accommodate an emerging array of social issues that appealed to the formerly New Deal Democrats known as Reagan Democrats. Adopting and adapting the positions of the old ideological opposition requires a principled rhetoric that can articulate a political philosophy and a political program that can unite diverse groups into a new coalition. Principled leadership establishes this coalition upon a new consensus, built around a rhetorical framework that sets fresh terms

of inter-party debate. From this perspective, regime construction is the culmination and resolution of a long process of regime destabilization as it is the beginning of a new era of inter-party conflict.

Case Selection and Methods

To illustrate this model, I engage in a comparative analysis of two historical episodes in an effort to shed light on the pattern of historical development. My case studies focus on the developmental process that concludes with the reconstructive presidencies of Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. The first case study devotes a chapter to William Jennings Bryan's ideological leadership, another to William McKinley's pragmatic leadership, and a third on Franklin Roosevelt's reconstruction. My second and parallel case study begins with Barry Goldwater, followed by a chapter on Lyndon Johnson, concluding with a chapter on Ronald Reagan. The chapters on McKinley and Johnson each conclude with an overview of the regime destabilization that followed upon their pragmatic rhetoric; in those sections I focus on the coalitional ruptures of Theodore Roosevelt's 1912 insurgency and the McCarthy/RFK/McGovern insurgencies of 1968/1972. I summarize these findings in table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Case Study Findings

Example (Case Study 1)	Year	Rhetorical Leadership
William Jennings Bryan	1896	Ideological
William McKinley	1896	Pragmatic
Franklin Roosevelt	1932	Principled
Example (Case Study 2)	**Year**	**Rhetorical Leadership**
Barry Goldwater	1964	Ideological
Lyndon Johnson	1964	Pragmatic
Ronald Reagan	1980	Principled

I selected my case studies purposively to illustrate the role of rhetoric in the reconstructive process of forging a new principled consensus. I selected Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan because both are widely recognized as presidents within "reconstructive time;" consequently, both provide opportunities to analyze the rhetorical approach of reconstructive presidents. I find that these reconstructive presidents employed principled rhetoric, and that such rhetoric is necessary to complete the reconstructive task. In both cases an emerging opposition party initiates a process of regime degeneration and construction that depends upon a specific dynamic of ideological rhetoric within the opposition and a pragmatic response within the regime party. In order to demonstrate that a specific historical moment—the emergence of an opposition party—has a significant combination of rhetorical leadership, I selected William Jennings Bryan and Barry Goldwater. These candidates occur within the appropriate time frame, and both explicitly understood themselves to be challenging the reigning regime consensus, and in doing so, acting as the first member of their party to shift partisan principles in an attempt to create a new principled consensus. Finally, the kind of pragmatic rhetorical leadership that an oppositional candidate engenders in the regime party is illustrated by William McKinley and Lyndon Johnson.

My two case studies—1896-1945 and 1964-1988—therefore follow a parallel pattern. There is one chapter on the ideological leader, one chapter on the pragmatic leader, and one chapter on the reconstructive leader. Each chapter follows the same basic outline: 1. A description of coalitional context for each president or candidate; 2. A broad description of his political principles, based largely on campaign addresses or major public addresses like the annual message to Congress or an inaugural address; 3. A

description of the candidate's or president's principles in practice, by which I mean an explication of his public policy program (either as he proposed it in the campaign or as it was implemented in his administration) as it relates to his political principles; 4. The effects of his leadership upon his coalition over time.

In order to identify a specific process of change within the partisan regime, I focus on the beginning and end of that process to bring its distinctive pattern into relief. This creates two asymmetries in my analysis, however, that are worth addressing directly: first I examine a pair of candidates in those election years that begin the process of regime construction (Bryan/McKinley and Goldwater/Johnson), while I examine only one candidate during election years that produce a reconstructive president (Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan; second, I focus largely on the campaigns of non-reconstructive presidents (1896 and 1964 campaigns), while I focus on the campaign and administration of reconstructive presidents (the Roosevelt and Reagan campaigns and administrations).

I analyze alternative candidates for the 1896 and 1964 elections for several different reasons. First, for the sake of explaining different types of rhetorical leadership, I identify three distinctive rhetorical approaches, and dedicate an independent chapter to each. Since ideological and pragmatic rhetoric occur simultaneously in 1896 and 1964, I spend one chapter on each candidate to explicate the ways in which the candidates exhibit these specific rhetorical characteristics. By contrast, while 1932 and 1980 evince principled leadership, the opposing candidates do not employ a distinctive type of rhetoric that would warrant further explication; Hoover and Carter, who ran against FDR and Reagan respectively, were a species of pragmatic leaders during a time of evident

regime enervation. Skowronek and subsequent regime theorists have adequately described Hoover and Carter's disjunctive politics, and thus it is not necessary to dedicate special attention to them. By contrast, though Skowronek described Roosevelt's reconstruction—and to some degree Reagan's as well—it remains necessary to explicate the specific rhetorical character of their leadership.

Secondly, I concentrate on both candidates in 1896 and 1964 because the dynamic of both candidates made these years critical moments of change within the partisan regime that set new paths of development ultimately leading to reconstruction. These electoral contests disturbed politics as usual, and encouraged major shifts in coalitional loyalties that formed the context for subsequent political destabilizations within the partisan regime. These elections, in other words, constituted what Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor call "critical junctures," or "moments when substantial institutional change takes place thereby create a 'branching point' from which historical development moves onto a new path."[30] This new path of development depends upon two events: the emergence of an opposition party and the simultaneous occurrence of ideological and pragmatic leadership. In practice, these two events were correlative, but they are logically distinct, and that makes it insufficient to simply describe, for instance, the ideological opposition of Bryan and Goldwater alone or the pragmatic rhetoric of McKinley and Johnson alone; one cannot understand the partisan dynamic without a full description of the interaction of both types. By contrast, the 1932 and 1980 reconstructions depended far more upon the critical failure of regime party policies, and the subsequent regime vulnerability, than it did upon the peculiarities of Hoover and Carter's *rhetoric*; FDR and

[30] Peter A. Hal, Rosemary C.R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies* 44 (1996), 942.

Reagan's principled rhetoric, and the vulnerability of the regime generally, were adequate for them to construct a new partisan consensus. That is not to say that Roosevelt and Reagan ignored their opponents. Far from it: both strongly criticized them throughout their campaigns. But that had more to do with shattering the old order, which Hoover and Carter represented, than it had to do with Hoover and Carter's rhetorical leadership *per se*.

This new path of development necessitates examining both candidates because this historical moment represented the breakthrough of "multiple orders" or "intercurrence." Orren and Skowronek define intercurrence as the "simultaneous operation . . . of different political orders."[31] The insurgent challenges of 1896 and 1964 signaled the emergence of a new, nascent partisan regime, while the associated rebuttal of McKinley and Johnson constituted the reassertion of the old order. The contest illustrated, therefore, the new order interposed over the old order, and fully explicating that disjunction is necessary to explain the dynamic that ultimately leads to presidential reconstruction. Thus, Roosevelt and Reagan resolved the conflict created by the intercurrence initiated in 1896 and 1964. Accounting for the multiple orders, therefore, necessitates analyzing the simultaneous leadership of the new order, represented by Bryan/Goldwater, and the old order, represented by McKinley/Johnson.

The second asymmetry in my case studies is my focus on the campaign rhetoric of the ideological and pragmatic leaders, and my focus on the campaign and administration rhetoric of the principled leaders. This asymmetry means that I examine slightly different types of evidence based upon the roles that these leaders play in the process of regime

[31] Stephen Skowronek and Karen Orren, *The Search for American Political Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.

construction. Once again, I examine the campaigns of 1896 and 1964 in particular because I hypothesize that those contests were critical in shuffling coalitional loyalties in a way that ultimately destabilized the regime party. It was the promises made in those contests, calibrated as they were to appeal to a plurality of interests that fled the ideological opposition, which created the conflicting expectations which ultimately destabilized the regime party. Thus, I focus on the campaign rhetoric to demonstrate that the regime party candidate did indeed employ pragmatic rhetoric, and I then examine subsequent developments within his and later administrations to show the effects of that pragmatic rhetoric. It is sufficient, given this hypothesis, to show that pragmatic leaders did not pursue policies that met the expectations created by their rhetorical approach, and that these leaders did not alter their rhetorical approach during their administration. The chapters on principled leadership, on the other hand, involve the most thorough account of rhetoric from the administration because I hypothesize that principled rhetoric is necessary to reconstruct a regime, which is more than winning an election. Reconstruction also means creating laws that reflect the public policy aspirations of the leader's coalition, which constitute a durable edifice and legacy of regime principles that continue to unite and animate the coalition beyond the president's administration. In other words, if principled rhetoric is necessary for reconstruction, then it will be as necessary in championing specific and concrete laws as it was in winning the election in the first place. That is because a president could undercut the principled consensus he tendered in his campaign if he did not maintain his principled rhetoric, thereby sabotaging his reconstructive attempt. Since I contend that principled rhetoric is

necessary for reconstruction, I examine the role of that rhetoric during the election and the subsequent administration.

My method is textual analysis and historical study. For textual analysis, I rely on presidential speeches. I focus on speeches that one can reasonably expect the figure in question to understand as major statements of principle and purpose, and that he could expect to be widely circulated and analyzed. In other words, I choose and analyze speeches that are highly relevant and representative of the themes, principles, ideas, and interests defining the president's rhetorical vision and aspiration. That means that I focus on nationally broadcast speeches, speeches before Congress, or inaugural speeches. In addition to these speeches designed for mass consumption, I also examine campaign stump speeches and policy speeches to specialized audiences. Though these speeches are delivered to small, localized audiences, presidents and candidates often use them to make specific statements about various policy areas because they understand that the press will widely disseminate the content of these speeches. When I cannot access presidential speeches as a whole from an archival database, I turn to historical newspapers as an alternate source. When I use newspapers for this purpose, I focus on papers that reprint entire speeches, or present large quotations of speeches, to ensure I draw evidence from the candidate's or president's own words. In general, I analyze speeches to identify and evaluate major rhetorical themes. In doing so, I assume that presidential speeches present a topic or group of topics as part of a coherent argument to persuade an audience of a particular policy, set of policies, or the worthiness of a broad political purpose; I assume that presidents try to communicate something, and their meaning can be made more or less clear through interpretation. Thus, I employ a qualitative assessment of presidential

rhetoric to determine significant themes and arguments rather than a content analysis method, that would provide some numerical basis of determining what is and is not significant.

I supplement my textual analysis with a historical case study that provides context for presidential speeches, and allows me to make inferences about the political dynamics that correlate to rhetorical leadership. My historical analysis depends upon contemporary journalistic accounts of campaigns and administrations, and upon political histories. I rely on journalistic accounts that come from nationally syndicated newspaper articles through the Associated Press or the United Press International, major newspapers like the *New York Times*, or on book-length, journalistic studies written by contemporaries of the president. These sources provide valuable historical context by giving a sense of the contemporary political atmosphere, including expectations and reactions to presidential rhetoric. The political histories provide a richer and more nuanced historical account than contemporary journalistic descriptions, reflecting the distance afforded them by passing time and academic scholarship. By giving a more detailed depiction of what happened in time, political histories provide a foundation to verify and explain regime destabilization and reconstruction. Moreover, narrative histories have the advantage of independence: they are not being conditioned by my theoretical model. By the same token, by examining narrative histories in light of my own theory about presidential politics, I will be able to show that beyond idiosyncratic narratives, American political institutions structure political choices and actions in a way that offers a degree of enduring coherence to the practice of American politics. Thus, I do not rely on history in order to engage in historical revision, but instead to enrich my comparative historical study, and allowing

me to "generalize beyond a particular set of historical events" and demonstrate a theory of presidential leadership and its place in a pattern of regime construction.[32] Through this historical and textual focus, I hope to demonstrate a pattern of regime construction that is structured and spurred by the American presidency and American political parties.

[32] Skowronek and Orren, *The Search for American Political Development*, 6.

CHAPTER TWO

The Bryan Campaign: A Matter of Principle

Introduction: The Conversion of the Democratic Party

William Jennings Bryan emerged as the Democratic candidate for President in 1896 out of the wreckage of Grover Cleveland's second term. Democrats took control of the House after winning 74 house seats in 1890, and then took the White House in 1892 as Grover Cleveland appeared to be riding a wave of Democratic ascendency that would end the sharply divided politics of the gilded age. But Cleveland antagonized the emerging populist insurgents of his own party who favored economically heterodox policies—free silver being first among them—that were purported to help poorer, working classes, and which more often than not reflected the peculiar interests of western and southern agrarians that shared resentment of the Northeast. Cleveland intransigently resisted Democratic populists, and in so doing provoked even sharper intra-party clashes. These flaring conflicts, in conjunction with the economic panic of 1893, precipitated massive losses in the 1894 midterm election, and the Republicans regained the majority after winning 111 seats in the House. Amidst this turmoil, William Jennings Bryan captured the Democratic Party's nomination for president in 1896 by repudiating the pro-business bourbon Democracy of Cleveland, and avowed to counter the party of moneyed interests (the Republicans) with the party of toiling masses, comprising eastern laborers and western and southern agrarians. Following Bryan's capture of the Democratic Party,

however, he suffered clear defeat in the national election, which was repeated in 1900 and 1908.

Bryan's dominance in the Democratic Party signaled a new era for Democratic politics. William Gerring observed that "William Jennings Bryan is the rightful father of the Progressive-New Deal Democratic party, bringing to it a regulatory style and redistributive purpose found hitherto only outside the mainstream of American political parties."[1] As such, Bryan's populist insurgency signaled the first moment in a reconstructive process that culminated in Franklin Roosevelt's reconstruction. Bryan articulated political principles which, though incipient, would form the basis for Roosevelt's New Deal liberalism. Bryan envisioned a partisan reorganization and reconstruction built around populist principles that pitted a farmer-laborer coalition against capitalist elites. He vehemently asserted that silver bimetallism could unite that coalition. Though Bryan urged a cross-sectional alliance of the nation's toiling masses, he failed to convince the non-agrarian laborers in the industrialized Midwest and Northeast of the perfidy of industrial capitalists, nor could he convince them that free silver was crucial to anyone's liberation and empowerment except western farmers. Bryan tried, and failed, to reconstruct a new Democratic regime built around populist ideology and the free silver campaign.

Bryan's failed, in part, because he employed an ideological rhetoric which was inadequate to successfully completing the reconstructive task. While Bryan's rhetoric effectively elevated his own ideological faction by vanquishing Cleveland Democrats, that same rhetoric failed to build the kind of cross-sectional, ideologically diverse

[1] John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America* (New York: Cambridge, 1998), 189.

coalition necessary to win a national election. Bryan's rhetoric in the general campaign amplified the populist ideology of his narrow, western, agrarian base instead of tempering that ideology in order to explain its relevance to non-western agrarians. His monomaniacal focus on silver blinded him to any issues that might inherently appeal to the interests of industrial laborers, and because he failed to appeal to easterners on the basis of their own interests, his appeal was limited to the abstract populist animosity toward a moneyed elite. But without an issue that could make that animosity tangible, he merely imposed populism on them because he assumed that they would have the same suspicion and animus toward industrial capitalists as his own western agrarians. Thus, while his failure cannot be explained as a rhetorical failure alone, neglecting Bryan's rhetoric obscures a more rigorous account of his faulty rhetoric, and its relation to successful instances of reconstructive presidencies.[2]

Circumstantial explanations of Bryan's failure also confuse how his ideological rhetoric—paradoxically—contributed to the destabilization of the Republican coalition and laid the ideological framework for Roosevelt's eventual Democratic reconstruction. Roosevelt articulated liberal political principles which developed out of a populist ideology, but one that FDR tempered and expanded to reckon the preferences of non-western agrarians. But Bryan's rhetoric had more immediate effects which destabilized the Republican coalition: his ideological leadership was so unpopular that he sent many formerly Democratic voters into the Republican coalition. Perhaps counter-intuitively, flooding Republican ranks and inflating their electoral victory spurred conditions that led

[2] John Gerring asserts, for instance, "these were not happy times for the Democratic party, but there is no reason to suppose that Bryan was particularly at fault," Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America*, 224. Indeed, examinations of Bryan's attempts to draw in the very eastern and Midwestern constituencies he alienated show that Bryan exacerbated the circumstantial difficulties Democrats experienced at the time.

to intense partisan in-fighting and factionalism among the Republicans that ultimately led to a rupture of the party in 1912. Bryan's ideological rhetoric contributed to this process by alienating the very urban constituencies that he sought to win-over—industrial laborers and ethnic voters from the urban East and Midwest. McKinley also played a role filling Republican ranks: his pragmatic rhetoric diminished the principled foundation for the Republican Party, allowing it to better accommodate the ideologically heterogeneous collection of Republican groups, as well as Democratic groups fleeing Bryanism. Analyzing Bryan's rhetoric in this election, therefore, demonstrates the qualities of ideological rhetorical leadership, while also showing the first steps in the historical development that would lead to the destabilization of the Republican consensus and culminate in Franklin Roosevelt's construction of a new partisan consensus.

Bryan's Principled Vision

Bryan articulated principles in order to define a Democratic coalition that would cut across sectional boundaries and unite laboring agrarians and industrial workers into a working-man's majority. Doing so, however, required Bryan to articulate a reason why western agrarians and Midwestern and eastern industrial workers shared a common purpose. In large part, his effort came down to his attempt to convince workers across different geographical sections that a moneyed elite exploited and manipulated them to advance their own selfish interests—that the many had become ruled by the few. John Gerring called this the "Populist Epoch" of the Democratic Party: "Democrats' political philosophy could be encapsulated in the ideal of majority rule and in the populist narrative in which the people fought for their rights against an economic and political

elite."[3] Bryan often presented these ideas as consistent with the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian roots of the party. But his piety toward his predecessors notwithstanding, Bryan proposed a significantly different basis for Democratic consensus than his Democratic forefathers, who previously championed both decentralized rule and local majorities as a means of protecting the few from the many. Thus, even while he decried the baneful enemies of Jeffersonian democracy—"[t]yranny, aristocracy, [and] corruption"—Bryan inverted the basic organizing principle of the Democratic Party.[4] He advocated an energized national government, evident most in his belief in a national majority of working men, guided by a national interest instead of a shared belief in localized self-government. More programmatically, his push for a national monetary policy and the Democratic platform plank for a national income tax both also reflect an empowered national government. In this sense, Bryan's purpose was "disruptive rather than reactivating."[5] He desired to update Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Democracy; he sought to rework the meaning of self-rule in a way that accommodated greater nationalism without necessarily bursting Democrats' chains of monkish obedience to Jeffersonian principles, especially its animus toward elitism. Redefining the Democratic purpose would "mobilize the bulk of the 'toiling masses,' regardless of previous partisan identifications, behind the Bryan candidacy."[6] The first step to reordering the Democratic

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[3] Ibid., 189.

[4] Ibid., 222.

[5] Paul Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 300. See also W. Lance Bennett and William Haltom, "Issues, Voter Choice, and Critical Elections," *Social Science History* 4, no. 4 (Autumn 1980), 398; James Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1983), 158.

[6] Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture,* 301.

coalition, therefore, meant reordering the ideas and rhetoric upon which Democracy stood.

Reordering the Democratic coalition entailed polarizing the electorate in a new way. Specifically, Bryan attempted to bring formerly Republican-identifying voters into Democratic camps, and sending former Democrats into the Republican folds. Bryan pursued this goal by sowing antagonism, pitting the working man against the capitalist. Doing so would unite agrarians and formerly Republican members of the working class behind Bryan, while simultaneously forcing gold-bug, bourbon Democrats into the Republican Party. As Bryan said in his Cross of Gold speech, the Republican Party "legislate[s] to make the well-to-do prosperous," believing that "their prosperity will leak through to those below." By contrast, Bryan's Democratic Party would "legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them."[7] By casting the Republican Party as the party of the rich, and the Democratic Party as that of the working man, Bryan hoped that working men could overcome the distinct material or cultural interests that previously divided them along sectional, religious, or vocational lines.

In this way, Bryan explained his principles as oppositional or negative; he would stop the scheming relationship of capital and government; he would enlighten the working many of their vulnerability in order to protect them. In a Tammany Hall speech Bryan described the 1896 election as a "great contest" to "determine whether a few men banded together are more powerful than all the rest of the people."[8] Bryan emphasized a

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[7] William Jennings Bryan, "Cross of Gold," *The First Battle* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1896), 205.

[8] Bryan, "Tammany Hall Speech," 510.

similarly adversarial theme in a speech to Chicago businessmen, to whom he announced his intention to "[bring] prosperity first to those who toil; give them first the inspiration to work and then protect them in the enjoyment of their rightful share of the proceeds of their toil."[9] Bryan implied throughout that the working man had not been first, nor had he been protected; and if he had not been first then he had been second, and if not protected, he had been exploited. To convince the laboring masses that together they should rule, and that such rule should consist of government action that expressly assisted the working man, Bryan had to convince those same masses that they did not rule, and that government action was in fact opposed to them.

Not only did the toiling masses share a common enemy, however, but they shared a common purpose and interest. Implied in his argument that he would legislate for the working many was that western and Midwestern agrarians, along with eastern and Midwestern industrial workers, possessed more shared interests than those that divided them. For Bryan, silver bimetallism epitomized this shared interest, while the gold standard was the non plus ultra of a national policy that benefited the moneyed few. The policy benefiting the toiling masses did more than serve their own interests, it also represented a national interest. Because the nation's wealth as a whole depended upon the labor of the toiling masses, their interests were coterminous with society's interest in general: "Since the producers of wealth create the nation's prosperity in times of peace and defend the nation's flag in times of peril, their interests ought at all times to be considered by those who stand in official positions. The Democratic party . . . pledges itself to propose and enact such legislation as is necessary to protect the masses in the . . .

[9] Bryan, "Chicago Speech to Business Men," 583.

enjoyment of their just share of the rewards of their labor."[10] Bryan's attempt to polarize the parties between the working man's party and the moneyed party required that he demonize the capitalist, while at the same time showing the varied working interests from the West to the East shared a common interest and purpose, along with a common enemy.

Finally, Bryan explained that the partisan reordering he proposed presaged social and economic dislocations that warranted the unity of the working many, and the partnership of formerly estranged groups. As he said in his Cross of Gold speech: "They tell us that this platform was made to catch votes. We reply to them that changing conditions make new issues."[11] The changing conditions were the increasing aggregation of wealth, the stratification of society, and the collusion of the higher strata of society with the government. For Bryan, the alternatives between a gold standard, favored by fiscal conservatives, and gold and silver bimetallism, favored by Populists, crystalized the emerging conflicts of a new era. The capitalists preserved their wealth at the expense of the laborer's livelihood precisely by insisting on continuing the gold standard. Bryan's campaign, he explained in a Chicago speech, revolved around this "great question" that affects "every man, woman, and child in this land." The question was not simply about the advantages of different monetary policies, but what the different monetary standards symbolized: the prejudice of the private interests of a moneyed few, or the benefits of the country's laborers, who represented the wellspring of society's wealth and vitality. Thus, Bryan himself personified the "great question" of the time—he personified the defining moment of this historical moment. And the magnitude of the question, he sought to

[10] Bryan, "Letter Accepting the Democratic Nomination," 412.

[11] Bryan, "Cross of God," 203.

convince his audience in the same Chicago speech, was evident by the movements in the great mass of people; he argued that he had seen "the people stirred as they have seldom been stirred before."[12] Indeed, Bryan's strategy of disruption required him to contextualize his campaign as taking part in the larger reordering of social and economic relationship; he acted merely as the agent of those changes.

The Free Silver Campaign: Bryan Explains Democratic Populism

Bryan's campaign revolved around the promise to replace the gold standard with a bimetallic currency which would coin silver and gold together at a ratio of 16:1. His Bryan's so-called free silver campaign faltered because the largely agrarian monetary issue failed to generate support among industrial laborers in the Midwest and East. Though Bryan campaigned on one clearly defined policy issue in order to unite the eastern industrialist and western agrarian, the issue itself was only vaguely relevant to the interests of eastern wage-earners. It represented only the concrete interests of farmers in the far west. Thus, despite having a particular and concrete policy proposal, its irrelevance to the eastern portion of his desired coalition left Bryan little appeal there other than that of his abstract populist ideology. It was not that Bryan did not attempt to explain silver to the East; rather he failed to attach those explanations to distinct interests of eastern wage earners. It proceeded as if he could impose silver on eastern workers on the strength of populist ideology in the abstract, rather than connecting that ideology to issues inherently important to those same workers. Since Bryan did not adequately understand the issues that really moved industrial laborers, however, he offered no concrete fact that could instantiate his ideological appeal. Bryan's failure to explain how

[12] Bryan, "Chicago Speech," 580.

his populist principles benefited industrial workers' interests had a curious result: his radical silver campaign appeared as nothing more than the narrow sectional interests of the West and South, decorated in high-minded rhetoric. The prophet warning of exploitation must have appeared as a self-interested charlatan himself. Bryan ambitiously tried to establish a new partisan coalition around new principles, but his appeal only reflected the interests and the ideology of a very narrow and homogeneous portion of that coalition.

To demonstrate Bryan's problematic campaign rhetoric, I focus on his attempt to persuade easterners of his populist campaign. His appeal to the East had two components: first, he attempted to actually speak to the intrinsic interests of eastern wage earners. But aside from finding little to say about their interests, Bryan tended to let his silver zeal overshadow his attempts to articulate a more general basis of support, thereby undercutting his attempt to speak to the East and eastern concerns. Secondly, Bryan attempted to explain why silver should inherently appeal to eastern interests, and that it was more than a western agrarian issue. But his rhetoric in this category was also problematic. Bryan tended to explain that easterners should appreciate western agrarians because they were materially dependent upon the crops that they produced; easterners, in Bryan's rhetoric, had less of an interest in agrarian issues as they had a debt that they owed to their farming brethren. Beyond this, Bryan reverted to his populist diatribe against the moneyed few, and explained that silver was the proper means to vindicate the working many. This was not an explanation of populist ideology, but an appeal that presumed that that easterners accepted in abstract his own antipathy toward capitalists. In either case, Bryan spoke as if the easterners he tried to persuade had already accepted an

abstract populist ideology which in reality only reflected the narrow preferences of a homogeneous group of western and southern agrarians.

The Appeal to Eastern Interests

Bryan understood that while he could ride silver zeal to capture the party's nomination from bourbon, Cleveland forces within the party, becoming a national candidate necessitated more than speaking to the interests of a faction within the party. Two of his most important and widely reported public statements—his letter accepting the Democratic nomination and his speech accepting the nomination—were manifestly dedicated to reintroduce the silver firebrand as the leader of a national party standing on a platform of varied policies. Despite this recognition, however, his ideological zeal tended to cast a long shadow that foiled his attempts to reach out to eastern interests. Consider, for instance, Bryan's letter accepting the Democratic nomination, which was one of the first instances of his public communication directed at a national audience. His expectation that it would be widely published and distributed by the press makes it an important example of Bryan's attempt to branch out to more varied interests. The letter placed special emphasis "on those planks in the platform of particular importance to labor," calling for labor arbitration instead of labor injunctions.[13] He also denounced trusts, which "bankrupt rivals and then prey upon society."[14] In a letter that touched upon these and various other urban issues, Bryan only briefly mentioned silver in the final

[13] Stanley Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 309.

[14] Bryan, "Letter Accepting the Democratic Nomination," 413.

paragraph. He forestalled what he otherwise called the paramount issue of the campaign in order to show the sundry application of the Democratic platform.

But in practice, Bryan's discussion of the silver question elevated it to a position of special prominence that undermined his attempt at a more complex argument. Bryan boldly asserted that resolving the silver issue was his preeminent priority: "until the money question is fully and finally settled, the American people will not consent to the consideration of any other important question;" it was the one issue for which "[t]remendous results will follow" when the United States acts, and consequently "delay is impossible." Bryan went on to say that in the presence of this "*overshadowing* issue, differences of opinion upon minor questions must be laid aside" in order to assure the unity necessary to see the silver question through.[15] Bryan's own word "overshadowed" described with great precision his problematic attempt to widen the campaign. All of the non-silver issues in the greater part of the letter, issues which might appeal to the complex preferences of a toiling masses coalition, appeared only in silver's penumbra. In this particular example, Bryan easily brushed aside his cool cool and rational explanations of the non-silver Democratic planks to give the silver issue such prominence that it alone, among all others, required immediate action, since its results would, unlike all other issues, produce "tremendous results." It is not difficult to imagine how organized workers, remembering the violence of Pullman strike injunctions just two years before, would hesitate to assent that such problems were "minor issue[s]" when compared with the description of bimetallism as the ultimate case which "greed is

[15] Bryan, "Letter Accepting the Democratic Nomination," 414. Emphasis added.

prosecuting against humanity," even though silver's benefits likely appeared as a mere abstraction to the urban worker.

In another example, Bryan's speech accepting the Democratic nomination—like his letter accepting the nomination—attempted to show his relevance outside the silver issue. The fact that he chose to deliver his speech in New York City's Madison Square Garden symbolized his attempt to "appeal beyond the farmer."[16] He recognized how his critics used his demeanor and extemporaneous quips as evidence of his radicalism. Consequently, out of a determination to "make no unprepared statements which might be used later to embarrass him," he "read his speech from beginning to end . . . in an undramatic fashion for two hours." Furthermore, he calibrated the content of the speech to counter those images of him as a sectional radical, doing his best to "reassure voters that he and his platform offered no menace to private property, traditional institutions, or the social order. There was no plan to abolish the Supreme Court, as some opponents were already claiming, just a hope that it would reverse its decision on the income tax."[17] Finally, when the speech did address the monetary issue, it did so with a view to the "effect which monetary reform would have upon urban interests." [18] All of this was calculated to reintroduce Bryan to a national audience, which may have first learned of him from his zealous Cross of Gold speech.

Unfortunately, Bryan's behavior before and after the speech sabotaged the very image that his highly orchestrated Madison Square Garden speech sought to convey. For

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[16] William D. Harpine, *From the Front Porch to the Front Page* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2006), 82.

[17] R. Hal Williams, *Realigning America* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 96.

[18] Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896, 304-305.*

instance, Bryan travelled by train to New York, and at several stops he made extemporaneous stump speeches. "This kind of campaigning," historian Stanley Jones observed, "exposed Bryan to the ridicule from the eastern press which he was trying to avoid. . . . Thus, his reference at Lincoln, Nebraska, to the East as 'what now seems to be the enemy's country, but which we hope to be our country before this campaign is over,' was extensively quoted and used against Bryan, through the rest of the campaign."[19] His contrast between "enemy's country" and "our country" only reinforced the perception of sectional prejudice his Madison Square Garden speech sought to counteract. Moreover, immediately following the speech, Bryan took to his hotel balcony and jeered at the East when prodded by a crowd that formed below. Bryan "reverted to his more typical form: militant, divisive, and entertaining;" he claimed that "Nebraskans had been worried about sending him to 'the enemies country.'"[20] Bryan's repeated reference to the East as "enemy's country" worked against his deliberate attempt to demonstrate a capacity to speak as persuasively to an eastern, urban audience as to a western, agrarian audience.

Thus, Bryan's attempts to highlight his integrity to urban constituencies were overwhelmed by either Bryan's penchant for sectional antagonism, or more indirectly through his preoccupation with what he almost always referred to as the campaign's "paramount issue." James Sundquist noted that Bryan "made little effort to amplify" the party's labor plank, while he "talked silver to the urban as well as the rural masses."[21] Mark Harpine observed that even though his silver fervor, and specifically the famous

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[19] Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896, 304*; Quoting Bryan, *The First Battle,* 300.

[20] Harpine, *From the Front Porch to the Front Page*, 84.

[21] Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System,* 164.

"Cross of Gold" speech, "probably contributed to his nomination by a deadlocked convention," his campaign was hampered "by appearing in so uncompromising a way to the agrarian elements and to the West," which meant that "Bryan neglected the national audience who would vote in the November election."[22] In sum, Bryan attempted to demonstrate the breadth of the Democratic appeal and his ability to speak beyond the concerns of western and southern agrarians, but his preoccupation with silver and distrust toward the very region he courted impaired that attempt.

Bryan Explains Silver to the East

Beyond addressing issues that would intrinsically appeal to the urban wage earner, Bryan also tried to explain why silver should itself appeal to the toiling masses. Bryan argued that the toiling masses could be brought together in support of a "financial system which [the people] believe to be best for themselves, their neighbors, and for their country."[23] Of course, he had no need to persuade western agrarians of the virtues of silver, since they were the mainspring of silver fervor, and understood silver's inflationary effects as the key to buoying dismally low crop prices.[24] Bryan labored to show that it was equally valuable to urban wage-earners in manufacturing jobs. While this meant speaking to both eastern and Midwestern cities, Bryan especially focused on the East, because unlike the Midwest, it was almost entirely industrial, and thus, wanting most for an explanation of silver's benefits.

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[22] Harpine, *From the Front Porch to the Front Page*, 67.

[23] Bryan, "Chicago Speech," 580.

[24] Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, 139.

Bryan spent a fair amount of time on silver in his Madison Square Garden. He began by explaining the benefits to the farmer, before turning to the reasons the wage earner should care about free silver. He argued that "while a gold standard raises the purchasing power of the dollar, it also makes it more difficult to obtain possession of the dollar; [workers] know that employment is less permanent, loss of work more probable, and re-employment less certain;" all because "[a] gold standard encourages hoarding of money, because money is rising."[25] Bryan tied gold to unemployment and silver to employment and in so doing demonstrated some sensitivity to the type of issues important to factory workers. But Bryan's rhetoric was problematic because he conceded a Republican point—that the gold standard raised the dollar's purchasing power, and that silver lowered it—albeit for the purpose of giving a more nuanced explanation of his monetary policy. Bryan put on one side of the balance a weaker dollar, while on the other side he put the probable loss of work, and uncertain reemployment, and asked his audience to consider which was worse. The comparison effectively asked his audience to weigh abstract macroeconomic considerations about a complex relationship between monetary policy and the labor market, against the more concrete consideration that a dollar that would not buy as much as it once did. Ironically, it was Bryan's nuance—as opposed to his typically heavy-handed style—that marred Bryan's message. Conceding that silver would reduce the dollar's purchasing power played into one of the Republicans' most effective messages of the campaign. They repeatedly harped that free silver would nearly halve the value of a dollar, creating 53 cent dollars.[26] The McKinley

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[25] Bryan, "Madison Square Garden Speech," 322.

[26] Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*, 305; Paul W. Glad, *McKinley, Bryan, and the People* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1964), 183; Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, 164.

campaign minted novelty one-dollar coins to illustrate the point in campaign memorabilia. One such coin "bore a caricature bust of Bryan with the inscription, IN GOD WE TRUST . . . FOR THE OTHER 47 CENTS."[27] The theme pervaded the whole campaign, and certainly swept away Bryan's attempt at intricacy.

Bryan's attempt at nuanced sensitivity to Eastern interests—though flawed—stood out as the exception far more than the rule. The Madison Square Garden speech effectively initiated his campaign, which entailed a frenetic tour throughout the nation, peppered with short stump speeches that did not have the restraint or calculation evident in the Madison Square Garden speech. These speeches, on the whole, revealed a deeply problematic sectional bias which lingered just below the silver issue. That is, Bryan's attempt to explain silver was problematic from the start because silver as an issue came to take on a symbolic import that could not be easily separated from strictly economic arguments. Silver was more than a monetary issue but a symbol of western vindication for years of eastern injustices. Paul Kleppner aptly described how Bryan's free silver rhetoric "created a problem of cognitive dissonance for urban workers. The Bryanites emphasized the primacy of agriculture over industry. They concentrated on the agricultural producer and his role in the creation of the moral and just society."[28] W. Lance Bennett and William Haltom explained that beyond the dubious merits of silver as a policy issue *per se*, it embodied "sectional distrust of the East and the Eastern capital that was rampant in the West and South." Moreover, it was accompanied by a "moralistic

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[27] Glad, *McKinley, Bryan, and the People*, 183.

[28] Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*, 304; W. Lance Bennett and William Haltom, "Issues, Voter Choice, and Critical Elections," *Social Science History* 4, no. 4 (Autumn 1980) 403-404; Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, 164; Williams, *Realigning America,* 95.

rhetoric that asserted the values of agrarian culture and expressed fears that the neighborliness and morality of the democratic agrarian frontier were falling prey to the avarice of monopoly capital."[29] Bryan's Cross of Gold speech, though not delivered with a national audience in mind, propelled him to a national stage, and contained some of the most powerful sectional images. Bryan railed: "Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the street of every city in the country."[30] This quotation illustrated a theme of a hierarchy of social good that underlay much of Bryan's campaign speech: the farm over the factory; the country over the city. Too often Bryan's suggested that the city ought to support silver in repayment of a debt that it owed to the farm, and that latent message weakened considerably Bryan's attempt to show the East and the city the reason why silver was in their own self-interest.

Bryan's junket through the Northeast and New England demonstrated these problems amply. He did not moderate the pitch of grating sectionalism in the East, nor dilute the concentration of anti-eastern symbolism inherent in that issue, and therefore his attempt to convince the wage-earner of his inherent interest in silver was quixotic from the start. In Philadelphia, Bryan mused: "I believe that the only thing in the Bible which some of these financiers ever read is the passage which say that about 1800 years ago certain wise men came from the East. They seem to think that the wise men have been coming from that direction ever since."[31] In Springfield, Massachusetts, Bryan rebuked

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[29] Bennett and Haltom, "Issues, Voter Choice, and Critical Elections," 394.

[30] Bryan, "Cross of Gold," 205.

[31] Bryan, "Philadelphia Speech," 478.

the gold standard, which "has never commended itself to the agricultural classes of any country which has ever had it." It was not clear whether the members of the Springfield audience were farmers of western Massachusetts or the workers of the industrialized cities of central and eastern Massachusetts. If it was the latter, Bryan's emphasis on the gold standard's impact on agrarian life was obviously discordant, since a non-agrarian audience could hardly be expected to vote for silver for its effect on a different class of people.

In any case, however, Bryan continued his Springfield speech with a kind of dialogue that actually antagonized his eastern audience, regardless of whether he spoke to them as farmers or industrialists. After asserting that the gold standard "never commended itself to the agricultural classes," he continued by asking, "[w]hat will you say then? Will you say that these farmers have no right to have their interests respected?" Bryan's dialogue here suggests that he is not addressing an eastern constituency in particular, but the easterner per se. Were Bryan talking to New England farmers, he would not speak of "farmers" in the third person, nor would he associate his farmers with a kind of victim and his audience as at least a potential victimizer who was not respecting their interest. This became clearer as he continued because he assailed his audience for forgetting that their wealth and comfort does not come from them—from their own toil—but from the western agrarian: "No, you dare not say that [these farmers have no right to have their interests respected], because my friends, they must first produce wealth before there is wealth to be distributed. What will you say then? No, you will dare not say that, because you know that in public life and in business life the best brains that you have

come from the farms of this country." Bryan spoke to his audience as beneficiaries of agricultural toil, not as toilers themselves.

This became even clearer as he continued to speak to his audience as antagonists toward agricultural toilers: "What answer will you make to them? When they ask for bread, will you give them a stone? When they ask for fish, will you bestow serpents upon them? That has been the policy of the financiers of this country."[32] Bryan began the dialogue by reminding his audience how the whole country's wealth begins on the nation's farms, and he concluded by asking his audience what they would repay these farmers in return for the wealth that they generated. Bryan's speech ultimately reminded his eastern audience what they owed to the western agrarians whose toil constituted the foundation of their own livelihood. By implication, Bryan instructed his audience that to deny the western agriculturalist free silver—or, to deny Bryan their vote—would effectively deny them the return they were owed for their toil; it would be like returning the wealth they created with stones in place of bread, and serpents in place of fish. In what amounted to a very strange argumentation behalf of the western farmer, Bryan simultaneously urged eastern voters to recognize their dependence on the West, while also reminding them of their duty to amend the western farmers' plight.

In the same junket as the Springfield speech, Bryan made a similarly problematic appeal in Hartford, Connecticut. Rather than antagonizing his eastern audience, Bryan asserted the value of silver as if it spoke to eastern interests, but he did so in a way that relied almost entirely upon the persuasiveness of populist ideology alone. He began by explaining that his speech would likely clash with the interests of those to whom he was

[32] Bryan, "Springfield Speech," 490-491.

speaking, and who are not "in sympathy with the cause that I represent." He then singled out the "great insurance companies" for which "[y]our city is noted." Those insurance companies were, Bryan went on to note, "taking an active part in the battle to continue the gold standard," but they did so only because "[t]he presidents of these companies are more concerned about their own salaries than they are in protecting the policy holders from the effects of free coinage." This argument was as discordant as the Springfield speech, likewise demonstrating Bryan's unawareness of how thoroughly he spoke prejudicially in favor of western interest and ideology. Bryan identified the principal industry of the people he addressed, only then to associate that industry (and them) with the policy that he found so pernicious.

Bryan did focus on the presidents of these insurance companies—the moneyed few—rather than insurance companies *per se*. But Bryan acted as if it were enough to mention the perfidy of professional executives to make clear why silver was itself desirable. The audience of a town that generated wealth by virtue of professional insurance companies would not necessarily suspect company presidents. Even if it did, Bryan would still need to explain why silver was commendable on its own terms. Bryan elected to rest upon his argument of guilt by association; that since the moneyed few were bad, and they preferred gold, then gold too must be bad. Bryan assumed that populist distaste for wealth sufficiently communicated the reason his audience should support him. He acted as if this ideological appeal alone rendered it unnecessary to explain silver's pertinence with any more specificity, or to explain a public policy issue that would be more relevant to eastern interests. Though Bryan believed he explained how silver united the interests of eastern and western toilers, he merely urged silver upon

the east based solely upon the strength of an abstract populist ideology that pitted the working many against the moneyed few.

Bryan the Cultural Antagonist

While Bryan was aloof to the material interests to industrial wage-earners, especially in the East, he also compounded his problems by antagonizing the traditional ethnic cultural base of the Democratic Party in the Midwest and the East. Richard Jensen and Paul Kleppner have described the cultural differences in the Midwest by virtue of two different religious categories, the liturgical and the pietistic.[33] Pietistic churches include most native protestant denominations, along with old stock and recently immigrated Scandanavian, and Dutch Lutherans, English, Irish, and English Canadian Protestants, Methodists, and Southern Presbyterians and Baptists. Their religious perspective "emphasize[d] a personal, vital, and fervent faith in a transcendent God" and concentrated on "conversion, or change of heart, personal piety, and a relative informality in worship."[34] In terms of ethnic background, culture, and religious practice, pietistic churches were distinct from liturgical churches, which comprised German Lutherans and Catholics of sundry ethnic stripe. Their "ritualistic perspective" stressed "intellectual assent to prescribed doctrine" that emphasized "formal doctrine, traditional confession, and ritual. It eschew[ed] emotionalism" in favor of " *right belief*, a formalized commitment to the letter of the codified norms of faith." Though particular groups within these two broad categories varied in their relative partisan attachments, broadly speaking

[33] Richard Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), ch. 3; Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*, ch. 2.

[34] Kleppner 73.

the pietists possessed longstanding allegiance to the Republican Party while liturgicals traditionally identified with the Democrats.

The partisan affiliations of pietistics and liturgicals had to do with how their different cults of religious practice manifested distinct understandings of political action. Pietistics were reformers: their "political concerns centered around the use of government power to impose their religiously derived canons of behavior upon the broader society."[35] These were the Republicans that opposed the Democracy of "rum, Romanism, and rebellion," advocating Sunday work laws and, perhaps the most important point of political contention, prohibition. Meanwhile, liturgicals aligned behind the Democratic Party because it emphasized individual liberty, acted as a refuge from overweening temperance advocates, and collected and mobilized opposition to prohibition.

But in 1896, Bryan's rhetoric inverted this pattern. Throughout the electorally crucial Midwest, Germans, Lutherans, and Catholics—farmers and manufacturing workers alike—were "consistently less responsive to the Bryan candidacy than were native Protestant voters who had usually been anti-Democratic."[36] Liturgicals left the Democrats to join the Republican ranks and reform oriented pietistics left the Republican to join the Democratic ranks. These cultural shifts reflected the way Bryan's zealous and high-minded crusade for free silver inherently appealed to pietistic voters and repulsed the liturgicals. The latter's allegiance to the Party was the role that it served protecting them from moralistic politics and "defend[ing] their religious values . . . [But] when they perceived that it was no longer the defender of 'personal liberty' against the

[35] Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*, 322.

[36] Ibid., 324.

encroachments of imperialistic pietism . . . they broke away from their political allegiance, rejected the 'Democracy of Bryan,' and turned to the Republicanism of McKinley."[37] Thus, just as free silver became a symbol for sectional antagonism—despite Bryan's attempt to persuade the Eastern worker of its merit—so too did silver become a symbol for pietistic moral reform: "the battle was for morality, against wickedness; for right behavior, against the ways of men; for 'his [Bryan's] kind of people,' against the evil ways of men who walked in the paths of sin. On this type of issue there could be no compromise, for God's cause did not allow for accommodation with that of the devil."[38] The temperance and prohibitionist Republicans, as well as the independent Prohibition Party saw in Bryan a national figure whose passion for moral purity echoed their own quest for righteousness.

Though Bryan's free silver campaign converted Republican pietists, prohibitionists and Populists, they were not a sufficient electoral replacement for the tide of fleeing liturgicals. Gambling on the support of the pietistic moralists, as Richard Jensen argued, Bryan ignored "the needs of the immigrants and the cities, he focused his attack on 'an arrogance that has seldom been paralleled . . . 'A tyranny not often before attempted,' a conspiracy to force 'all mankind [to] bow down and worship the golden calf.' He promised moral redemption through free silver, yet was never able to convince the people that his millennium would be as prosperous as McKinley's good society."[39] These liturgicals were dubious that the moral righteousness of silver alone was enough to

[37] Ibid., 338

[38] Ibid., 346.

[39] Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest*, 305.

displace the much more economically tangible issues of sound money and the tariff which McKinley offered them. And beyond this kind of economic realism, McKinley's sound money campaign became "the symbol of the economic and cultural pluralism and advancement that [McKinley] knew would sweep the cities and the immigrants into an invincible coalition."[40] Thus, Bryan's difficulty in the city had at least as much to do with the religious and cultural import of free silver as it did with its being an economically and politically obtuse appeal to urban workers throughout Northeast: "The larger cites provided the greatest Republican gains in 1896, thanks to their ethno-religious composition [and] their industrialized and commercialized economic base."[41] Bryan managed to invert the cultural basis of the Democratic Party, which was once the refuge of the wet, saloon interest but had become through Bryan's leadership the promise of dry, revivalist and millennial reformers who saw in Bryan's own zeal the possibility of moral renewal throughout the country.

Conclusion: Bryan and the Principled Consensus

Bryan's obtuse appeal to the urbanized East, as well as his alienating old stock immigrants and liturgically minded religious components of the old Midwest, indicate Bryan's problematic campaign.[42] Bryan's argument for a re-ordering of the Democratic coalition on new principles, I have argued, suffered from inherent contradictions. Bryan explains the principles behind his toiling masses coalition with an issue that actually only reflected the narrow interests of, and symbolic weight that was meaningful to western and

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., 300.

[42] Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, 163; Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*, 308; Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest*, 269.

southern sections of the country. Accordingly, as far as the crucial eastern and Midwestern voting blocs, Bryan's leadership relies almost entirely upon the persuasiveness of an abstract statement of principle—that the moneyed few abuse the powers of government and exploit the laboring many. His principled argument fell flat in those sections of the country that did not see the gold standard as the cause of all economic and social difficulties, nor saw free silver as the remedy of all problems, and he made no other meaningful appeal to issues of interests to those sections. He could have addressed with more conviction the diversity of issues pertinent to working men, some of which presented themselves in the Democratic platform like labor opposition to trusts, or immigration, or support for the income tax.

Generally speaking, Bryan did little to incorporate a diversity of interests into his appeal. Such diversity would likely have strengthened his principled appeal by making it more tangible to those who did not appreciate the virtues of silver. Silver would cease to be the panacea that Bryan treated it as, and the West would cease to be the foundation of American society. Bryan, however, did not take this route to broadening, and thereby tempering his principled appeal. The western and southern roots of his campaign readily understood antagonism toward the East or, in the case of the South, antagonism toward Republicans. But the East was more ambivalent toward such vitriol, nor had they the experiences with the Populist movement that socialized westerns to see nefarious political collusion in social and economic difficulties. In making the case for a coalition associated with the public interest versus the moneyed interest—a case that very well could be made in the East—Bryan would need to have discovered a way to explain his principles of organization and action in terms that resonated with eastern experiences and

interests. Failing that diverse appeal, Bryan espoused the good of a narrow partisan coalition, and justified it in the ideology of oppression and exploitation. Despite the magnitude of what Bryan hoped to accomplish, in the end he failed to speak beyond the homogeneous sectional preferences of his native western constituencies and the narrow principles that he imposed upon eastern and Midwestern toilers.

CHAPTER THREE

The McKinley Campaign: A Pluralistic Coalition

Introduction: An Era of Republican Dominance?

William McKinley's 1896 victory over William Jennings Bryan appeared to usher in a period of Republican dominance that would be unbroken until the Great Depression. Indeed, Republicans would occupy the White House for 16 continuous years after McKinley, and for a total of a total of 28 of the 36 years between McKinley and FDR's election in 1932. David Crocket represents this prevalent interpretation of McKinley as the advance agent of Republican electoral prosperity; he argues that "William McKinley, emblem of orthodox Republican tariff policies, confirmed the GOP sweep of [the 1894 midterm elections], winning by the largest popular margin in over 20 years, taking unified control of the national government, and inaugurating a new era of Republican supremacy that would dominate politics for a generation."[1] This interpretation would appear uncontroversial based upon Republican electoral returns. But the argument is overdrawn. Insurgent progressives rent McKinley's coalition in two shortly after his assassination in 1901, which allowed a progressive-Democratic congressional coalition to drive class-based economic policies which appeared to embody the urban populist political programming that Bryan himself never managed to create. This insurgency culminated in Teddy Roosevelt's third party candidacy that allowed Woodrow Wilson to capture the White House twice without ever gaining a majority of the popular vote.

[1] David Crockett, "The Perils of Restoration Politics: Nineteenth-Century Antecedents," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (December 2012): 881-902.

Meanwhile, the 1920s "return to normalcy" hardly seemed to revive the economic nationalism and mercantilism that was so key to the turn of the century Republican Party, which suggests that the 1920s Republicanism was not merely a return to McKinleyism after all.

The shortcomings of the McKinley coalition come into clearer relief with a more systematic evaluation of McKinley's pragmatic rhetorical leadership. In many ways, McKinley's rhetoric was an impeccable counterpart to Bryan's ideological leadership. Where Bryan proposed division, polarization, and sectional and class conflict, McKinley proposed unity, non-partisanship, and social cohesion. Indeed, McKinley established his campaign upon vague themes of social harmony that promised to reconcile the interests of diverse groups—especially the worker and the manager, but also the city and the farm. Where Bryan stood for free silver, McKinley stood for protectionism. But unlike free silver, the tariff actually did speak to the material interests of the diverse groups that McKinley appealed to; it embodied the larger theme of social harmony. As a matter of rhetorical leadership, therefore, McKinley campaigned upon issues that could instantiate the consonance of interests that social harmony represented

McKinley's campaign of social harmony depended upon emphasizing issues where coalitional interests aligned and obscuring issues where coalitional interests diverged. In practice, that meant that McKinley's campaign oscillated between a positive appeal to the tariff and to sound money—his uplifting but vague response to free silver—and a negative campaign against Bryan extremism. When he did speak to principles beyond material advantages, he discussed the vague principles of social cohesion (which in practice meant the complementarity of self-interest) and patriotism. This highly

pragmatic rhetoric allowed McKinley to appeal very broadly to diverse groups within the crucial industrial centers of the Northeast and Midwest. But it also meant that McKinley actually obscured the ways in which the self-interests of these very groups diverged. Furthermore, since he highlighted self-interest instead of shared principles as the basis of coalitional unity, when the material advantages of coalitional groups ceased to converge, there was no principled basis that could preserve the coalition. In short, McKinley's leadership was pragmatic, therefore, because his social harmony campaign was merely an appeal to a plurality of self-interested coalitional groups.

This pragmatic leadership produced favorable results in the short-term, but in the long-term it promised a degree of amity that Republicans could not deliver, and resulted in increasing factionalism and coalitional strain. McKinley could appeal to divergent self-interests because Bryan so woefully neglected the interests of the very urban laborers he sought to capture by overlooking issues like the income tax or opposition to the labor injunction. But when these same workers came to see their interests opposed to the urban professionals McKinley promised unity with, they struck out against Republican regulars and fueled the rise of insurgent progressives. This conflict grew increasingly divisive in the first decade of the 20th century, and culminated in Teddy Roosevelt's outright revolt from the Republican Party in 1912. Thus, McKinley's pragmatic rhetoric inflated the Republican coalition by promising to satisfy a plurality of material interests—a feat Bryan's ideological rhetoric facilitated. But this glut of self-interested coalitional partners created an expectation of harmony that Republicans could not deliver, and that failure created destabilizing intra-party strife.

McKinley's Vision of Social Harmony

William McKinley's candidacy and campaign contrasted strikingly with Bryan's. Where Bryan's campaign was remarkably narrow, McKinley's was notably broad. The variety of interests and groups that McKinley sought to enlist in his support demonstrated the breadth of his appeal. McKinley offered to the American people social harmony: the confluence and complementarity of society's diverse interests. While McKinley appealed to the farmer and the industrial worker alike, he focused in particular on the emerging interests within the industrial economy system burgeoning in America's cities, especially in the Northeast and the Midwest. These economic developments also increasingly stratified society into urban laborers and urban professionals. McKinley based his social harmony campaign on the premise that these groups possessed more in common than they were divided by opposed economic interests; where Bryan tendered the union of the worker and the farmer, McKinley sought to yoke the worker and the manager. McKinley saw in the emerging industrial economy a unity of interests that transcended old coalitional divisions predicated upon sectional, ethnic, or vocational differences, and that promised to unite the East with the Midwest, as well as the worker with the professional. Protection and sound money were the two issues which embodied those shared economic interests. By contrast, policies that allegedly vindicated the working man by punishing the moneyed few—free silver being the most pertinent but not the only example—were counter-productive because they assumed that the few and the many were at odds. In fact, McKinley argued, class-based policies actually hurt the very lower classes they intended to help. That was because class-based policies were bad for social cohesion and vitality of the whole. But damage done to society as a whole actually disproportionately

burdened the working classes within society, because their lesser property made them more vulnerable to broader, societal economic dislocations. Thus, he said, free silver should not only alarm financial elites in the Northeast, because "[n]o one suffers so much from cheap money as the farmers and laborers," noting that "the poor, and not the rich, are always the greatest sufferers from every attempt to debase our money." McKinley's social harmony argument that all social classes—and especially laboring vocations—materially benefited from avoiding class-based legislation presumed a fundamental complementarity of interests such that good legislation did not disproportionately benefit one group over another.

Beyond allowing McKinley to build a coalition among society's newly delineated economic interests, his social harmony appeal also served as a valuable foil that McKinley used to contrast himself with Bryan. Where "Bryan spoke of class, ethnic, and sectional divisions" McKinley countered with "broad, positive programs in which everyone could share."[2] He routinely admonished the Great Commoner and his associates for trying to set interest against interest and class against class. In his letter accepting the Republican nomination to the presidency, McKinley lamented the "effort . . . being made by those high in the counsels of the allied parties to divide the people of this country into classes and create distinctions among us which in fact do not exist and are repugnant to our form of government. . . . We are not a nation of classes but of sturdy, free, independent, and honorable people, despising the demagogue and never capitulating to dishonor." McKinley especially appealed to the better senses of the very toilers that Bryan so earnestly sought, cautioning "every industrious laborer of this country," to

[2] R. Hal Williams, *Realigning America* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 145.

"guard against such delusion" that would "play off his passion against his interest."[3] Since McKinley's theme of social harmony promised to satisfy workers' interests as well, he could deny that Bryan had workers' best interests in mind and therefore reduce Bryan's campaign to demagoguery that stirred passions of envy and resentment. By contrast, social harmony not only promised the complementarity of interests, but it also promised an antidote to class resentment: social harmony was the sentiment of unity underlying the actual complementarity of interests among diverse groups. Thus, McKinley gently encouraged equanimity toward all social classes, frequently urging from his front porch that "[w]e are all equal citizens—equal in privilege and opportunity."[4]

McKinley additionally appealed to the sentiment of patriotism as a reason to support him over Bryan, which fit in with the larger theme of social harmony. McKinley consistently stressed Americanism more than partisanship from his front porch in Canton: "There are some among us who have hitherto maintained allegiance to other political faiths, but we have resolved that this is a time when party fidelity must be cast aside, and all patriotic citizens must stand shoulder to shoulder in rescuing our country from threatened disaster, dishonor, and ultimate destruction." Like social harmony, patriotism proved a useful tool in making Bryan a foil. McKinley proposed that those who love their country should vote for him, and in so doing "stamp out the spirit of lawlessness and repudiation which now threatens [the country]." Thus, McKinley stood for more than a set of policies, but he stood for American values, so that his victory would "not be a mere party victory, but a victory deeper and broader and more significant than that, for it will

[3] "Mr. McKinley Accepts," *The New York Times*, August 27, 1896.

[4] "They Came In Thousands," *New York Times,* September 6, 1896.

represent the votes of men of all parties, who unite with the Republican Party in the purpose to preserve the honor of the country."[5] McKinley urged that the people's non-partisan patriotism would inoculate them to Bryan's class demagoguery. He represented those who had "no sympathy with such appeals," asserting that "[p]atriotism is a nobler sentiment." McKinley asserted that Republicanism coincided with Americanism, since it stood then as it always had "for the maintenance of law and order and democratic tranquility."[6]

McKinley so stressed patriotism that he became personally identified with the noble love of country. McKinley's famed front porch campaign began to symbolize in the public consciousness the domestic virtue of the quaint American town, bolstering his appeal to all Americans on the basis of their patriotism. Stanley Jones observed that "[a]s men and women left Canton they carried away an image of a kindly, home-loving man, a public-spirited man, a man endowed with a profound understanding of public affairs, a man of almost supernal patriotism." He went on to quote the Nebraska Republican Senator John Thurston, who compared Bryan's railroad car with McKinley's front porch:

> [Bryan] has selected for his area the sand lots—his appeals are to the passions and prejudices of men. [McKinley's forum] is an American door yard; his rostrum is the porch of an American cottage; his words, simple and forceful, are addressed to the intelligence, the conscience, the patriotism and the common sense of a brave, thoughtful, just and hopeful people.'[7]

McKinley epitomized the patriotic leader, and from "the moment Hanna inaugurated the practice of distributing buttons carrying merely a replica of the American flag as

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[5] "Canton Is Again Crowded," *New York Times,* September 19, 1896.

[6] "They Came In Thousands," *New York Times,* September 6, 1896.

[7] Stanley Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 285.

McKinley buttons," McKinley's "patriotism made him a national symbol coequal with the flag." This image of patriotism was important because it appealed to many different groups. On the one hand, it was popular among "upper-middle-class conservatives, Republican and Democratic, in the large urban centers of the country."[8] But social harmony and patriotism also served McKinley's ethnic inclusivity, as against Bryan's pietistic moralism. Love of country constituted a shared American value that linked the native born and the immigrant. Thus, McKinley "promised every ethnic minority that, if they demonstrated their patriotism and good faith by voting for McKinley, the new Republican administration would guarantee their security."[9] Patriotism, therefore, as part of his rhetoric of social harmony, posited an inclusive appeal to broad and uplifting sentimentality that could accommodate a variety of different groups, and which also vividly contrasted with Bryan's negative and fervid appeals.

Social harmony and patriotism were powerful and attractive themes, but they were also vague. For one thing, both themes were explicitly non-partisan. That is not to say that McKinley did not run as a Republican—he clearly did, advocating canonical positions like the tariff—but that his appeals to patriotism and social harmony obscured social or material distinctions. McKinley promised to satisfy all interests equally, and in so doing replaced specific coalitional interests with a ubiquitous sentiment of social amity. In a sense, McKinley downplayed self-interest by promising to serve all interests, and in so doing rested his coalition upon a sentiment of cooperation that was predicated primarily on satisfying material desires; in attempting to downplay self-interest he left

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[8] Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896,* 291.

[9] Paul Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 291.

himself with little basis of cooperation other than self-interest. This was a problematic foundation. Should groups no longer perceive their material interests as harmonious with those of other coalitional groups, coalitional unity would shatter. Secondly, both social harmony and patriotism were viable and effective themes because Bryan was so susceptible to attacks for un-American class resentment. But that meant social harmony and patriotism were only transient reasons to support McKinley, dependent more upon antipathy or fear of Bryan than upon belief in McKinley. The principles of McKinley's campaign, therefore, accommodated a wide variety of voters, but in a way that, perhaps paradoxically, tended to exacerbate factional self-interest in the long run. As we shall see, the inherent problems of vagueness in the themes of social harmony and patriotism carried over to McKinley's programmatic appeal in the campaign.

McKinley's Campaign: Patriotism, the Tariff, and Sound Money

McKinley's victory appeared to inaugurate a long period of Republican dominance. Democrats would hold the White House for only eight years in the 36-year period between 1896 and 1932—and in those two elections in 1912 and 1916, Woodrow Wilson never won a majority of the popular vote. James Sundquist argued that the 1894-1896 elections marked a Republican realignment that depended upon the industrialized Northeast and Midwest, in which workers—the crucial voting bloc—were genuinely "*converted*" to the Republican cause by McKinley.[10] That, however, is the very contention that I take issue with in this chapter. While McKinley undoubtedly campaigned for the urban laborer, he did so in a way that glossed over potential conflicts

[10] James Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1983), 158. Emphasis in the original.

of interests, emphasized issues that appealed to concurrent interests, and generally relied upon ambiguity and a redirection of attention toward the easily criticized Bryan; in sum, McKinley seemed much better suited to accommodate *defectors* than to win converts. His explanations of the tariff and sound money illustrate his pragmatic appeal to the self-interest of his partisan coalition. They promised a degree of mutual interest that only obscured the ways in which conflict actually underlay the coalition. They also helped soften potential coalitional conflict because both helped McKinley redirect attention negatively toward Bryan, Democrats, and the panic of 1893. But this emphasis on material interest, as well as antipathy toward Bryan and Democrats, proved a fleeting basis of appeal when interests diverged. Though Bryan would run again in 1900 and 1908, the very class-based divisions he sought to create would develop within the Republican coalition between progressives and regulars, demonstrating that social harmony between laborers and professionals would become a hollow promise giving way to coalition conflict. To demonstrate McKinley's pragmatic appeal to self-interest, I examine his campaign rhetoric, especially his letter accepting the Republican nomination, as well as speeches he delivered to delegations visiting Canton.

Protectionism and Social Harmony

The tariff was the lodestar of McKinley's 1896 campaign. It was crucial to uniting the diversity of interests within the industrialized portions of his coalition from the East and the Midwest. On one hand, it long served as the basis of Republicans' advocacy for the urban manufacturing workers: "The key economic inducement offered to the urban working class was the promise of vigilant tariffs, which would exclude 'unfair competition of contract labor from China' and from other countries with lower wage

scales."[11] McKinley himself established one of the most preeminent reputations for protection; he authored the 1890 tariff bill that Cleveland targeted when seeking to lower tariff rates during his second term. On the other hand, the tariff also appealed to the salaried professionals of the American business community because it kept prices high and protected American corporate profits. McKinley's stance on the tariff, therefore, served two purposes: it undercut Bryan's attempt to appeal to the urban worker, and it was the basis for his argument that, contrary to Bryan's class antagonisms, the interests of the working man and the professional man come together—a kind of social cohesion which McKinley himself embodied. Lewis Gould observed that "the benefits of the tariff would provide employment and markets for rich and poor alike. Labor would also obtain higher wages in a protected home market."[12] In his letter accepting the Republican nomination McKinley decried "[e]very attempt to array class against class, 'the classes against the masses,' section against section, labor against capital, 'the poor against the rich,' or interest against interest in the United States."[13] McKinley frequently pointed to the tariff as the nexus of labor's and capital's interests, saying, for instance, that "'[n]othing is of greater moment to the welfare of the country than the adoption of a policy which will give to labor and capital constant employment with fair returns;'" William Harpine goes on to observe that this quotation illustrated an oft-used rhetorical strategy McKinley employed, wherein he identified the mutual interests of labor and capital simply by mentioning them "together in the same sentence, stating their common

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[11] James Blaine, acceptance letter, 7/15/1884, *History of U.S. Political Parties,* ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger (New York: Chelsea House, 1973), 1464, quoted in Gerring, *Party Ideologies,* 59..

[12] Lewis L. Gould, *Four Hats in the Ring* (Lawrence, KS: University Kansas Press, 2008), 9.

[13] "Mr. McKinley Accepts," *The New York Times*, August 27, 1896.

economic interest" in tariff protection.[14] Thus, because the tariff conceivably benefited both urban laborers and salaried business professionals alike, it was the lynchpin of a campaign that dedicated itself to social harmony.

The tariff not only promised future prosperity for diverse interests, but also explained the economic dislocations associated with the crisis of 1893. Thus, McKinley used the policy to explain why the Democrats were an enemy to labor and management alike. In this vein, McKinley criticized Cleveland's tariff reduction: "Now, my fellow-citizens, four years ago the people of this country determined to change [the protective system], and they did change it. What has been the result? (Cries of 'Hard times!')." Addressing a group of New York lumber men, McKinley went on to connect employment with protection: "I may be pardoned, gentlemen . . . if I say in this presence that I believe in the policy that gives preference to Buffalo and Tonawanda, rather than to Montreal and Toronto."[15] In another speech, McKinley related patriotism to protection: "I am one of those Americans who believe that the American workshops should be protected against foreign workshops . . . I believe that the American workingman should be defended by a wise and judicious protective policy against the workingmen of the Old World."[16] By connecting the tariff to the 1893 crisis and joblessness to the Democratic Party, McKinley took another step to forestall Bryan's appeal to urban industrialized workers by giving them tangible reasons to distrust Bryan's abstract appeal to populist, class conscious ideology; he managed to undermine Bryan's position largely because the

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[14] William D. Harpine, *From the Front Porch to the Front Page* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2006), 94.

[15] "M'Kinley on Hard Times," *New York Times*, October 7, 1896.

[16] "Canton is again crowded," *New York Times*, September 20, 1896.

tariff "explained the 'hard times' in terms that accorded with the urban workers' experiences. Its focus was not on distant causes, but on the very immediate ones that had converted the prosperity of 1892 into the depression of 1893."[17] The tariff linked economic hardship and Democratic policies in a way that undercut Bryan's populism, and it was tangible because it furthered McKinley's argument that Republican policies benefited the material self-interest of the urban, industrial coalition of wage-earners and businessmen alike.

McKinley's appeal to the tariff also afforded him the opportunity to mute potential conflict between increasingly divergent interests within his labor-professional urban coalition due to the economic stratification wrought by the industrial revolution. These potential conflicts made the tariff that much more important, because it represented one issue that linked groups whose interests were growing apart. By tying recent economic panic with anti-tariff policies, moreover, McKinley managed to bring the policy into even greater relief. Furthermore, McKinley managed to exploit the issue as fully as he did because Bryan neglected the developing issues relevant to urban laborers. For instance, the Democratic platform spoke of much that would have been favorable to laborers, such as diminishing judicial power to impose opposed the use of labor injunctions, favoring the income tax, and denouncing the tariff as a "prolific breeder of trusts and monopolies" which "enriched the few at the expense of the many."[18] "To obtain unity," William Harpine noted, "McKinley sought to negate that which would

[17] Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*, 305.

[18] Democratic Party Platforms, "Democratic Party Platform of 1896," July 7, 1896, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on March 15, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29586.

produce division. He did so not by refuting it but by saying nothing about it."[19] McKinley's attempt to stress social harmony by avoiding issues which might undermine that message—a strategy that the 1893 panic and Bryan's ideological peculiarities made possible—yielded short-term benefits. McKinley's victory was decisive in the crucial areas of "the country's industrial Northeast and Midwest and most of the states bordering on the industrial heartland as well."[20] But as time went on, it would become clear that the tariff was not so resilient a policy of social harmony. McKinley's appeal to self-interest among groups with rapidly diverging self-interests would destabilize the Republican coalition, as its members were given little reason to support the Republican Party other than that it would benefit their material advantages. When these groups began to interpret their own advantage differently, McKinley's message of social harmony would prove an ephemeral rationale for their continued coalitional cooperation.

Sound Money and Social Harmony

The monetary issue was arguably the most visible issue of the campaign due to the fervor displayed by both Bryan and Bryan's opponents. But McKinley dealt with it by temporizing, and the tariff was key to that strategy. By elevating the tariff to the premier issue of his campaign, McKinley ensured that the Republican Party would not simply become the gold standard party; he diverted attention away from the monetary issue in a way that allowed him to address it obliquely and pragmatically. Eschewing a firm response to Bryan's attempt to polarize the parties on the monetary issue allowed McKinley a higher degree of flexibility to appeal to the diverse interests of his partisan

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[19] Harpine, *From the Front Porch to the Front Page*, 116.

[20] Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System,* 157. See also Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*, 308.

coalition. McKinley quietly stood by a moderate monetary policy called international bimetallism that would move toward bimetallism only in conjunction with other major industrial nations.

The financial elites dominating the Northeastern Republican party organization did not appreciate this moderate stance. They "resented the failure of McKinley to grasp the monetary issue as firmly as they believed he should."[21] William Harpine noted that, prior to his nomination, the conservative *Washington Evening Star* criticized McKinley for "'wavering on the [gold plank in the] platform' . . . They added, correctly, that McKinley 'is not dogmatic on that question.'"[22] McKinley recognized the strong desire of some within his coalition that he directly address Bryan on silver and gold, dedicating "the first three dozen paragraphs [of his acceptance letter] on the currency questions [as] a signal to his party that he understood the importance of the issue."[23] But ultimately McKinley elevated the tariff to prominence precisely to deny the desire of both Bryan and eastern elite Republicans to polarize the two parties primarily according to their monetary preferences.

McKinley ducked gold to create a broader, and more diverse partisan coalition that could comprehend urban business interests as well as Midwestern and western Republican voters vulnerable to the allure of silver: "William McKinley, with his middle western perspective saw that west of the Alleghenies . . . the free silver Republicans and independents, attracted to the party on the tariff issue, might very well abandon it for the

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[21] Jones, *The Presidential Election of 1896,* 287.

[22] Harpine, *From the Front Porch to the Front Page*, 34.

[23] Williams, *Realigning America*, 140.

Democratic party should Republicans campaign exclusively on money."[24] That applied, first of all, to silver Republicans from the Mountain West. Many Republicans in this region "campaigned openly for silver." McKinley's ability to keep their support prevented "the western campaign from becoming a clear cut contest between silver and gold."[25] International bimetallism allowed McKinley the opportunity to occupy a moderate and inclusive position on the monetary issue that sought to hold on to the western faction of the party.

Bimetallism was also important for McKinley's appeal to farmers in the old Midwest. In those areas McKinley primarily addressed "the immigrants and the city-dwellers," who were "the keys to the winning of the Midwest." He also sought to incorporate Midwestern agrarians into his coalition.[26] For some, the perception of Bryan's pietistic radicalism assured that they would join the Republican coalition, but many agrarians from the old Midwest also perceived their economic interests differently from their more zealous, reforming western counterparts: "When the midwestern farmer asked himself what was wrong with his world, why his prices were declining and his property depreciating in value . . . [t]he principal problem was not exploitation by eastern capitalists, nor excessive railroad freight rates, but the 'unfair' competition created by western production. . . . The chief villain was not the eastern financier but the western farmer, who was responsible for overproduction."[27] International bimetallism provided

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[24] Jones, *The Election of 1896*, 287; see also Lewis L. Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1981), 11.

[25] Williams, *Realigning America*, 143.

[26] Richard Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 304.

[27] Kleppner, *The Cross of Culture*, 308.

McKinley an independent link to those agrarians who desired a more inflationary monetary policy, but were repulsed by Bryan. Along with bimetallism, McKinley also advocated a relatively novel idea of tariff reciprocity that added an important nuance to his stand for protectionism. Reciprocity authorized the president to reduce American protections on a limited range of goods in exchange for reciprocal reduction in tariff rates abroad. McKinley still maintained in his acceptance letter that protection was "of supreme importance" and that the "Republican Party is wedded to the doctrine of protection and was never more earnest in its support and advocacy than now." But he pointed to the 1890 tariff law he wrote as a Congressman as a precedent that tariff reciprocity was consistent with the larger protective policy. He could appeal to Midwestern agrarians on the basis of reciprocity, which he proudly observed, thanks to his 1890 law, allowed "the export trade of the United States [to attain] the highest point of our history." He then provided more specific examples of the vast foreign markets to which American farmers delivered their products before concluding with the pledge to observe the limited purpose of reciprocity within the larger protectionist framework; namely, to "afford new markets for our surplus agricultural and manufactured products, without loss to the American laborer or a single day's work that he might otherwise procure."[28] Reciprocity, in conjunction with McKinley's moderate position on silver, indicated McKinley's pragmatic attempt to hold together the Midwestern farmer—along with the western silver Republicans—together with eastern laborers as well as professionals.

[28] "Mr. McKinley Accepts," *New York Times*, August 27, 1896.

McKinley needed to find a way to distinguish his own moderation and obfuscation on the silver issue from Bryan's silver radicalism. Consequently, McKinley emphasized Bryan's zeal more than bimetallism *per se*. That explains why McKinley stood for "sound money" more than any particular monetary policy. McKinley portrayed the free coinage of silver as the epitome of irresponsibility: it is a "financial policy that encourages the violation of contracts, the repudiation of debts, or the debasement of our circulating medium," a threat to "American finances and credit" and to "public law." Inaugurating free silver, so to speak, would "change all values, disarrange the relation of labor to production, of raw material to the finished product and unsettle all conditions of existing business and property," all of which created uncertainty that "makes every business man pause. Capital hesitates to invest because it sees danger ahead."[29] Focusing attention on Bryan's irresponsibility, rather than the merits of monetary policy *per se*, afforded McKinley a degree of flexibility that helped him balance the divergent interests within his coalition. He thereby avoided supporting the gold standard simply, without trumpeting his platform plank of international bimetallism, a move that may have forced him to make subtle distinctions between his own bimetallism and Bryan's—in addition to provoking gold-standard supporters. Sound money had an additional benefit in this respect: it was vague. Its ambiguity benefited McKinley by allowing voters of different monetary preferences to interpret the definition of "sound" differently—whether sound meant gold or a more restrained bimetallism. In any case, McKinley's sound money appeal abjured a clear defense of any particular monetary policy, and instead dealt with coalitional tensions by refocusing attention from his own positions and onto the extremity

[29] "Places Protection First," *The New York Times*, October 2, 1896.

and zealotry of his opponent's position; sound money proffered a flexibility that saved McKinley from having to clearly and unequivocally support a specific policy.

McKinley's second manner of criticizing free silver reflected a similar desire to downplay the monetary issue. McKinley often linked the dangers of free silver with free trade and the benefits of sound money with those of protectionism, thereby redirecting public attention to the benefits of his tariff policy rather than the benefits of his monetary policy. In an example of such a practice, McKinley referred to sound money as a kind of protection akin to the tariff: "We propose in this contest to protect our money from debasement, and with the same votes to protect our industries from foreign competition."[30] In a similar example, McKinley likened the danger of free silver—devalued wages—with the dangers of free trade—unemployment: "The first thing we want in this country is plenty to do, and when we have that then we want to be paid in good money for what we do. . . . We neither want short work nor short dollars in the United States. . . . We neither want free trade nor free silver in the United States. . . . Free trade has cheated your wages . . . and we do not propose to permit free silver to cheat us in our pay."[31] This linking tactic indicated once again McKinley's strategic avoidance of polarization over the silver issue as part of his attempt to forestall a division in his coalition that would have sent western Republicans to Bryan. McKinley's qualified bimetallic platform plank distanced him from eastern gold devotees and enabled Republican surrogates to advocate silver openly in the West, while simultaneously averting the need for to give McKinley full-throated support to bimetallism. Meanwhile

[30] "Places Protection First," *The New York Times*, October 2, 1896.

[31] "Canton is Again Crowded," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1896.

by increasing the salience of the tariff and subordinating silver questions to the larger specter of free trade, McKinley sought to link "free silver and free trade as equally dangerous allies of Democratic origin" which "kept before the public the familiar image of McKinley the champion of protection while linking him also with the theme of sound money."[32] By subordinating silver to protection, McKinley remained ambiguous on monetary policy while opening a link to pro-silver Republican-leaning constituencies and still maintaining the support of gold Republicans.

McKinley's approach to the monetary question, therefore, was shaped by his attempt to reconcile the conflicting preferences of eastern financial conservatives and western financial moderates. But just as was the case with McKinley's support for the tariff, his strategy stressed coincident interests in a way that obscured latent tensions. In particular, McKinley temporized on gold, denounced Bryan based upon the uplifting but vague appeal to sound money, and redirected the focus from the monetary issue to the tariff. Each of these tactics served McKinley well in the short run, but tended to obscure the economic distinctions within his coalition. Consider the aggregate of McKinley's monetary arguments: International bimetallism was a palliative for western Republicans resisting their Eastern brethren; in conjunction with reciprocity it redirected attention to his emphasis on the tariff for the sake of Midwestern farmers. At the same time, the sound money criticism was more of a critique of Bryan than a positive policy, which obscured the difference of opinion on money between East and West, while linking free silver to free trade played to those Republicans who agreed on the tariff but disagreed on

[32] Jones. *The Presidential Election of 1896*, 286.

money. In sum, McKinley's monetary policy pragmatically trod a careful path through exceptionally diverse economic preferences within his coalition.

The McKinley Administration and the Unraveling of the Republican Coalition

McKinley's clear defeat of Bryan in 1896—as well as the commanding majorities Republicans gained in Congress in 1896 after picking up 117 seats in 1894—appeared to place Republicans in a position of superior strength. Instead, major fissures began to appear before the end of McKinley's presidency, were exacerbated by Theodore Roosevelt's seven years as President, and led to the open progressive insurgency in 1912 that resulted in Woodrow Wilson's presidency. Walter Dean Burnham observed that "several decades of intensive industrialization" leading up to the 1896 election created a "new dilemma of power in many respects as grave as that which had eventuated in the civil war" and which "moved toward the stage of overt crisis."[33] McKinley's leadership papered over the impending crisis by aggregating a plurality of divergent interests which had little basis to cohere. The tariff united the worker with the business professional for an evanescent moment; soon it became associated with corporate profits benefiting business, while it raised the cost of living on those earning wages and lacking disposable income. Meanwhile, the trust and labor policies—both of which were obtusely neglected in 1896 despite being part of Bryan's party platform—further aggravated a split between workers and business. McKinley obscured these conflicts in 1896 by playing to coalitional self-interest, but his neglect of a substantive foundation in principle meant that

[33] Walter Dean Burnham, "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," *The American Political Science Review* 59, No. 1 (March 1965): 24-25.

his coalition had little basis to continue to cooperate. As industrial development advanced it exacerbated the conflicts of interest within the Republican coalition.

These conflicts did not emerge, however, until part way through the first decade of the twentieth century, and they did not reach a breaking point until Roosevelt's 1912 candidacy. In part, that was because certain favorable circumstances temporarily lowered the salience of economic divisions. For one thing, the monetary issue quietly but rapidly diminished in importance as "gold discoveries in the Yukon and South Africa would appear to provide inflation within the framework of the gold standard."[34] Those discoveries allowed Congress to easily codify the gold standard in 1898. Additionally, strong economic recovery that basically coincided with McKinley's inauguration and tenure slowed coalitional conflict. Prior to the panic of 1893 the GDP stood at the 15 billion dollar mark, though between 1893 and 1896 the GDP oscillated around 13 billion dollars—sinking at one point to 12 billion dollars. But in the three years between McKinley's inauguration in 1897 and the start of his campaign in 1900, the GDP shot up by five billion dollars, which was the most dramatic rate of increase measured in several preceding decades.[35] "As if to solidify the GOP's association with the 'full dinner pail' McKinley had promised," as James Sundquist observed, "the economy turned upward almost coincidentally with his election. Employment, wages, and earnings began to climb again and trade unions recouped their lost vigor. Farm prices also rose. By 1900 the country had come all the way out of the Democratic depression to the Republican

[34] Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley*, 46.

[35] "The American Business Cycle: Continuity and Change," ed. Robert J. Gordon, National Bureau of Economic Research Studies in Business Cycles Volume 25, University of Chicago Press 1986, last accessed on March 28, 2013, http://www.nber.org/data/abc/.

boom."[36] The economic relief that the country experienced during McKinley's administration diminished some of the social and economic dislocations that accelerated Bryan's candidacy, and which Teddy Roosevelt would fixate on in the coming decade.

Furthermore, the economic issues of 1896 further diminished in proportion to America's steady approach to and finally engagement in war with Spain. During the campaign the Cuban question received scant attention from either candidate, despite the fact that each party had taken a position in its platforms. The pressing economic issues of the campaign passed away with a whimper as foreign affairs roared into the national consciousness. During the first year of his administration, McKinley focused on the tariff and international bimetallism, and the public's attention followed. But at the same time there was a "downward spiral of Spanish-American relations."[37] Eventually the Cuban question came to the fore as Cubans fought in open revolt against Spanish imperialists. American support for the war was a source of unity for the country, and for the McKinley administration: "A swelling sense of national pride, a rekindled faith in Manifest Destiny, and a belief that the United States should takes its place among the shapers of world affairs combined to give the Cuban crisis an immediacy that would have been improbable ten years before." The national sentiment was so clear that both parties were pro-Cuban, and both vied for the "credit for chastising Spain and freeing Cuba." No party in the country at that moment "could succeed politically if it was perceived as being pro-Spanish."[38] Naturally, as the war was prosecuted and concrete actions were taken, the two parties began to diverge. Bryan and the Democrats assailed what they argued were

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[36] Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, 165.

[37] Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley,* 56.

[38] Ibid., 62-64.

American imperialist intentions in Cuba and particularly in the Philippines, as the Spanish lost claim to their colonial holdings. Lewis Gould quotes President McKinley's response to the criticism, as he asserted that his administration sought to "'establish in the Philippines a government suitable to the wants and conditions of the inhabitants and to prepare them for self-government, and to give them self-government when they are ready for it and as rapidly as they are ready for it.'" [39] But the concerns over imperialism only reinforces the point that the economic issues that would so divide Republicans during the progressive era were suppressed by the Spanish War. McKinley's "full dinner in every pot" campaign in 1900 indicated that McKinley faced scant pressure to elaborate upon his vague themes of social harmony, and the potentially divergent interests that united his coalition.

1897-1912: Prelude to Rupture

Despite these favorable economic circumstances, the cleavages upon which progressive Republicans would break from other Republicans were inchoate during McKinley's tenure.

The trust issue. The trust issue increasingly came into focus after the monetary issue faded away. In his 1899 State of the Union message, McKinley argued that trusts suppress "natural and ordinary competition," and as a consequence artificially drove up consumer prices. He went on to say that trusts were "obnoxious not only to the common law but also to the public welfare," before calling for a remedy to the "evils involved in such organizations." The question, however, was how exactly to remedy these evils.

[39] Ibid., 227.

McKinley referred critically to the 1896 case *U.S. v. E.C. Knight*, in which the Supreme Court sharply limited the reach of the federal Sherman Anti-Trust Act under a narrow interpretation of the commerce power. McKinley argued that national regulation was necessary because the variability of state laws had failed to address the trust issue. Thus, he called for federal legislation that could establish uniformity, while also wisely and justly discriminating "between what is injurious and what is useful and necessary in business operations."[40] This final line marked the characteristic McKinley appeal to social harmony, and foretold what would become Roosevelt's familiar incantation on trusts—regulate in a way that distinguishes and preserves what is good and controls the effects that are bad. While McKinley began his discussion of the topic by calling trusts obnoxious, he concluded by acknowledging legitimate corporate interests in trusts which ought to be protected.

Just as was the case in the 1896 campaign, in his 1899 State of the Union message McKinley relied more on ambiguity than on principled argument to aggregate these diverse coalitional interests. His ambivalent conclusion on trusts illustrated this—he admitted there is some good mixed in with what is bad, and in avoiding any concrete identification of what the good and bad may be, his criticism became vague and non-committal. Moreover, the timing of his comment also suggests an attempt to suppress conflict rather than define principles by which he would address or resolve it. The approaching presidential election meant that "it was unlikely that Congress would take action of a substantial kind" and that the "president knew that Congress, in both the 1899/1900 session and the lame-duck one of 1900/1901, would hardly enact serious trust

[40] William McKinley, "Third Annual Message," December 5, 1899, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on April 9, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29540.

legislation."[41] In other words, besides the absence of substantive content, it was also unlikely to prompt any substantive action. Consequently, the statement suggested an attempt to recognize the growing agitation regarding trusts, but avoided taking a clear stand on the issue, and thereby avoided the consequences of legislation that would have invariably helped one set of interests and hurt another.[42]

The emergence of the trust issue at the end of the first term and during the second term indicates that the interests of the wage earner—whose working conditions as well as the consumer prices he paid became increasingly dependent upon a small number of industrial magnates—were not as harmonious with the professional and salaried classes as has been suggested in 1896; the vague principle of social harmony, and the mutual interests represented by the tariff and sound money, were showing themselves to be less than fully salient adhesives of McKinley's diverse coalition.

The labor issue. Along with trusts, labor conflicts became increasingly more difficult at the turn of the 19th century. Lewis Gould noted, for instance, that for "those Americans who toiled in the factories, mines, and fields during Taft's administration, their working conditions were often harsh, brutal, and dangerous."[43] Though these difficulties became more pronounced in the twentieth century, the difficulties began to

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[41] Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley,* 164.

[42] Lewis Gould observed, however, that such temporizing may not necessarily indicate mere rhetorical manipulation, or an attempt to "deflect public concern rather than arouse it." To the contrary, McKinley very well could have been silent on the subject, and that he spoke of it all suggests that McKinley was "preparing the ground for taking action, during his second term, on economic concentration." This account may very well be true. But the fact that McKinley addressed it at all may just as well indicate the growing salience of the issue, and the increasing tension it placed on McKinley. In other words, whether McKinley's statement was caused by increasing social tensions, or whether it preempted them, the conclusion remains the same that economic conflict lay just beneath the surface of McKinley's social harmony coalition.

[43] Gould, *Four Hats in the Ring*, 8.

emerge before the end of McKinley's first term. And, much like the trust question, McKinley seemed to maintain a kind of ambivalence as divisions began to emerge, consistent with his larger themes of social harmony. In 1899 McKinley intervened in an Idaho mining striking by responding to state requests for help with army detachments. Though he avoided the violence that made the Pullman strike so dramatic, McKinley faced a congressional probe that "the administration was on the side of the owners," which "resulted in conflicting partisan verdicts regarding the troops' long stay in the state." In spite of this, McKinley remained popular with labor leaders like Samuel Gompers of the AFL, Terence V. Powderly of the Knights of Labor, and Frank P. Sargent from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen.[44] In part that was because he straddled the interests of management and labor. For instance, in a major strike in 1900, on the cusp of the presidential election, anthracite coal miners in Pennsylvania went on strike seeking wage increases. McKinley's close ally and campaign proxy Mark Hanna, and reportedly McKinley himself, warned management that "the coal strike could seriously hurt their party at the polls," which, by implication would hurt the business interests of management.[45] While labor won this battle with at the very least the administration's tacit support, their victory provided only temporary relief. An even more dramatic conflict broke out in the same anthracite fields just two years later, provoking an even bolder move to side with labor on the part of the Republican administration, as the then President Roosevelt intervened personally to arbitrate a resolution. Labor policy became

[44] Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley,* 165.

[45] Jonathan Grossman, "The Coal Strike of 1902—Turning point in U.S. Policy," *Monthly Labor Review* 98 (1975), 22.

a more divisive issue, and Republicans frequently found themselves in a position requiring them to choose sides between two different members of their coalition.

The tariff issue. The labor and trust issues each suggested that there were growing conflicts in McKinley's coalition, cutting against the theme of social harmony. The tariff, however, divided Republicans most in this period. This division demonstrated the fragility of McKinley's coalition—more so than the1896 and 1900 victories let on—as the marque issue in 1896 would soon become Republicans' greatest liability. Even before the end of his first term, McKinley showed a requisite flexibility on protection that belied his reputation as an "emblem of orthodox Republican tariff policies."[46] McKinley pursued tariff reciprocity, which "[e]nvisioned the controlled reductions of tariff rates through treaties with the nation's trading partners" and was designed to "[forestall] more drastic revision of protected schedules and to expand American markets overseas."[47] That tariff reciprocity was anything but Republican orthodoxy, was clear when Taft's attempt to pursue reciprocity with Canada in 1911 sparked and "intensif[ied] Republican factionalism . . . and contribute[d] to the prospects for Democratic victory in the 1912 presidential contest."[48] McKinley's commitment to tariff reduction through reciprocity, though later associated with the progressive wing of the party, formed a vital part of the McKinley administration's signature tariff legislation from 1896. He continued to publicly advocate for reciprocity in both his second inaugural address and his first message to Congress of his second term. McKinley's clear and consistent support for

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[46] Crockett, "The Perils of Restoration Politics," 897.

[47] Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley*, 6.

[48] Gould, *Four Hats in the Ring*, 21.

reciprocity illustrated his keen sensitivity to the way changing industrial and commercial circumstances affected the direction of U.S. economic policy. But it also reflected the fact that from the earliest days of McKinley's administration, the issues which promised social harmony actually masked economic conflict. It soon became clear that financial, and business interests in the East supported the tariff, while the tariff became threatening to laboring Republicans of the city and the farm alike, as it inflated prices for commodities and manufactured goods.

The Wilson Victory and the Rupture of the Republican Coalition

The rupture of the McKinley coalition was clearest in the Democratic control of Congress beginning in 1910, and Wilson's two victories in the presidential contests of 1912 and 1916. The crucial issues of 1912—the trust, labor, and the tariff—indicate the central role that the urban wage-earner played in that election. Theodore Roosevelt, seeking the Presidency in 1912, presented the New Nationalism as a political program geared in many ways toward the benefit of this voting bloc. His program would enhance the nation's capacity to advance goals of social justice by "insist[ing] that property shall be the servant and not the master of the commonwealth." Such a program, TR admitted, "implie[d] a policy of a far more active governmental interference with social and economic conditions in this country than we have yet had" for the purpose of ensuring laboring Americans' interests were adequately represented in public policy programs. TR called for a public policy program which reprised Bryan's call for a government that legislated for specific interests: those least capable of defending themselves against the moneyed few. In proposing such a principle of action, he disavowed any intention to break industrial capitalism, instead proclaimed that he sought to yoke it to the "benefit to

the community."[49] But serving the purposes of the community meant appealing unabashedly to "the crushable elements at the base of our present industrial structure" through a program of social justice that called for industry to "submit to such public regulation as will make it a means of life and health, not of death or inefficiency."[50] Roosevelt's campaign, therefore, manifested the rupture of McKinley's coalition insofar as Roosevelt claimed that social harmony could only be achieved by actively legislating in favor of one group and penalizing another, which was far closer to Bryan's claim than McKinley, who asserted no conflict of interests.

Woodrow Wilson, for all the distinctions of the New Freedom, struck an essentially Bryan-esq note: social harmony required government action favoring select groups and penalizing others. Where TR called upon the "the crushable elements at the base of our present industrial structure," Wilson responded in a Buffalo speech by addressing himself to "the interests of the workingman" or the "wage earner" who "in a broad sense, constitute the country." Wilson sought to discuss "the things which interest the wage earner." Like Roosevelt, however, Wilson distinguished himself from the socialists by claiming to take an interest in the wage earners for the sake of the country as a whole; though, he did not seek to divide the country, but instead to look at the country "as a whole from one angle, from one point of view."[51] Wilson, Roosevelt, and Bryan all explained themselves as seeking more moderate solutions to the problems of industrial

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[49] Theodore Roosevelt, "New Nationalism Speech," *American Progressivism: A Reader*, eds. Ronald J. Pestritto and William J. Atto (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 211-223.

[50] Theodore Roosevelt, "A Confession of Faith," in Brett Flehinger, *The 1912 Election and the Power of Progressivism* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003), 88.

[51] Woodrow Wilson and John Wells Davidson, "Buffalo Speech," *A Crossroads of Freedom, the 1912 Campaign Speeches* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1956), 69-85.

capitalism than the socialists. All three also sought, however to legislate in a way that set one class against another while claiming that the interests of one group were coincident with the public interests conceived more broadly.[52] In all this, however, McKiney's message of social harmony was transmuted: social harmony became a matter of an active government helping friends and hurting enemies, instead of government finding policies that highlighted the shared interests of diverse social groups. Republicans and Democrats alike competed for the opportunity to legislate in the interests of one group of voters in particular. The interest-based conflicts that McKinley obscured had, by 1912, come into full view, and both parties abandoned the pretense of satisfying complex interests simultaneously. Instead, they proposed—as Bryan had in 1896—to reconcile conflict by bringing the moneyed interests to accept the primacy of the laboring interest.

Conclusion: McKinley and the Pluralistic Coalition

The opposition between McKinley's pragmatism and Bryan's ideological rhetoric in 1896 affected significant changes in the Republican coalition that set the conditions for developments that ultimately ruptured the Republican consensus. A similar consensus did not eventuate until the liberal one constructed by Franklin Roosevelt. The 1896 campaign thus set into motion developments that would ultimately destabilize the Republican coalition. This does not imply that we can find the progressive period of the early 20th century fully contained within the three month campaigning of August through November in 1896. A full explanation of the period cannot ignore the singularity of Teddy Roosevelt as president from 1901-1908, then as candidate in 1912, the unique

[52] For Bryan, the interests of farmers were coincident with the public interests, while for Roosevelt and Wilson, the wage-earner served as a proxy for nation as a whole.

actions of President Taft between 1908 and 1912, and the adroit campaigning of Woodrow Wilson in 1912 and 1916. The election of 1896, however, warrants the special attention I have given it as a significant transition point that in many ways presaged the tumults of the progressive era. This and the preceding chapter, therefore, do not discount more thorough accounts of the period, nor do they suggest such accounts are negligible. Instead, these chapters attempt to show how those later developments occurred in a coalitional context that was framed in this crucial moment of partisan change. Bryan sought to incorporate urban laborers into his coalition who nevertheless sensed a threat to their self-interest from Bryan's policies. At the same time McKinley promised to satisfy those interests by reconciling them with the business interests that only a few years later would so dramatically clash with their own. This unique conjunction of Bryan's ideological rhetoric with McKinley's pragmatic rhetoric effected a change that made Democrats less able to compete for a national majority, while contributing to changing the terms upon which Republicans competed. In conclusion, the tumult of the progressive era cannot be explained without the coalitional reordering that took place in the 1896 election, while that coalitional reordering cannot be explained without considering the unique rhetorical parlay of William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan.

CHAPTER FOUR

Franklin Roosevelt and Liberalism: Searching for a Principled Consensus

Introduction: Principled of Pragmatic?

Ambivalence rests at the heart of the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. For some, FDR and the New Deal effected major ideological changes in American history. The Democratic Party began an inexorable movement toward a liberal party committed to egalitarian nationalism, while the Republicans became increasing conservative, and attached to neo-liberal economics and decentralization, a legacy which persists today. For others, FDR's pragmatism, rather than his ideological vision, defined his leadership. Accordingly, the New Deal appeared not as an ideological revolution, but a concoction of extemporized experiments calibrated to particular problems. Part of FDR's pragmatic leadership meant that he guided his coalition by means of a kind of interest-group politics—advancing programs that partially satisfied the interests of a diversity of coalitional groups—instead of clear, ideological purity. For those who see in FDR ideological vision, the New Deal's success resounded for decades. Those who see pragmatism, however, tend to see missed opportunity instead of long-lasting success: FDR eschewed steps to create an ideological coherent party to achieve short term gains, and in so doing rested the Democratic program of egalitarian nationalism on an explosive foundation of northern liberals and southern conservatives. For many, the New Deal arguably died in 1938.

The difficulty is that both of these interpretations are correct, to a degree. FDR's was no ideologue, and his actions as president bore out his 1932 campaign promise to

embark in a program of "bold, persistent experimentation."[1] But the ideological reordering that the New Deal produced—moving the Democrats left and Republicans right—is as evident as Roosevelt's theoretical fickleness. This tension does not make Roosevelt or the New Deal inscrutable, however. It does indicate, however, that neither Roosevelt nor the New Deal were monolithic. One especially valuable historical interpretation, most notably advanced by Alan Brinkley, distinguishes pre-war New Deal liberalism and war-time and post-war New Deal liberalism to demonstrate the importance of the latter to codify a clear liberal program. Thus, while Roosevelt and the New Deal began "awash in ideologies"—of which Roosevelt was merely the broker rather than the visionary leader—liberal experiences during World War II sorted out the disparate strands into a coherent ideology.[2] Specifically, the booming war time economy restored liberal faith in the marketplace in a way that established Keynesian political economics as the unifying strand of liberalism. Accordingly, it rightly observes that while Roosevelt was not ideological mastermind, New Deal liberalism certainly established a principled consensus which, in the words of Samuel Lubell, established "a wholly new orbit of political conflict" wherein Democrats defined the issues of political contest, and Republicans acquiesced by promising to resolve those issues better than the Democrats.[3]

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[1] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Georgia," May 22, 1932. *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on November 27, 2013. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88410.

[2] Alan Brinkley, "The New Deal and the Idea of the State," *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, Ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 86. For other examples of work focusing on the war and post-war codification of liberalism, see: Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), Edwin Amenta and Theda Skocpol, "Redefining the New Deal: World War II and the Development of Social Provision in the United States," *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, Ed. Margaret Weir, Ann Schola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); John W. Jeffries, "The 'New' New Deal: FDR and American Liberalism, 1937-1945," *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 397-418..

[3] Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 3.

The war-time liberalism account makes a valuable distinction between pre-war and war-time liberalism, and in so doing suggests that the New Deal followed a linear pattern of chaos to order, or incoherence to intelligibility. But the difficulty is that it too misses nuances of the New Deal; the linear account fails to recognize that early liberalism and late liberalism had something in common, namely liberalism; it fails to account for the order and coherence that was nascent in early liberalism and which was itself necessary for the later adopting of a Keynesian economic program. This order amidst the disorder is clearer when we add an additional distinction: that between liberal principles and liberal programming. Liberal principles—the commitment to economic freedom achieved through national egalitarianism—and the coalition it held together constituted a strong and consistent undercurrent that sustained the New Deal amidst the turbulent cross-currents of New Deal programming; the linear programmatic development was overlaid upon a foundation of principled consistency. Thus, while New Dealers vacillated between programmatic solutions to the New Deal—often pursuing contradictory policies—the coalition rested upon a consistent liberal foundation. That is not to say that Roosevelt's principled justification for the New Deal did not vary at all—indeed, Roosevelt's articulation of liberalism placed emphasis on different issues in ways that reflected changing economic circumstances and partisan dynamics. But Roosevelt's articulation of liberalism remained essentially unchanged from 1932 through 1945, and that articulation provided a sufficient basis to organize and sustain a new and durable Democratic partisan coalition, beginning in 1932. The story of the New Deal, therefore, is one of consistency and development operating simultaneously.

The inconsistency between principles and programs came down to understanding the continued role of the marketplace. Liberalism was essentially a conservative justification for national egalitarianism that united a centrist coalition drawing from progressive ranks on one hand and moderately economic conservatives on the other. Liberalism described the centrality of individual economic freedom, which was the concept forming the keystone of his principled consensus. Roosevelt's liberalism sought to reconcile egalitarianism with economic rights by seeking to assure all individuals a requisite degree of economic and material security, and thereby affording them individual economic freedom. Thus, in principle Roosevelt sought to preserve the marketplace by extending broader access to it—egalitarianism in the service of individual liberty. The difficulty is that early New Deal programming undermined this promise by attempting to replace the marketplace with direct government management of the economy. It was not until the late-war period of the New Deal—the final phases of Roosevelt's administration—that it became clear that Keynesian political economics could provide a programmatic agenda that actually comported with liberal principles. Thus, while Roosevelt's principled rhetoric was consistent throughout the New Deal—in a way that was sufficient to provide a degree of continuity and stability for a new principled consensus—the Democratic coalition was not complete until Democrats reconciled liberal principles with Keynesian policies.

The incongruity of principles and programming created problems for Roosevelt and the New Deal. His pursuit of policies that undermined his principled commitment to individual economic freedom catalyzed a conservative opposition and made it more difficult for him to hold his coalition together. In this way, the principled consensus

imposed a kind of limitation on Roosevelt that encouraged him to ultimately find a more suitable programmatic agenda. That is to say that while Roosevelt's principled leadership formed a new principled consensus as early as 1932, the coalition would not achieve its full strength and unity until Roosevelt abandoned the statist policies that controverted liberal principles. In this sense, Brinkley is right to observe that liberalism did not come into its own until it found the value of Keynesian economic policies, but that is because those policies represented tangible programs that the diverse members of the New Deal coalition could recognize as their own.

In this chapter, I begin by describing the coalitional dynamics of the 1920s which formed the background of Roosevelt's new principled consensus. I then explicate the principles of liberalism, beginning by showing how its principal components—national egalitarianism aimed at economic freedom—were both consistently conceived of throughout FDR's 13 year tenure, as well as how they were present already in the 1932 campaign. The remainder of the chapter analyzes the New Deal according to three programmatic phases—the first, second, and third New Deals—that are widely acknowledged in historical and political science literature. I conclude by describing how New Dealers finally accepted a Keynesian political economy out of recognition of the superiority of a political program that would actual preserve a continued role of the marketplace. Liberal faith in the marketplace was restored by the new Keynesianism because liberals came to see how they could transform the meaning of material security, which they longed stressed as key to economic freedom, into a kind of right of consumption—which comported with the principled emphasis on individual economic freedom while also providing an economic means to growth, prosperity, the economic

recovery they promised since 1932. Thus, Keynesianism's emphasis on demand-side growth provided an economic program that, in emphasizing consumerism, finally breathed programmatic life into liberalism, and thereby set a liberal agenda that would unite the coalition for decades.

Forming the New Deal Coalition

Democratic Conflict in the 1920s

The New Deal reconciled partisan division between groups whose conflict went back at least as far as 1896. These groups were divided by cultural and sectional differences. Since the mid-19th century, the Democratic Party had stood for ethnic diversity as the refuge for America's immigrants. In 1896, however, William Jennings Bryan spurred a remarkable shift in the party away from this ethnic, immigrant base toward Anglo, pietistic Protestantism. These cultural conflicts drew sectional battle lines. Ethnic Democrats tended to come from the industrialized Northeast and Midwest, while Protestant Democrats were concentrated in the far West and the South. This divide spurred major Republican gains with ethnic voters at the turn of the 19th century, and crippled Democrats until fissures in the Republican Party propelled Wilson to the presidency. The native southerner and former New Jersey governor, Wilson was peculiarly situated to mute these conflicts. The prevalence of economic issues associated with the industrial revolution and the progressive movement, moreover, helped assuage the cultural conflicts between city dwelling, ethnic Democrats and country dwelling Protestant Democrats. World War I, however, stoked those cultural tensions once more, and Wilson did little to calm the flaring conflict. In his final address urging the adoption

of the League of Nations treaty, for instance, Wilson proclaimed that "any man who carries a hyphen about with him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this Republic whenever he gets ready"[4] Robert Saldin observed how Democrats "stoked ethnic tensions during and after the war" that aggravated German, Scandinavian, Irish, and Italian Americans.[5]

Republicans dominated in the 1920s by capitalizing on the turmoil of the Democratic Party. Not only had cultural and ethnic conflicts revived, war time policies created an economic slump that was "the second worst U.S. downturn of the twentieth century (behind the Great Depression)."[6] In conjunction with the unpopularity of the League of Nations, the Democratic Party's tenuous grasp on power during the second decade of the twentieth century —evident at the very least by Wilson's failure to ever win the presidential election by a majority—ebbed away. Meanwhile, the rise of prohibition exacerbated Democratic infighting. The 1924 Democratic convention—pitting the western and southern dry William McAdoo versus the urban, Catholic wet Al Smith—vividly manifested these cultural divides. The convention was deadlocked for 102 ballots before nominating John Davis as a compromise candidate, whom Calvin Coolidge roundly defeated. Smith appeared to have his revenge in 1928 by taking the party's nomination, but Southern members of the party retaliated by voting in droves for Hoover. Southern Democrats revolted "in such Democratic strongholds as Oklahoma City, Atlanta, Birmingham, Dallas, Houston. In virtually all the Southern cities, Smith's

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[4] Woodrow Wilson, "Final Address in Support of the League of Nations," *American Rhetoric, last accessed* on Nov. 2, 2012, http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/wilsonleagueofnations.htm.

[5] Robert P Saldin, "World War I and the 'System of 1896,'" *The Journal of Politics* 72, no. 3 (July 2010): 829.

[6] Saldin, "World War I and the 'System of 1896," 829-831.

vote fell off, as well as in cities with heavy Scandinavian populations, reflecting Lutheran distrust of Catholicism; he also lost ground wherever the population was mainly native born or Ku Klux in sympathy."[7] But Smith also made interesting inroads that would soon form the basis for a major shift in Democratic strength. While Smith lost "more than 200 Southern counties which had never gone Republican before," he also flipped "122 Northern counties out of the GOP column." These were nascent moves that proved to be part of a "profound social upheaval" that could be "seen most clearly in the industrial East, where one finds the heaviest concentration of counties which have been Democratic since 1928. Before Smith, no other part of the country was more religiously Republican. None had a heavier proportion of foreign born." Smith's surge in the Northeast tendered the possibility of powerful Democratic majority, presuming a candidate could maintain Smith's gains while reconstructing the Democratic South.

Franklin Roosevelt Unites the Democratic Party

Roosevelt was uniquely poised to unite the Democratic Party's warring factions. Part of that owed to Roosevelt's position as a Protestant New Yorker. His credentials as New York governor allowed him to speak to the urban, Northeastern, and ethnic wing of Smith Democrats. But for Southern and Western Democrats, Roosevelt was more acceptable than Smith. The latter was the Catholic son of immigrants closely associated with Tammany Hall, while the former was a Protestant Anglo who cut his teeth representing the anti-Tammany, reform wing of New York Democracy. In contrast to Smith or McAdoo, Roosevelt embodied aspects of both wings of the Democratic Party.

[7] Lubell, *The Future of American Politics,* 35-41.

The circumstances of Roosevelt's nomination and election, of course, rendered Roosevelt in a far better position to mute the cultural conflicts that had divided Democrats for decades. In the face of the Great Depression, cultural divisions seemed far less salient. For instance, the Northern portion of the coalition comprised immigrant Catholics and Protestants of lower social and economic status, bound by the blight of economic hardship and their "common economic interest" which "allowed them to overcome their cultural antagonisms."[8] Under these conditions, the wet Roosevelt could quietly end prohibition and put the divisive issue behind his party, thereby uniting it around an economic program. The core of Roosevelt's strength, therefore, came from uniting and reactivating the old and new ethnic, Catholic, and Northeastern members of Smith's electoral coalition with the Bryanite western and Southern reforming, pietistic Protestant Democrats.

Roosevelt also drew from coalitional groups outside traditional Democratic folds. African Americans, who steadily migrated to Northern, urban areas in the early decades of the twentieth century, shifted decisively into the Democratic ranks following Roosevelt's leadership of the Party. That shift was not as evident in 1932, buy by 1936 and 1940 Roosevelt "took about 70 percent of the black vote," after the "economic programs of the New Deal had made their mark in the minds of black voters."[9] The party's strength with urban blacks, as well as Catholic immigrants and northern Protestants of lower social and economic status, reflected the New Deal's "class distinctiveness," and illustrated the way that program cemented the Democratic Party "as

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[8] Evertt Carll Ladd with Charles D. Hardly, *Transformations of the American Party System* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978), 65.

[9] Ibid., 59.

the working class party in a broad, national sense," which "proved decisive not only to the short-run success which Roosevelt and his party achieved in the 1930s but to the longer-range structure of American partisan divisions."[10]

While Roosevelt's political base comprised working-class Americans across different economic sectors and geographical sections, he also drew respectable support from those with economically conservative interests, despite the saliency of class division in the New Deal. Roosevelt polled well with middle-class groups, such as the college-trained, who voted for FDR by a slight majority in 1936, as well as "nearly half of those employed in business and professional occupations [who] gave him their vote that year." Illustrating Roosevelt's wide appeal, voters of a middling social and economic status voted for Roosevelt at 60% in 1936 and a respectable 44% in 1940—the latter being a full five percentage points higher than the Democratic Party identifiers of that group.[11] In 1936, he "attracted the support of three independents out of every four that went to the polls." Such broad support was that much more notable when one considers that in the period between 1936 and 1976 there were only three times that Republican identifiers defecting to the Democratic candidate exceeded the number of Democrat identifiers defecting to the Republican candidate: 1936, 1940, and 1964.[12] That means that Roosevelt possessed a unique ability to appeal to those with economically conservative interests, and which was reflected, we shall see, in articulating liberal principles that were highly sensitive to conservative economic sensibilities.

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[10] Ibid., 66.

[11] Ibid., 67-69.

[12] Ibid., 83

In sum, Roosevelt's electoral strength came not only from reconciling the warring factions of the Democratic Party, but also from drawing in new sections of the electorate. The old and the new contributed to a culturally, ethnically, and economically diverse Democratic Party. And while the New Deal program undoubtedly leaned toward working-class policies, reflecting the blue-collar interests within the coalition, Roosevelt's appeal to middling professionals indicates that his appeal extended beyond simple class distinctions.

Roosevelt's Vision of Liberalism and Economic Freedom

Roosevelt's broad electoral foundation helped shape a complex argument for his political program. While Roosevelt infused his rhetoric with class consciousness, he also showed a nuanced sensitivity to broadly conservative principles, reflecting his desire for a centrist coalition. Roosevelt explained the New Deal as a program of national egalitarianism to further an essentially conservative end: economic freedom. The New Deal vastly expanded the activity of the national government to provide welfare and to regulate private, economic institutions and activities. These activities attempted to produce a more equitable share of wealth for those working-class Americans who suffered most from the Depression. But in working toward egalitarian ends, Roosevelt explained that the New Deal only sought to preserve the economic freedom of all Americans as their basic right. While national egalitarianism had long been sought after by progressives, FDR contributed a singular, rights-based justification known as liberalism. Five major speeches from a cross-section of FDR's presidency—his Commonwealth Club address from the 1932 campaign, his 1935 annual address to Congress, his 1936 Madison Square Garden campaign address, and his 1944 and 1945

annual addresses to Congress—demonstrate that while the New Deal developed and changed over FDR's long tenure, his explanation of the two principal components of the New Deal—nationalism and egalitarianism—consistently maintained the conservative justification of preserving the right of economic freedom. In so doing, Roosevelt hoped to unite a partisan coalition that drew from old progressive quarters as well as moderately conservative voters—thereby overcoming the old progressive-conservative battle lines by integrating moderate elements of both through a new public philosophy called liberalism.

Nationalism

Roosevelt argued for expanding the goals and activities of national government to include wider responsibilities in relief and regulation. But Roosevelt was a Democrat, and Democrats since Jefferson and Jackson held that decentralization protected liberty, and nationalism threatened it. Roosevelt argued that the American economy had entered a new phase, however, and with it had come new problems of oligarchic wealth. Roosevelt contended that Democrats should remember that federalism was only a means to an end, and the end had always been liberty. The rise of oligarchic wealth and the decline of economic productivity "call[ed] for a re-appraisal of values."[13]

The problem of oligarchy became acute in the first third of the 20th century because the industrial revolution ran its course, which effectively closed the economic opportunities for the majority of Americans while codifying the wealth of those few captains of industry who fuel the industrial revolution. By 1932 the industrial revolution had run its course, the West had long been closed, and industry reached its developmental

[13] Franklin Roosevelt, "The Commonwealth Club Address," September 23, 1932, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt,* volume one (Random House: New York, 1938), 751.

capacity. Roosevelt observed that "our industrial plant is built; the problem just now is whether under existing conditions it is not overbuilt." America entered an industrial malaise wherein wealth and capital pooled in the hands of a small group of capitalists. At the same time, the demise of industrial productivity—which Roosevelt believed to be a systemic and lasting condition of a maturing economy—meant the lack of economic opportunities for most Americans. "Equality of opportunity as we have known it no longer exists," Roosevelt argued, because "we are steering a steady course toward economic oligarchy, if we are not there already."[14] The oligarchic concentration of wealth reflected the twilight of the American economy, and it also was responsible for the diminished economic opportunity and independence of most Americans suffering from the exigencies of the Depression.

Under these circumstances, only the national government possessed the stature to remedy the oligarchic concentration of wealth that resulted from economic stagnation—presuming of course that it was granted the powers requisite to the great purpose Roosevelt envisioned. The newly empowered national government would dedicate itself to preserving the freedoms once protected by government decentralization; it would ground itself in "an economic declaration of rights, an economic constitutional order." Meanwhile, the new national government's duties comprised "the soberer, less dramatic business of administering resources and plants already in hand, of seeking to reestablish foreign markets for our surplus production, of meeting the problem of under consumption, of adjusting production to consumption, of distributing wealth and products more equitably, of adapting existing economic organizations to the service of the people."

[14] Ibid.

The national government, in other words, dedicated itself to the kinds of economic regulation warranted in a mature and stagnating American economy, which would prevent the aggregation of oligarchic wealth. Economic stagnation made Americans dependent on the oligarchs for economic opportunity, while the oligarchs sought their own financial aggrandizement. The lack of centralized authority meant, in turn, that the government lacked any power to restrain the nefarious business practices of low wages, long hours, child labor, poor working conditions, etc. Empowering the national government gave it the power to assure the kind of economic opportunity that was once promised to all Americans by a growing American economy. While nationalism once represented a threat to liberty, it now represented a new opportunity for "the day of enlightened administration."[15]

By the end of Roosevelt's tenure, he came to see the marketplace more optimistically, though still requiring national oversight. The war spurred an industrial revival, and a new age of prosperity dawned over American economy, banishing the languishing days of 1932. But the new prosperity only reinforced the need for an enlightened administration, albeit of a different kind. In 1932, enlightened administration meant adjusting for the over-extension of industry and scaling production down to accommodate a depressed level of consumption. To the contrary, in his 1945 annual address to Congress Roosevelt could boast that "[w]e have had full employment during the war," owing to the government's readiness "to buy all the materials of war which the country could produce." The government's role during peacetime was to ensure that the

[15] Ibid., 752.

private marketplace could replace the levels of demand sustained by the public sector during the war. Rather than adjusting production down to meet a depressed demand, Roosevelt wanted to increase demand in order to spur ever greater levels of production. Stimulating demand upwards required enlightened administration just as much as modifying production downwards. Roosevelt asserted that maintaining war-time levels of demand during peace-time "will require large outlays of money which should be raised through normal investment channels." But the failures of "private capital" to live up to its public purpose were all too memorable, and FDR makes clear that Government would "recognize its responsibility for sharing part of any special or abnormal risk of loss attached to such financing."[16] While Roosevelt recognized the renewed vitality of the economy, he asserted that, just as much as before, the government ought to remedy the irregularities, deficiencies, and exigencies associated with the marketplace, which, when left unregulated, threaten the economic freedom of the country's most vulnerable. Thus, in this sense the threat of oligarchy did not disappear with America's industrial revival, nor did the necessity for an economic constitutional order, or a second bill of rights of economic rights, that the national government could adequately protect through national regulation of the marketplace.

Egalitarianism

Like Roosevelt's argument for nationalism, the egalitarian aspects of the New Deal were ultimately intended to protect and bolstering economic freedom, not threaten it. Roosevelt's egalitarian argument for economic freedom contained two points: first,

[16] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address," January 6, 1945, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on October 29, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16595.

economic freedom formed the foundation for all freedom, and, second, protecting economic freedom necessitated distinguishing between liberty and license—rightful freedom and abusive freedom. Egalitarianism protected economic freedom by breaking the oligarchic aggregation of wealth, which not only hampered individual economic opportunity, but more broadly threatened individual liberty as such.

Roosevelt's Commonwealth Club address began by asserting that economic freedom was not simply one of many liberties, but it formed the foundation for all other rights. To make this point, Roosevelt made a crucial distinction that he attributed to Jefferson. On one hand, "personal competency" comprised one set of rights—by which he meant "the right of free thinking, freedom of forming and expressing opinions, and freedom of personal living each man according to his own light." Economic rights were instrumental to securing the rights of personal competency, since a man lacking material security—the basic subsistence that assured his financial independence from his neighbor—also lacked the requisite material security to engage in the higher freedoms of thought, belief, and expression. Thus, he argues that each man's "right to life" includes, as a prerequisite "also a right to make a comfortable living." By securing to each man "an avenue to possess himself of a portion of that plenty sufficient for his needs, through his own work," FDR promised not only material comfort, but the protection of liberty *per se*.[17] Material security was requisite to the higher rights because lacking the necessary materials so hampered basic living that a citizen could never enjoy the freedoms of reflection and choice associated with the rights of "personal competency."

[17] Roosevelt, "Commonwealth Club Address," 754.

Roosevelt's 1944 annual address to Congress provided another opportunity to consider his explanation of the foundational character of property rights. In that address he explained that economic freedom meant material independence, or some assurance of subsistence and material comfort that afforded individuals the financial security to take economic risks. But economic freedom also meant a requisite degree of material comfort that afforded the individual the kind of leisure that enabled him or her to exercise the higher freedoms of free thought and expression. "[T]rue individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence," Roosevelt argued, before reiterating, "'Necessitous men are not free men.'' From the premise of economic freedom—understood as material subsistence and comfort—Roosevelt went on to justify government actions that assure all individuals this basic economic freedom. He likened these assurances to a "second Bill of Rights" that included, to name a few, the "right to a useful and remunerative job . . . the right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation . . . the right of every family to a decent home . . . the right to adequate medical care . . . the right to a good education," etc.[18] Of course, this list revealed that Roosevelt believed government should go quite far achieving a more egalitarian distribution of material benefits to American citizens—further indeed than Roosevelt or the Democrats actually went. But even as Roosevelt suggested government embark in a remarkable expansion undertaking new responsibilities he maintained the central premise of liberalism: egalitarianism promotes and reaffirms individual economic freedom.

[18] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "State of the Union Message to Congress," January 11, 1944, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on October 29, 2013. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16518.

While Roosevelt argued that the wide dispersion of economic freedom was necessary to assure freedom more broadly, it was only half of his egalitarian argument. How was it that Roosevelt could justify infringing the property rights of some who accrued more wealth in order to assure the property rights of others who were wanting; how could Roosevelt proclaim his determination to protect liberty if he was merely violating the liberty of the few for the sake of the many? Looking back to Jefferson once more, Roosevelt introduced a distinction between economic freedom and the abuse of economic freedom. Roosevelt explained that "even Jefferson realized that the exercise of the property rights might so interfere with the rights of the individual that the government, without whose assistance the property rights could not exist, must intervene." Roosevelt went so far as to argue that the oligarchic threat to property rights undermined freedom more generally because economic enslavement struck at the heart of the social contract. Roosevelt explained that any attempt to claim a "liberty to do anything which deprives others of [their] elemental rights" falls "outside the protection of any compact."[19] Consequently, when the industrial oligarchs aggregated all economic opportunity to themselves, and thereby robbed individuals of economic freedom and material security, they threatened the very stability of civil society, which individuals constituted to ensure their economic freedom. Roosevelt's remarkable defense of egalitarianism on the grounds of property rights thoroughly appropriated the arguments of conservative Republicans. For years Progressives had decried the reactionary defense of property rights, but Roosevelt abjured that Progressive rhetoric, and indeed flipped it on its head. It was the oligarchs that threatened economic freedom, and it was in the name

[19] Roosevelt, "The Commonwealth Club Address," 755.

of protecting property rights that Roosevelt would justify many of the progressive policies which, two decades before, were undertaken in order to break a conservative fixation with property rights.

Having distinguished between true economic freedom, and the abusive accumulation of wealth—economic liberty and economic license—FDR made a distinction that allowed him to utterly assail the licentious oligarchs that perverted the true right to property. He attacked those "princes of property" or the "one wolf, the unethical competitor, the reckless promoter, the Ishmael or Insull whose hand is against every man's." These princes of property raise their hand against every other man's because they "[decline] to join in achieving an end recognized as being for the public welfare, and [threaten] to drag the industry back to a state of anarchy" by licentiously disregarding the rights of others in pursuit of their own gain. Roosevelt argued that government "may properly be asked to apply restraint" because the purpose of government is to ensure that freedom does not become one man abusing the rights of another.[20] Government actions that broke up and redistributed economic wealth did so on the basis of restraining the licentiousness of a few and restoring the economic freedom of many.

Roosevelt frequently returned to the distinction between liberty and license as the basis for his egalitarian program. In his 1935 annual address to Congress he called on Americans to recognize that all actions taken in the name of economic freedom were not necessarily a rightful exercise of freedom; he asked them to "forswear that conception of the acquisition of wealth which, through excessive profits, creates undue private power

[20] Ibid.

over private affairs and, to our misfortune, over public affairs as well." But, calling attention to the distinction, Roosevelt went on to argue that excessive profits themselves did not demonstrate the free-market's evils. Instead, excessive profits do violence to economic freedom more broadly because the aggregation of wealth makes the many materially dependent on the few. Thus, Roosevelt rejected any claim that he sought to "destroy ambition," nor to "seek to divide our wealth into equal shares on stated occasions." To the contrary, FDR acknowledged "the greater ability of some to earn more than others." The New Deal did not, he argued, ignore natural inequality of ability and capacity, but instead prevented the licentious exercise of those natural inequalities from threatening the freedom of others. Hence, FDR sought to endorse "the ambition of the individual to obtain for him and his a proper security, a reasonable leisure, and a decent living throughout life," which a more pernicious ambition threatened, the "appetite for great wealth and great power." To ensure the latter ambition does not displace the former, Roosevelt reiterated the need for the national government to embark on an egalitarian program: distributing economic freedom more broadly by restraining the abuse of freedom. That meant assuring each person of his right to economic independence, which meant protecting and guaranteeing his material subsistence and comfort; he called for security against the major hazards of life" and the "security of decent homes"—all for to provide basic equal opportunity, not total economic equality.[21]

Even when Roosevelt's anti-business class conflict rhetoric reached its most fevered pitch in the 1936 campaign, he continued to stress a distinction between liberalism's promise of economic freedom and pure egalitarian redistribution. Liberalism

[21] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress," January 4, 1935, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on February 18, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14890.

sought to assure freedom for the vast number of Americans struggling with basic subsistence. He assailed the "old enemies of peace," by whom he meant business and financial oligarchs. He conjectured that they "are unanimous in their hate for me—and I welcome their hatred." But even after this fitful attack, Roosevelt returned to his essentially conservative explanation of liberalism. Restraining the hand of business merely sought to assure people the "peace that comes from security in their homes: safety for their savings, permanence in their jobs, a fair profit from their enterprise." These assurances required that government distinguish between license and liberty, and protect against licentiousness; that meant the protection of citizens' "currency, fairer wages, the ending of long hours of toil, the abolition of child labor, the elimination of wild-cat speculation, the safety of their children from kidnappers."[22] The New Deal did not present material security as an end in itself—but instead as the basis of an economic independence necessary for people to pursue their own self-improvement as well as enjoy the higher and more abstract liberties.

Economic Freedom: A Unique Contribution

While liberalism's essential meaning as economic freedom remained consistent throughout Roosevelt's tenure, it is worth observing that the idea was wholly formed in the 1932 campaign, and as such provided the intellectual framework for the entire New Deal. Perhaps one of Roosevelt's most famous speeches as a candidate came in his April 1932 "Forgotten Man" radio address, wherein Roosevelt called for the "building of plans that rest upon the forgotten, the unorganized but the indispensable units of economic

[22] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at Madison Square Garden, New York City," October 31, 1936. *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on February 18, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15219.

power." Here Roosevelt argues that national egalitarianism ought to assure a greater swath of citizens the material security that an unregulated marketplace has denied them. That is not to say that government ought to replace the marketplace, however, but instead that it should "provide at least as much assistance to the little fellow as it is now giving to the large banks and corporations."[23] In other words, as was the argument of the Commonwealth Club address, Roosevelt suggests that liberalism sought to restore the economic freedom that economic oligarchs effectively diminished. Similarly, in his July address accepting the Democratic nomination for the presidency, Roosevelt observed that what "the people of America want more than anything else" are "work . . . [and] a reasonable measure of security—security for themselves and for their wives and children."[24] Material security, which is the foundation for economic freedom, lay at the heart of Roosevelt's appeal to the American people even at this early stage of the campaign. There are many examples of the centrality of material security and economic freedom in 1932. In Columbus, for instance, he asserted "I, too, believe in individualism . . . I believe that the individual should have full liberty of action to make the most of himself . . . We must go back to first principles; we must make American individualism what it was intended to be — equality of opportunity for all, the right of exploitation for none."[25] Egalitarianism afforded the material security that, in principle, assured

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[23] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Radio Address From Albany, New York: "The 'Forgotten Man' Speech," April 7, 1932, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on November 26, 2013. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88408.

[24] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago," July 2, 1932. *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on February 18, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=75174.

[25] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Campaign Address at Columbus, Ohio," August 20, 1932, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on November 26, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88407.

individual economic freedom and the opportunity to access to the marketplace. In the final address of his campaign at Madison Square Garden Roosevelt emphasized how economic freedom served as the lynchpin of his liberal appeal: "Tonight we close the campaign. . . . From the time that my airplane touched ground at Chicago [at the Democratic National Convention] up to the present, I have consistently set forth the doctrine of the present-day democracy. It is the program of a party dedicated to the conviction that every one of our people is entitled to the opportunity to earn a living, and to develop himself to the fullest measure consistent with the rights of his fellow men."[26] Liberalism as egalitarian nationalism dedicated to economic freedom formed the core of Roosevelt's principled appeal in 1932, and it remained the essential liberal message through his entire tenure.

The two defining features of Roosevelt's political program—nationalism and egalitarianism—aspired, therefore, to assure a wider enjoyment of individual economic freedom, and thereby the higher and more general freedoms associated with liberal government. Roosevelt accomplished a novel rhetorical feat—to integrate many progressive assumptions about American development, and many of its social justice goals, into a rhetorical framework that reaffirmed rather than detracted from American constitutional heritage. Accomplishing this, Roosevelt established liberalism as the major ordering principled of the Democratic Party. Sidney Milkis explained FDR's liberalism asserted a "connection between energetic nationalism and rights" in order to give "legitimacy to progressive principles." It offered this legitimacy by "imbedding [the

[26] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Campaign Address at Madison Square Garden in New York City," November 5, 1932, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on November 26, 2013. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88405.

progressive principles] . . . in the language of constitutionalism and interpreting them as an *expansion* rather than a *subversion* of the natural rights tradition."[27] Beneath its conservative justification, Roosevelt proposed and embarked upon a massive expansion of the ends of American government *per se*, and the national government in particular.

But FDR did more than camouflage progressivism in ostensibly conservative rhetoric. Liberalism conceptualized a continued role for markets and business independence in a way that Progressivism did not. The New Nationalism aspired to preserve the best parts of industrial capitalism while regulating what was pernicious about it, but in order to do so it necessitate a massive expansion of a state regulatory apparatus that assumed—without much clear evidence as support—that industrial capitalism could be as efficient and effective when it operated under government control instead of market incentives. The New Freedom was similarly problematic. Wilson and Brandeis asserted that, unlike TR, they could preserve the marketplace by disallowing the massive trusts which crowded out competition that would otherwise thrive in a marketplace of smaller competitors. But first of all, Wilson relied on a litigious solution to industrial capitalism which would operate as heavy a hand in the marketplace as Roosevelt's regulatory solution. Secondly, and more to the point, in practice it was less clear that the theoretical distinctions between the New Nationalism and New Freedom held up, especially after the institution of the Federal Trade Commission—which relied upon administration, not juridical authority—and the War Industries Board during World War I, which essentially adopted the centralized planning model of the New Nationalism. In either case, both Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson conceived of their unique

[27] Sidney Milkis, *The President and the Parties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 43. Emphasis is in the original.

approaches to progressivism as preserving industrial capitalism in one way or another, but both did so by directly managing the marketplace, and therefore replacing market incentives and free associations with planned government mandates.

Liberalism, by contrast, articulated a continued role for the marketplace, and eventually—through a Keynesian compensatory economic program—discovered a way to achieve its egalitarian goals without direct regulation of the marketplace. That is not to say that liberalism abandoned regulation, or even that it was entirely sanguine about the marketplace—it developed out of progressivism after all. But conceptually, the goal of material security and economic freedom shifted the focus away from statist management of the economic marketplace, and toward a focus on individual consumers and their economic rights—more so than social justice. This ultimately fostered an economic program that allowed an indirect market regulation, achieved through stimulating consumer demand, not forcing the market to conform to massive and abstract macro-economic plans.

But while liberalism proved a valuable rhetorical framework to rationalize egalitarian political programming within a larger conception of individual rights, putting liberalism into practice flummoxed Franklin Roosevelt for a long time. The New Deal often advanced political programs which reflected a failure to understand liberalism's conceptual difference from progressivism. At times, the New Deal acted on progressive impulses that were fundamentally hostile to the marketplace, and in that sense undermined a liberal affirmation of economic freedom for ever more Americans in favor of the more abstract goal of social justice specifically for a class of downtrodden Americans. In this sense, the New Deal as a whole was not monolithic, but an iterative

process that took one step forward before taking two backwards while searching for a political and economic program that comported with the liberal affirmation of the marketplace. Thus, on one hand, Roosevelt articulated liberal principles that rationalized a principled consensus among groups with diverse economic preferences and principles, including but not limited to progressivism. But on the other hand, Roosevelt struggled to find a program that reflected the liberal consensus that united those diverse interests and principles; New Deal programs, which often seemed to aspire to the replacement of the marketplace, were disjointed from the liberal intellectual framework and its sensitivity to the continued role of the marketplace. It was not until late in FDR's tenure that the New Deal displaced the progressive programs of direct economic management, and instead adopted Keynsian policies which sought to compensate, rather than replace market incentives by stimulating consumer demand. Under the new compensatory rationale, welfare, which before had always been understood as temporary and secondary to the New Deal's more grandiose reform plans, became of central importance and reconceived as a permanent fixture in liberal program. Welfare was key for two reasons. It directly enhanced consumer demand by drastically expanding the purchasing power of citizens whose economic status made them negligible parts of the consumer economy. Secondly, government deficits provided a way for the national government to indirectly stimulate economic growth by driving the GDP to ever higher levels, thereby compensating for troughs in the business cycle. In the new liberal era, fostering the means and the culture of consumerism provided a way to achieve an egalitarian, nationalistic program that preserved the independent marketplace. Economic freedom became the right to consumer ever greater levels of material products, and when the national government preserved and

expanded this right, it stimulated the kind of economic growth it had long sought, but never achieved through direct economic regulation. The western frontier was closed by 1932, but the New Deal would open a new frontier—the American consumer—that would drive economic growth as fervently as westward expansion ever did.

The First New Deal (1933-1935): Searching for Balance

Franklin Roosevelt spent the New Deal searching for a political program that comported with liberal principles. That search corresponded to the three distinct phases. Each phase represented distinct attempts to advance a liberal New Deal. I argue that the first phase—the first New Deal—undercut Roosevelt's principled argument because it attempted to put into place government management of the economy, rather than a more moderate regulation of economy in a way that still left space for the marketplace. But much of the political programming of the first New Deal tended to undercut the shared liberal principles of his coalition by depending far more on direct economic management that was consistent with Roosevelt's commitment to economic freedom. That is, while Roosevelt was clear about his attempt to lay a restraining hand onto the marketplace, he affirmed that liberalism also sought increase citizens' material security in an effort to broaden access to the market, not to displace the market. While aspects of the first New Deal did conceivably advance that purpose—FDR's banking regulations for instance—much of the first New Deal belied liberal principles by engaging in direct economic management. The National Industrial Recovery Act illustrates this difficulty best. And the difficulties of Roosevelt's programmatic subversion of liberal principles were compounded by the way Roosevelt appealed to the self-interest of his diverse coalition to supply the cohesion and support instead of the possibility of a principled unity behind a

program that comported with liberal principles. But in practice, the massive arrogation of administrative power under the first New Deal failed to temper and harmonize the competing interests of big business, small business, and labor, and consequently the first New Deal pleased no one, and produced a cacophony of resentful coalitional partners.

The National Recovery Administration and a Concert of Interests

Aside from the major relief oriented programs of the New Deal—the WPA, PWA, CCC, etc—which FDR described as a necessary but temporary expedient, the first New Deal's most distinctive and ambitious programs sought to reform the American economy in a way that would prevent an economic calamity like the Great Depression from ever occurring again. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) was one of the most important instances of early New Deal reform projects. Along with the Agricultural Adjustment Act (which did for agriculture what the NIRA did for industry), the NIRA typified the "associational model" of reform. This model envisioned reforms that would facilitate an associative relationship between government and industry, wherein "government would promote and regulate the cartelization of private industries so as to reduce destructive competition and maintain prices."[28] The associational model reflected assumptions about the relationship of the economy and the government that pointed back to Theodore Roosevelt's New Nationalism, and the conviction that a complex, industrialized economy necessitated a permanent managing role for the national government. To this effect, the NIRA empowered Roosevelt to create by executive order a governing body called the National Recovery Administration (NRA), which served as a cooperative forum between industry leaders, labor leaders, and administrative officials.

[28] Brinkley, "The Idea of the State," 88.

FDR held high expectations for the NRA, speculating that it would be "the most important and far-reaching legislation ever enacted by the American Congress."[29] Despite those high expectations, however, historians and political scientists alike widely regard the NRA as one of the New Deal's most spectacular failures. Within a year of its passage "the failure of the NRA was already becoming clear."[30] With the different groups comprising the NRA embroiled in intractable conflict, big business, small business, and labor each accused the other of using the instruments of "association" to impose their own narrow interests on the others. It eventually was ruled unconstitutional by a unanimous vote of the Supreme Court in 1935, but by then its malfunctions already rendered it an object of suspicion and derision alike.

A concert of interests. The NRA sought to secure a greater degree of government management over the economy by providing a state-sanctioned forum for distinct sectors and actors in the national economy to deliberate about and draft rules that could benefit all players equally. It sought to overcome the incessant and multilevel competition in the marketplace—competition driven entirely by the self-interest of each player—by providing participants of the marketplace a setting in which to agree to common and mutually beneficiary rules that the government would then sanction, monitor, and enforce. It was the "institutional expression of Roosevelt's plan for partnership of all groups, achieved through friendly co-operation between the government and group

[29] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Statement on Signing the National Industrial Recovery Act," June 16, 1933, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on May 24, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14669.

[30] Alan Brinkley, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 40.

leaders."[31] The NRA attempted to exert vast administrative authority to harmonize conflicting groups by encouraging them to participate in a program that would simultaneously satisfy part of their interests, but conditioning that satisfaction on the acceptance of some rival interests also receiving their own particular advantage. It embodied Roosevelt's plea for a "concert of interests" wherein the nation's "economic units and the various groups in these units" participate together in economic planning "on the basis of a shared common life."[32] In practice, this meant "establishing price floors, production restrictions, and employment standards to check deflation and restore prosperity."[33] And while direct administrative controls like these might provoke principled objections by business or conservatives groups, the administration believed such reservations would be put aside when the program itself proved to provide them with more material benefits than the competitive marketplace.

Organizing a diversity of preferences, however, posed an administrative problem: how could the administration ensure the most constructive and mutually enriching relationship between interests as conflicting as business and labor, or big business and small business? Coordinating industry practices according to an abstract plan meant that partners would have to sacrifice "some of their market power and reordering their interests by that administration's priorities."[34] The NRA asked partners to put aside their

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[31] James MacGregor Burns, *The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956), 192-193.

[32]Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at Jefferson Day Dinner in St. Paul, Minnesota," April 18, 1932. *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on November 26, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88409.

[33] Brinkley, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt,* 38.

[34] Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 307.

own advantage, and to trust the strength of the NRA's administrative mechanisms to ensure that they would not be punished in the market place for doing so.

To address this problem, participation in the NRA was voluntary. While it may seem brash to think that industries would voluntarily undergo these risks, the administration explained that voluntary participation assured industry representatives the opportunity to ensure that codes were drafted in a way that reflected their own interests. The NRA's voluntary character allowed the administration to argue that submitting to administrative orchestration secured material benefits that far outweighed any benefits that any partner could achieve on his own. For instance, in a period when he sought to secure business cooperation, FDR argued that the NRA was essentially about restoring corporate profits when he asserted it would "restore our rich domestic market by raising its vast consuming capacity."[35] But achieving that goal required employers to act in ways that would, counter-intuitively, hamper profits for the short term, Roosevelt acknowledged. In practice, that if getting "employers in each competitive group [to] agree to pay their workers the same —reasonable wages—and require the same hours—reasonable hours—then higher wages and shorter hours will hurt no employer."[36] Thus, the NRA required industries to voluntarily curtail competitive practices in ways that potentially made them vulnerable to other competitors in the marketplace, but FDR assured these groups that the NRA could rationally organize competing interests into a consonant whole, such that they would actually benefit from foregoing their own material advantage. As Roosevelt explained, by "agree[ing] to act together and at once, none will

[35] Roosevelt, "Statement on N.I.R.A.," June 16, 1933.

[36] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat," July 24, 1933, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on February 18, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14488.

be hurt," and in so doing, "we can sink selfish interest and present a solid front against a common peril."[37] The NRA was based upon the assumption that self-interest would be better served by suspending self-interest long enough to submit to administrative orchestration.

Big business diverges. Roosevelt's appeal to business and industry self-interest had unintended consequences, however. In practice, the administration found it much more difficult to bend narrow interests to a larger, shared interest. Consequently the NRA's effectiveness and public support rapidly diminished. The voluntary scheme of the NRA—touting that partners could take part in drafting codes—proved a treacherous first step for the NRA because it gave big businesses greater opportunities to influence outcomes to their particular advantage, and, as it turned out, to the disadvantage of smaller business. As James MacGregor Burns asked, "who were the leaders" responsible for actually drafting the codes? "It was not surprising that [it was] . . . the business and labor leaders closest at hand, those who were most vocal, best organized, most experienced in dealing with politicians and bureaucrats."[38] Favoring bigness was especially damaging: "The large corporations which dominated the code authorities used their powers to stifle competition, cut back production, and reap profits from price-raising rather than business expansion."[39] Later New Deal liberals who looked back on the NRA focused derisively on the fact that it "attempt[ed] to create a cartelistic 'business commonwealth' capable of ordering its own affairs," which, they contended, "produced

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[37] Roosevelt, "Statement on N.I.R.A.," June 16, 1933.

[38] Burns, *The Lion and the Fox*, 192-193.

[39] William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 69.

only increased concentrations of power and artificially inflated prices. 'The NRA idea is merely the trust sugar-coated,' *The Nation* argued, 'and the sugar coating soon wears off.'"[40] This early stumble for the NRA proved very damaging because the NRA appeared coopted for narrow and special interests from the very start. Rather than encouraging all parties to sacrifice short-term interests for long-term advantages, it in fact provided an instrument for larger groups to advance their own interests by suppressing those of of weaker groups. And for all that, the NRA "did little to speed recovery and probably actually hindered it."[41]

Labor diverges. The administration struggled with more than big business's tendency toward destructive self-interest. Just as large industries took advantage of the NRA codes to advance their particular interests, so too did organized labor manipulate the advantages that the NRA tender them for their own, peculiar advantages and to the detriment of the concert of interests the NRA aspired to orchestrate. The NRA secured the cooperation of labor by, once again, appealing to its self-interest. The best example of that was also perhaps the most important legacy of the NRA: section 7(a). Section 7(a) of the NIRA granted legal recognition of labor's right to bargain collectively, a groundbreaking moment in the development of the American labor union. Prior to this innovation, labor unions were "[s]apped and crippled" by the Great Depression, but as a result of the NRA, labor "recruited millions of new members with the help of Section 7(a) and [subsequent labor legislation,] the Wagner Act"[42]

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[40] Brinkley, "The Idea of the State," 88.

[41] Leuchtenburg, *FDR and the New Deal*, 69.

[42] Burns, *The Lion and the Fox*, 350.

Thus, the NRA stimulated the self-interest of labor for the purpose of encouraging its cooperation in the larger planning scheme. Paradoxically, the rationale for empowering labor to a greater extent than ever before was that doing so would make its less disposed to use that power in a disruptive way. That was because the section 7(a) empowerment incentivized participation, while the NRA planning would, theoretically, create codes that reflected everyone's interest in a way that would render striking unnecessary. Roosevelt acknowledged the tension in empowering unions for the sake of domesticating them when he boasted that he had secured for "[t]he workers of this country have rights under this law which cannot be taken from them, and nobody will be permitted to whittle them away," but going on to implore the judicious use of those rights: "on the other hand, no aggression is now necessary to attain those rights. The whole country will be united to get them for you."[43] Roosevelt drastically increased labor's power to act on its own to attain its own interests for the purpose of encouraging it to put aside its own interests in order to cooperate with its competitors. In this way, the labor portion of the NRA reflected the larger aspirations and contradictions of a program that sought to channel the self-seeking behavior of a number of different tributaries, like labor, big business, and small business, into the broader current of the public interest generally.

But the NRA struggled to curb labor's self-seeking behavior in the same way it struggled with big business. The labor problems emerged when the NRA drafted labor codes that did not adequately fulfill labor's demands. Large, independent labor unions favored winner-take-all union elections, which would have granted one union—the top

[43] Roosevelt, Fireside Chat, July 24, 1933.

vote getter—the power to represent all workers. This granted that union a greater degree of solidarity and influence. Management favored proportional representation, which would have allowed multiple labor unions to represent workers based upon the proportion of their vote. Labor opposed this method because it weakened the influence of any one union, while it also created the possibility for company-sponsored unions, which independent labor viewed vehemently opposed. The relevant NRA administrators—chief administrator Hugh Johnson and the labor administrator Donald Richberg—both favored proportional representation, as did Roosevelt himself. Accordingly, they decided that 7(a) required the potential for "a plurality of labor groups," meaning perhaps that "no one [would] have exclusive power to represent all company workers."[44]

This interpretation created stubborn difficulties. Section 7(a) demonstrated the great potential of political activism, because not only did it vastly enhance union enrollment and legitimacy, but it also illustrated the potential gains unions could generate by lobbying legislators to pass favorable laws. Furthermore, labor's disagreement with Hugh Johnson and Donald Richberg was little more than a political problem—a problem of how politicians decided to interpret 7(a). With the massive influx in labor membership, why not turn that power into political influence and seek even greater benefits from the sanction of law? The NRA empowered labor as a means to secure its compliance with the codes, but that appeal to self-interest never turned into the *quid pro quo* the administration expected; instead labor used their new empowerment to advance its own peculiar advantages rather than bowing to a greater, common interest.

[44] George T. McJimsey, *The Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 2000), 77.

Newly empowered labor unions demonstrated their influence during a period of wide-spread and debilitating strikes. Roosevelt, recognizing the perilous effect of labor discontent, acknowledged in a 1934 fireside chat that these strikes had "retarded" the process of "industrial recovery."[45] This included "a wave of strikes that quadrupled the number of lost man-days over the average of the previous six months."[46] Highlighting the extent of the problem, "[m]ore workers struck in the summer of 1933 than in the whole period of 1930 and 1931 . . . [while] the strike wave surge upward during 1934 and 1935."[47]

To stem these debilitating strikes, Roosevelt formed the National Labor Board (NLB) within the NRA, and appointed Senator Robert Wagner—a long time political advocate of labor's interests—to head the board. But just as Roosevelt's interpretation of Section 7(a) failed to provide a stable balance business and labor interests, creating the NLB within the NRA structure created more instability than equilibrium. The NLB mediated disputes between labor and industry regarding the enforcement of Section 7(a), judging the fairness of labor elections and hearing complaints of business non-compliance. But when companies bucked NLB rulings, they were referred to Johnson and Richberg of the NRA—whose decision to require proportional representation created the kerfuffle in the first place. Creating the NLB and putting the pro-labor Wagner at its head, but still within the structure of Johnson and Richberg's pro-business NRA only made the labor situation more volatile by raising labor's profile within the NRA without enhancing its influence in any meaningful way. Ultimately, since the authority was

[45] Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat," September 30, 1934.

[46] McJimsey, *The Presidency of FDR,* 78.

[47] Burns, *The Lion and the Fox*, 216.

undercut by Johnson and Richberg, Wagner looked for a pro-labor solution outside the NRA's structure. Consequently, Senator Wagner proposed labor legislation that created a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) as a separate legal entity from the NRA. Rather than the balancing act the NRA attempted, however, the NLRB explicitly advanced labor interests, granting the board "full legal authority to protect worker rights, including the principle of majority rule."[48] As "one of the most drastic legislative innovations of the decade," the NLRB "threw the weight of government behind the right of labor to bargain collectively and compelled employers to accede peacefully to the unionization of their plants" while at the same time it "imposed no reciprocal obligations of any kind on unions."[49]

The political ground moved under Roosevelt's feet. The Wagner act creating the NLRB undermined the NRA's intent of creating a concert of interests, and represented a loss of legislative initiative on the administration's part. Roosevelt dragged his feet on the NLRB, indicating the same wariness of labor as his pro-business 7(a) interpretation. Though he did not throw his weight behind conservative opposition, neither did he support the bill, nor did any members of his administration. It was only after the Senate passed the bill, and after it passed through the relevant House committee, that the president "abruptly announced, for reasons that are not wholly clear, that he not only favored the Wagner bill but regarded it as 'must' legislation. Once Roosevelt gave his blessing, the measure had clear sailing."[50] Though Roosevelt ostensibly supported the bill, he withheld this blessing for months while Wagner labored through the legislative

[48] McJimsey, *The Presidency of FDR*, 79.

[49] Leuchtenburg, *FDR and the New Deal,* 151.

[50] Ibid.

politics, and only conferred his support once the measure "was due to pass anyway."[51] The success of the Wagner act indicates that, with its newly found influence, labor did not need Roosevelt and decided to act as an independent political interest group to generate the support of politicians more willing to advance its particular interests—Senator Wagner first among them. Labor and business moved in opposite directions as they pursued their own self-interest, leaving Roosevelt in no man's land in between. The NRA aspired to weave labor and business together, but by virtue of the very powers granted them by the NRA, they both became increasingly strident.

The Failure of Interest Based Consensus

Roosevelt's interest based politics—epitomized by the NRA—failed to tame self-interest in a way that would secure greater cooperation to the larger concert of interests. Roosevelt once explained that self-interest could be the basis of cooperation, but to the contrary, stimulating self-interest divided the coalition and undercut Roosevelt's legislative initiative and leadership of divergent party interests. FDR "jolted interest groups out of their lethargy and mobilized them into political power groups," in a ways that went beyond what he anticipated and "threatened to disrupt the Roosevelt coalition."[52] The signature programs of the first New Deal undermined the conservative arguments for economic freedom that structured FDR's explanation of liberalism by attempting to replace the marketplace with direct government management. Roosevelt hoped that the NRA would so appeal to the self-interest of groups that might object to such wholesale economic reform that it would assuage their objections. But the idea of

[51] Burns, *The Lion and the Fox*, 219.

[52] Ibid., 378.

cooperation through self-interest merely stoked self-interest to such a degree that economic management became all the more unattainable, despite the NRA's vast administrative authority. The first New Deal, therefore, belied FDR's liberal principles and unloosed a conservative opposition to the New Deal that actually provoked in FDR a reaction that pushed him further from liberalism, and therefore further from a principled consensus in the second New Deal.

The Second New Deal (1936-1938): Ideological Reflexivity

The failure of the NRA and the rise of the NLRB signaled a transition point in the New Deal. The next phase, the second New Deal, sputtered as much as the first, albeit for different reasons. Alan Brinkley referred to this period as "The Crisis of New Deal Liberalism,"[53] and Richard Polenberg called it "The Waning of Reform."[54] Interestingly, however, FDR began this period with the 1936 election, which he dominated with 60 percent of the popular vote, and each state in the Electoral College except Maine and Vermont. His party picked up 12 and 5 seats in the House and the Senate respectively, pushing their totals in those two bodies to 322 and 69. Despite these dominant majorities, FDR struggled from the beginning of the second term. In part, he over-interpreted his electoral success: "Liberals liked to believe that the President's triumph represented widespread popular support for a significant expansion of state (and executive) power . . . But many voters (and many legislators) had supported the New Deal for other reasons: because it seemed to have alleviated the Depression; because they had benefited from its relief and welfare programs; because the President himself had so effectively conveyed

[53] Brinkley, *The End of Reform,* 15.

[54] Richard D. Polenberg, *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945: A Brief History with Documents*, Ed. Richard D. Polenberg (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2000), 16.

an image of strength and compassion (and had . . . attracted the support of voters who liked him more than they liked his policies)."[55]

Roosevelt's mistaken appraisal of his electoral strength made Roosevelt more ideologically rigid in the second New Deal in a way that further muddled the meaning of liberalism. The curiosity of the second New Deal, however, was that Roosevelt appeared to continue to search for the progressive-conservative consensus that liberalism conceptualized, but which he had yet to attain in terms of specific public policy that reflected liberal principles. The second New Deal failed in this respect, I argue, because Roosevelt simply hardened in ideologically progressive positions while at the same time hardening in certain ideologically conservative positions. While Roosevelt fervidly attacked business interests and embarked upon a statist expansion of antitrust enforcement that represented another attempt to administratively manage the economy, he renewed his effort to balance the budget by slashing federal expenditures in 1937 and again in 1938, all in an effort to bolster "business confidence" in a business community toward whom he hurled invective. In the end, Roosevelt's attitude in the second New Deal was incongruous and disjunctive, acting as if he could unite a liberal consensus by being more progressive and more conservative at the same time simply by rehashing the stock issues of each set of political principles. Instead, it further obscured the possibility of a political program that could comport with liberal principles: an egalitarian program that could affirm rather than denigrate the marketplace. The second New Deal catalyzed opposition against the President. It eventually gave way to the debilitating 1938

[55] Brinkley, *The End of Reform,* 17.

Congressional elections, in which New Deal liberals suffered major losses, while conservative Democrats and Republicans fortified their position.

Antitrust and Ideological Progressivism

Roosevelt's second term was markedly more aggressive than the first. In this period, Roosevelt drew many of the same battle lines drawn by progressives in the decades before him—the very progressives that FDR criticized for their ideological rigidity.[56] Some of Roosevelt's most controversial adventures in the second New Deal took up the progressive animus toward those political institutions which had traditionally weakened centralized government—and which had effectively resisted some New Deal endeavors more recently. Roosevelt's Supreme Court packing plan, executive reorganization, and the 1938 party "purge" reflected the corresponding progressive goals of weakening the counter-majoritarian judicial system, enhancing executive power and leadership, and diminishing the influence of political parties to create a direct link between presidential leadership and popular support. If liberalism envisioned a realignment of partisan loyalties that would be made possible by jettisoning some of progressivism's more radical proposals, Roosevelt's initiatives in the second New Deal veered from his own articulation of a liberal consensus.

FDR's increasing belligerence toward business interests and conservatism revealed an economic progressivism that paralleled the institutional progressivism in the second New Deal. The tumults of the first New Deal galvanized a conservative

[56] "A president, he believed, had a limited amount of political capital and he had to avoid spending it too early. To this he added his belief that progressive politicians were unreliable allies. Progressives were always willing to qutm but when it came to compromise, they stood on virtue and demanded more than was possible for their side. Roosevelt wanted to transform the Democratic Party into a 'liberal' or 'progressive' party, but he believed that he could not rely solely on the support of the progressives to achieve it." McJimsy, *The Presidency of Franklin Roosevelt,* 130.

opposition to Roosevelt, and his anti-business progressivism seems as much a reaction to the attacks from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the American Liberty League as his institutional progressivism was a reaction to the reluctance of the Supreme Court and unreconstructed Democrats in resisting White House initiatives. The dysfunctional NRA quickly soured big businesses on the administration—many of them had only "reluctantly accepted the NRA [in the first place] as the best politically feasible alternative to the passage of more unfavorable legislation"—and to respond to the increasingly centrifugal tendencies of its participants, the industry code representatives "were progressively stripped of significant functions as the central bureaucracy grew in power."[57] The long period of strikes and the subsequent passage of the Wagner Act compounded growing frustration with the statist aspects of the NRA, and, as business intransigence became more vocal and organized, Roosevelt met it in kind. The 1936 campaign and the second New Deal illustrate a turn away from Roosevelt's aspirations of the associational model of the NRA and his hope for a symphony of interest. In its place, the second New Deal sustained a broad offensive against business.

The rhetoric of the 1936 campaign first indicated the growing anti-business bent of the second New Deal. Roosevelt declined to spend his time "rehears[ing] his administration's accomplishments and take credit for the recovery," and instead "chose instead to castigate the opponents of the New Deal in terms that were harsh and

[57] Donald Brand, "Corporatism, the NRA, and the Oil Industry," *Political Science Quarterly* 98, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 104-105.

provocative."[58] His October address at Madison Square Garden exemplified this. In one salvo, Roosevelt castigated the "old enemies of peace"—by which he meant "business and financial monopoly, speculation, reckless banking, class antagonism, sectionalism, war profiteering"—who had "begun to consider the Government of the United States as a mere appendage to their own affairs." In a rising crescendo, Roosevelt insisted that "[n]ever before in all our history have these forces been so united against one candidate as they stand today," and then boldly asserted that "[t]hey are unanimous in their hate for me—and I welcome their hatred." In a second salvo, Roosevelt used the business community's opposition to Social Security to call attention to business mendacity, employed to protect their profits. He asserted that businesses attempted to "coerce the votes of the wage earners of this country" into voting against him in 1936. That coercion came in the form of "deceit." Roosevelt accused businesses of misleading workers about Social Security by drawing attention to the tax on payrolls, while concealing what really piqued them: the fact that the law required them to match their employees' payroll taxes. Roosevelt said that this deception was akin to "the old threat to close down the factory or the office if a particular candidate does not win." After this sustained fulmination, Roosevelt then added the understated caveat that he was not speaking of "the vast majority of law-abiding businessmen."[59] Roosevelt's qualification notwithstanding, his speech imprinted a lasting image of a dichotomy between profits on one hand and human welfare on the other, each in conflict with the other. And while he hedged his claims, he implied that without government oversight, nothing about businesses' outlook counter-

[58] Marc Landy, "Presidential Party Leadership and Party Realignment: FDR and the Making of the New Deal Democratic Party," Ed. Mileur and Milkis, *The New Deal* and the Triumph of Liberalism (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 80.

[59] Roosevelt, "Madison Square Garden," October 31, 1936.

balances its fetishizing profits. The argument implied, therefore, that while only some businesses may be abusive, nothing inheres in the business ethos *per se* to forestall these nefarious traits in any business. Without government, Roosevelt argued, nothing protects the citizen from the abuses of business.

A steady legislative program followed upon the campaign's biting anti-business rhetoric. The Wagner act, coming before the end of the first term, reflected this increasingly antagonistic programming. Upon signing the Wagner Act, Roosevelt emphasized that the NLRB's quasi-judicial structure distinguished it from a mediation board like its NRA predecessor the NLB, since such a structure facilitated compromise, while compromise "has no place in the interpretation and enforcement of [this] law."[60] To the contrary, the NLRB enforced a government defined right—collective bargaining—and the board determined when management violated that right and how it would be punished for doing so.

Similarly, the Roosevelt administration pushed for two anti-business tax increases in 1935 and 1936. The Revenue Acts of 1935—known among its critics as the "soak-the-rich" tax—raised income taxes on upper bracket earners and established new inheritance and estate taxes. Among new business taxes, it established a graduated corporate income tax, and raised taxes on dividends. The following year, the administration pushed the 1936 Revenue Act, which also raised corporate tax rates and established the undistributed profits tax, closing loopholes for corporations seeking to lessen their income tax liability. The undistributed profits tax provoked considerable opposition and caused "[s]everal of

[60] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Statement on Signing the National Labor Relations Act.," July 5, 1935, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on June 13, 2013. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14893.

the more conservative among the President's advisors [to break] with him." It passed only after "conservative Democrats on the Hill weakened" the proposal coming from the White House.[61] Roosevelt also signed the Public Utilities Holding Company Act in 1935, which "sought to reduce the monopolistic power of the great utilities trusts." Among its opponents and supporters alike, the bill became known as "the 'death sentence' bill, because it appeared to threaten the survival of some great corporations. The business community fought it strenuously."[62] In total, the rhetorical attacks in 1936 prepared the way for a steady legislative program that represented a concentrated and deliberate attack on big businesses.

These aggressive business policies generally took place amidst improving economic conditions, but when the economy drastically reversed course and appeared to head back into the Depression, Roosevelt's antibusiness program became even more dogged. The economy showed some signs of recovery by 1937: The unemployment rate was at a "Depression low of 14.3 percent" and the gross national product had "grown by 5.5 percent."[63] Compared to the 1937 budget, the 1938 budget cut federal expenditures by nearly one billion dollars, while the federal deficit between budget years 1937 and 1938 shrank by $2.1 billion dollars, which indicated a substantial increase in federal revenue. But the economic recovery was short-lived, and in October of 1937 the stock market dropped as precipitously as the infamous 1929 black Tuesday crash, and by the spring of 1938 the Dow Jones Industrial Average "dropped by 48 percent." In what became known

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[61] John Morton Blum, *The Progressive Presidents* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), 126.

[62] Brinkley, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt,* 53.

[63] Ibid., 58.

as the "Roosevelt recession," the economic gains of the past several years vanished. By the end of 1938 "industrial production had dropped off more than 40 percent; corporate profits had fallen by 78 percent; four million more workers had swelled the already large unemployment rolls; the national income had slipped by 13 percent from its post-1929 peak of the previous summer."[64]

The Roosevelt recession spurred greater antagonism toward business. Searching for a cause and a solution, liberals and the Roosevelt administration focused their animus on the trust. They even speculated that industry leaders orchestrated a "capital strike," wherein they halted investments to spur a recession that would sabotage the Roosevelt administration. In his 1938 message to Congress, Roosevelt decried those practices associated with monopolies, and "which most people believe should be ended," including "tax avoidance through corporate and other methods, which I have previously mentioned; excessive capitalization, investment write-ups and security manipulations; price rigging and collusive bidding in defiance of the spirit of the antitrust laws by methods which baffle prosecution under the present statutes."[65] Later that month, in his Jackson Day address, FDR continued along the same lines by proclaiming himself and his followers in the midst of a "great struggle," at the core of which was a "small minority" that sought to "use power to make themselves masters instead of servants of mankind. At heart they oppose our American form of government."[66]

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[64] Brinkley, *The End of Reform,* 28-29.

[65] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress," January 3, 1938, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on February 18, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15517.

[66] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at the Jackson Day Dinner, Washington, D.C.," January 8, 1938, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on June 4, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15627.

Two concrete policy actions followed this rhetorical volley. First, Roosevelt created the Temporary National Economic Committee (TNEC) in late April. He proposed the committee in a speech delivered to Congress, wherein he denounced monopolies, in part, by likening them to European Fascists. The TNEC comprised a group of administrative and congressional members that would study how to update American antitrust law and make it more relevant to contemporary economy, while also researching an antitrust tax policy. The committee provided a public forum to bring to light monopolistic abuses and put business on notice.

But what the TNEC lacked in concrete antitrust policies was supplied by the rise of Thurman Arnold to the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department. This appointment signaled a major shift in antitrust policy. Arnold "radically expanded both the budget and staff of his division; and he had filed (and won) more antitrust cases than the Justice Department had initiated in its entire previous history."[67] In some sense, Arnold's antitrust exuberance reflected a polar shift from the associational style typified by the NRA. Arnold firmly believed that competition, not cartel-style associations, achieved efficiency conducive to economic growth. He wrote derisively of the very instruments of government planning employed by the NRA, proclaiming that there were "four horsemen—fixed prices, low turnover, restricted production, and monopoly control," which "rode through our economy from factory to farm.'"[68]

But for all Arnold's differences with the tactics of the NRA, he still represented a New Nationalism type of progressivism that ultimately sought to regulate, not explode

[67] Brinkley, "The Idea of the State," 90.

[68] Thurman W. Arnold, "Cartels Threaten Democracy," *Science Digest* 78(1944): 80; quoted in Spencer Weber Waller, "The Antitrust Legacy of Thurman Arnold," *St. John's Law Review* 78, no. 3 (2004): 579-580.

trusts. Arnold argued that "Big Business is not an economic danger" in itself, but business required government intervention to ensure that "'it devotes itself to efficiency in production and distribution.'"[69] The NRA and Arnold's antitrust office shared an essentially progressive economic strategy that sought to rationalize otherwise arbitrary and destructive business forces. That strategy required a large state apparatus that would serve as a perpetual partner to business life, even if that partner controlled economic activity differently. The antitrust division also operated under more modest expectations compared with the NRA, viewing the NRA's vision of a "harmonious capitalist world" fostered through voluntarism as quixotic. But Arnold replaced voluntarism with compulsory government oversight in which the state would "be constantly active, ever vigilant referees . . . The regulators would not, could not, create lasting harmony and order. They would simply commit the state to the difficult task of making the best of an imperfect economic world."[70] Regulation and coercion, not voluntarism, was the basis of the new practice of economic planning. FDR's vigorous antitrust program, accompanied by the administration's rhetorical invectives against business notwithstanding, he rejected trust busting as a means of fostering competition, and instead sought the same end through meticulous oversight and regulation.

Roosevelt's vigorous opposition to big business in the second New Deal revealed a reflexive and ideological turn toward progressive ideology born out of the frustrations of the New Deal, and indicative of progressivism far more than the more moderate liberalism. Along with his attempt to bridle reluctant actors by curtailing institutional

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[69] Brinkley, "The Idea of the State," 90.

[70] Brinkley, "The Idea of the State," 93-94.

resistance to the executive, Roosevelt's coercive, statist antitrust policies belied liberalism's conciliatory approach to markets, as well as its nod to constitutional heritage.

Ideological Conservatism: A Link to Consensus?

The intensity of Roosevelt's progressive turn—its abandonment of traditional institutionalism and opposition to business interests—was particularly curious because that turn was accompanied by one very prominent link to traditional institutionalism and business-friendly policy: fiscal conservatism. Roosevelt's fiscal conservatism was always an important aspect of his presidency. He assailed Hoover for running deficits, and pushed the Economy Act during his first 100 days to reduce federal expenditures. But his fiscal conservatism in the second New Deal stood out for two reasons. First of all, fiscal conservatism was a means to reach out to the very business interests that Roosevelt assailed in rhetoric and policy. The balanced budget was the keystone in an arch of conservative fiscal and economic ideas, alongside belief in the inherent value of "private capital investment, minimal government debt, stable currency, low inflation, and high savings," all of which aimed at maintaining the vague concept of business confidence. Consequently, as a policy of the federal government, the balanced budget, and the fiscal conservatism it symbolized, were "supported by investors and the business community, mainstream academic economists, think tanks, and the majority of the voting public. Conservative southern Democrats, who favored balanced budgets and were opposed to increased taxes, occupied almost all the key committee chairmanships." Running large deficits, on the other hand, would "only exacerbate [these groups'] hostility toward

[Roosevelt's] agenda."[71] But the disjointed fiscal conservatism of this period in contrasted starkly with the larger movements of the New Deal. It became increasingly isolated as a policy, and less constitutive of a larger philosophical whole. Roosevelt, therefore, assailed the very business interests that his fiscal policy was designed to encourage. Business confidence was a disjointed concept in the context of the New Deal. Furthermore, Roosevelt's fiscal conservatism also stood out because Roosevelt's administration, with the exception of Henry Morgenthau, increasingly discarded the traditional budget balancing approach in favor of the new Keynesian approach of planned deficits. Administration members Harry Hopkins of the WPA, and later Secretary of Commerce and Chairman of the Federal Reserve Marriner Eccles adamantly lobbied Roosevelt to abandon his adamant insistence on what was—to their mind—a program of needless fiscal austerity pursuing the nebulous goal of business confidence. In the case of fiscal conservatism—as was also the case with antibusiness progressivism—Roosevelt lost his distinguishing ideological flexibility and demonstrated uncharacteristic resolve resisting the growing Keynesian impulses among his closest advisors.

Roosevelt demonstrated a commitment to fiscal conservatism throughout the first and second New Deals. As I mentioned above, Roosevelt's push for economy in government made its way into the legislative volley of the first 100 days. Roosevelt funded Social Security through payroll taxes to reduce federal expenditures, and in 1936 he famously vetoed a veteran benefits bill known as the Bonus Bill (which Congress passed over his veto) because he refused to set a precedent of yielding "to each and all of

[71] Julian E. Zelizer, "The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal: Fiscal Conservatism and the Roosevelt Administration, 1933-1938," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30 no. 2 (June 2000): 332.

the groups that are able to enforce upon the Congress claims for special consideration."[72] In 1937, Roosevelt appeared to move fiscal conservatism toward a prominent position in his governing priorities. He presented his budget for fiscal year 1938 slashing federal spending in order to "reduce . . . many expenditures of the Federal Government which the general depression made necessary." He explained that doing so was the first step toward achieving the balanced budget he had been promising since 1932. He even explained that balancing the budget was not a matter of abstract accounting, but the means to maintaining limited government, asserting that the costs of "new functions and duties" of the national government "can be substantially reduced only by curtailing the function or duty" and that "no expansion of Government activities should be authorized unless the necessity for such expansion has been definitely determined and funds are available to defray the cost."[73] Roosevelt's budget for fiscal year 1938 was Roosevelt's biggest step toward fiscal conservatism since the 1933 Economy Act.

Near the end of 1937, however, the Roosevelt Recession settled upon the country, and it appeared the country never really left the Depression. Roosevelt remained committed to his goal of a balanced budget, and in his January 1938 budget message Roosevelt sent to Congress "a message of economy in government and more than one-half billion dollars in expenditure cuts."[74] On the same day, in his annual message to Congress, Roosevelt disavowed the calls for a "sharp curtailment or even elimination of government functions" to achieve an immediate balancing of the budget, but ultimately

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[72] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Veto of the Bonus Bill.," May 22, 1935, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on June 3, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15061.

[73] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Budget Message to Congress," January 7, 1937, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on May 28, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15337.

[74] Zelizer, "Fiscal Conservatism and the Roosevelt Administration," 352.

reaffirmed his commitment to a budget that would "exhibit a further decrease in the deficit," consistent with the declining of the deficit over the past year.[75] When Roosevelt presented his first round of budget cuts in 1937, the economy appeared to be strong, but presenting them again in January 1938 made his fiscal conservatism more puzzling because it was an uncharacteristic inaction—a refusal to change a policy which, for a whole year, seemed to create recession, not cure it. But the recession "seemed only to harden the President's determination to get the budget in balance."[76]

Developing Liberalism: The Keynesian Turn

Three months after his January 1938 budget message and its recommitment to cutting federal expenditures, Roosevelt gave way to the chorus of Keynesians and accepted planned budget deficits. Roosevelt addressed Congress and the nation on April 14, calling for an increase of government spending: nearly three billion dollars in public works spending and easy credit from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. This marked a crucial turn for Roosevelt and the New Deal because it would form the basis for Roosevelt's leaving behind the first and second New Deal's attempts to balance progressivism and conservatism and embracing the liberal principles that blend and unite certain elements of either alternative. But Roosevelt's decision came only after the failures of the interest-based first New Deal, and the more ideological and reflexive second New Deal, and even in 1938 it was an inchoate and not entirely self-conscious step toward liberalism. The third New Deal involved incremental moves toward a Keynesian, compensatory political program that could comport with liberal principles.

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[75] Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress," January 3, 1938.

[76] Burns, *The Lion and the Fox*, 323.

But it was also punctuated with reversions to earlier New Deal programming, most notably a return to centralized, associational planning typified by the War Planning Board or the Office of Price Administration. While Roosevelt's abandonment of ideological conservatism opened the door for Keynesianism and the third New Deal, it was far from a fait accompli in 1938.

The Third New Deal (1938-1945): Consumption, Spending, and Consensus

The 1938 mid-term election marked the beginning of a decline for New Deal Democrats. The results of the 1938 election were stunning: "Republicans won a smashing victory, gaining 81 seats in the House and 8 in the Senate." While Democrats still had the majority in the House, the composition included "169 nonsouthern Democrats, 93 southern Democrats, 169 Republicans, and 4 third-party representatives. Most observers agreed that the president could at best hope to consolidate, but certainly not to extend the New Deal."[77] These troubles worsened in subsequent elections: "In 1940, a presidential election year in which Franklin Roosevelt decisively defeated Wendell Willkie . . . Democrats picked up only 7 seats in the House and lost another 3 in the Senate. And in the next mid-term elections, in 1942 . . . Democrats lost 50 seats in the House (reducing to 10 a majority that six years ago stood at 242) and another 8 seats in the Senate (lowering the majority to 21 from the 60 they had enjoyed after the 1936 election." These electoral losses translated into a sustained attack on the New Deal: "By the end of 1943, Congress had eliminated the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, the National Youth Administration, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, and other New Deal programs of relief and public assistance," all of which

[77] Polenberg, *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 22.

reflected "a broad growing popular impatience with the New Deal—and with taxes, deficits and the expansion of bureaucracy that many voters associated with it." In short, Democratic strength unraveled in the third New Deal, and consequently so too did Roosevelt's legislative initiative.

Behind these legislative losses and growing conservative opposition, however, lay the problem of liberalism. A liberal program involved an actively engaged national government. But the problem with national activism during the first and second New Deals was that their activity grated against the stated goal of economic freedom. NRA style economic planning, or extensive antitrust regulating involved direct government intervention into normal economic processes. Such statism belied FDR's principles because liberalism, as FDR explained it, supposedly reinforced the freedom and independence of civil society, rather than eradicating it. Consequently, business or institutional conservatives who could sympathize to some degree with the principles of liberalism for its affirmation of economic freedom could not recognize the first or second New Deals as their own. In order to comport with liberal principles, a compensatory program would need to be less hostile toward business independence; liberalism wanted a program that was not so hostile to the free market.

A compensatory policy program supplied this want. It promised to drive economic growth by bolstering consumption, thereby driving demand, employment, and wages up. Its very name implied complementarity with the market, not opposition. Thus, a compensatory program placed consumer demand at the center of its focus. The idea was to place "extra money into the economy" which "[w]orkers would spend" and which "businesses could then respond. As the money circulated, the rate of spending

doubled."[78] A sustained program of boosting consumption would provide an incentive for growth otherwise lacking during recession. It did not premise a fundamental reordering of American economic life, but a national government using its instruments to reinforce the strengths of the market place and cushion its citizens from the undesirable problems of the marketplace. While planning methods encountered "formidable political, ideological, juridical, economic, and technical obstacles," the consumerist approach "provided a common denominator among most liberals." It was more politically feasible since it depended upon indirect intervention on the economy, rather than the "more intrusive planning . . . [and] coercive controls;" finally, what proved to be its strongest impetus, "as economic indexes rose again, [it] seemed plainly to work."[79] Thus, consumption based compensation was a powerful political program among liberals because it reinforced the idea that business and the market remained a viable engine of economic growth, so long as it could be compensated—especially in economic downturns—by an active but indirect national program that enhanced consumer purchasing power.

Compensatory programming also discovered a way to emphasize individual rights programmatically, thereby tapping into liberalism's articulation of material security as an individual economic right. A growing realism within the administration toward the utopian illusions of totalitarian governments attenuated New Dealers' enthusiasm for wholesale reform and management of the marketplace. Witnessing the rise of the Nazi-Fascist Axis and the brutality of Stalin's rule of the Soviet Union "encourage[ed] liberals

[78] Zelizer, "Fiscal Conservatism," 353.

[79] Jeffries, "The 'New' New Deal," 401.

to reassess their earlier faith in a managerial state." Liberalism's emphasis on economic freedom through material security allowed New Dealers' to refocus on programming that placed its focus on the consumer and his liberty, instead of programming that involved "the structure of the industrial economy and the distribution of wealth and power within it," which had fixated "progressives and New Dealers for decades."[80] Interestingly, this allowed New Dealers to give new emphasis to earlier programs, and to find liberalism latent within the first and second New Deals. Examples that I address below include Social Security, which had an ancillary place amidst the more ambitious reform projects of the first New Deal, or the NLRB, which Roosevelt only reluctantly embraced after opposing such a full-throated advocacy of the labor union against business interests. Looking back on the nascent liberal rationale of a program like Social Security, New Dealers would stress that liberalism meant assuring the rights of varied categories of downtrodden Americans. Accordingly, welfare would become increasingly important for New Dealers after they discovered its embodiment of liberal principles, as well as its compensatory capacity to stimulate consumer demand, and thereby drive economic growth.

For all that the compensatory program offered in the way of consolidating a liberal public policy program, the third New Deal was not a wholesale turn toward Keynesianism; in fact, of the three phases of the New Deal, this had the least to show for it in terms of domestic legislative or programmatic accomplishments. In part, this had to do with the fact of Roosevelt's own changeability. While Roosevelt's decision to accept planned economic deficits in the spring of 1938 suggested a movement toward

[80] Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, 170.

compensatory programming, the outbreak of war revived his belief in the need for cartel style associationalism and government planning to forestall massive inflation like that the country experienced during and after World War I. Thus, the War Production Board (WPB) and the Office of Price Administration (OPA) appeared to be a regression toward NRA style planning. Furthermore, the consolidation of conservative opposition in Congress also dampened the programmatic output of the third New Deal.

The punctuated rise of liberalism in the third New Deal meant that compensatory programming had less to do with achieving short-term political victories and more to do with defining a program that could set the agenda and unify liberal support into the future. Thus, one of the most important liberal statements that the administration produced during the war was the National Resource Planning Board's report called *Security, Work, and Relief Policies*. The report provoked conservative scorn and produced no concrete public policy, but it reflected the growing consensus within the administration that compensatory programming could replace direct economic management. Another example whose import was more symbolic than concrete, the administration's proposal in 1945 of the Full Employment Act, which was passed only after conservatives pared it down significantly, but which also indicated a revived belief in the strength of the market economy to drive employment and prosperity, assuming the indirect and compensatory management from the national government. Finally, the G.I. Bill was the clearest and most successful example of compensatory programming, but it was also an example of limited success. It envisioned a bold and comprehensive role for the federal government assuring the material freedom of a large swath of Americans, though it applied to a highly specific category of citizens, and arguably had such broad

political appeal because the exigencies of World War II were unique. In the end, there was no outright example of legislative successes, but all three illustrate the emerging liberal consensus among Democrats behind a compensatory political program.

Economic Freedom and Material Abundance: Consumerism and Consensus

A compensatory program aimed at driving economic growth by stimulating a consumer economy. One way that governments could increase consumer spending was to engage purposely in deficit spending. Planned federal deficits added to the gross national product, thereby infusing the private market with more money to purchase products and increase production. This increased spending could come in many forms, but one prominent way was federal relief and welfare programs. Federal welfare had a dual benefit: it created federal deficits—which had indirect compensatory effects—but it also directly stimulated consumer purchasing power by supplementing the discretionary cash of large portions of the population that would otherwise struggle to keep up with a consumer economy. In the earlier phases of the New Deal, welfare largely meant federal work programs like those of the early New Deal, the WPA, PWA, CCC. Previously, relief programs like these were justified as temporary exigencies. In 1936 FDR said of such programs that "the Federal Government must and shall quit this business of relief" lest the country's "continued dependence . . . [induce] a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fibre. To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit."[81]But within the new liberal program, the very relief activities for which FDR had almost apologized became one of the principal mechanism for stimulating economic growth. Measures like these were not

[81] Roosevelt, "Annual Address to Congress," January 4, 1935.

simply to "spare individuals the pain of joblessness, but also—and more important—to provide the nation with the largest possible body of consumers."[82]

This new emphasis on the compensatory benefits of welfare meant that New Dealers could retrospectively emphasize the liberal character of earlier New Deal programs. Specifically, the Social Security Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) both involved a permanent government commitment to social welfare, and indicated a significant step from temporary public works programs to a more permanent and elaborate social safety net. FDR explained that Social Security possessed the potential to stimulate consumer demand "by sustaining purchasing power" in order to "cushion the shock of economic distress."[83] Similarly, the FLSA assured "a better standard of living" by "increase[ing] purchasing power to buy the products of farm and factory."[84] By setting a minimum wage the FLSA ensured that each working American had the money to spend on consumer goods, while its maximum working hours provisions ensured the leisure to acquire a taste for those goods. Like Social Security and the FLSA, the 1937 Housing Act relieved indigent individuals of the burden of providing for their own subsistence so that they could redirect the little discretionary money they had back into the economy. While each of these programs possessed compensatory components, they remained isolated within the larger anti-business, antitrust initiatives that overshadowed them during the second New Deal. Their significance was retrospective. They provided a foundation for liberals to expand upon and a programmatic model in the third New Deal. As Alan

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[82] Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, 229.

[83] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat.," April 28, 1935, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on June 13, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15046.

[84]Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat.," June 24, 1938, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed June 13, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15662.

Brinkley explains, war-time and post-war liberals "emphasized those New Deal accomplishments that could be reconciled more easily with the vision of an essentially compensatory government. They lauded the New Deal's innovations in social welfare and social insurance; a decade earlier many had considered such initiatives of secondary importance."[85]

Welfare was such a tool of public policy because it combined two elements that were important to liberals. It was able to achieve economic benefits by spurring individual consumerism, while a public policy program that emphasized individual material security comported to a large degree with liberal principles of material security and independence. Thus, programs such as these allowed the government to assure each individual's basic subsistence, thereby mobilizing a whole portion of the national citizenry who perhaps never had an appreciable impact on national consumption. The poor who lacked discretionary income now possessed a degree of consumer capacity that had been devoted to a perpetual struggle for basic subsistence. Social welfare, therefore, was not a dole—an accusation that Roosevelt frequently faced in selling welfare—but instead a stimulus of economic recovery. Accordingly, liberals did not need to apologize for welfare as a necessary evil in difficult times, but instead celebrated its capacity to elevate poor citizens to the newly exalted status of consumers. This argument allowed liberals to present themselves as complementing the private marketplace, rather than demonizing the capitalist's harsh indifference to paupers.

This new liberal program represented a distinct phase of the New Deal. Early New Dealers believed the Depression demonstrated that the mature American economy

[85] Brinkley, "The Idea of the State," 110.

had run its course, and that growth had given way to the "soberer, less dramatic business" of enlightened administration. In the first and second New Deals, however, enlightened administration meant direct economic management that undercut the liberal argument for economic freedom and moderate reform that preserved the economic marketplace. The compensatory program of the third New Deal still warranted enlightened administration, but that no longer referred to caring for a worn-out economy. New Dealers came to believe in the American economy again during the war, and insofar as they found a way to stimulate economic growth and preserve an independent marketplace, they finally became liberals; the rhetoric of freedom and the practice of economic management were no longer at such odds. At this point, enlightened administration meant creating a new frontier of American expansion. Instead of the literal, western frontier, the new frontier was the newly discovered American consumer. Opening that frontier meant technological innovation that could lower the price of domestic luxuries, while simultaneously expanding the consumer market for those luxuries. The third New Deal put down the goal of economic reform only to adopt another kind: cultural reform. The liberal compensatory program sought to "redefine citizenship to de-emphasize the role of men and women as producers and to elevate their roles as consumers."[86] Material security, long the rhetorical promise of liberalism, was now the foundation of a nationalistic, egalitarian political program that transformed economic freedom to be the expansion of an individualistic life amidst an abundance of material accoutrements.

[86] Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, 269.

Finding a Program: Legislative Proposals

Roosevelt did not immediately adopt a full-fledge compensatory program, despite the fact that such a program would provide concrete policy goals that comported with liberal political principles. Instead, compensatory policies peppered the third New Deal. The first turn came, as I noted above, when Roosevelt's Keynesian-minded advisors prevailed upon him to abandon budget cuts and embrace deficits to respond to the Roosevelt recession. But, for one thing, this $3 billion spending program was "relatively small, given the $100 billion economy" and was actually "smaller than the unintended deficit of 1936," and consequently fell "far short of a Keynesian revolution."[87] While the April spending constituted an "important step in the direction of compensatory fiscal policy," it remained nonetheless "a small and tentative step."[88] More importantly, after the war began Roosevelt revived the associational approach to economic planning. Fearing meteoric inflation produced by escalating war-time demand, Roosevelt reasserted extensive government controls. He called for "one comprehensive, all-embracing program covering prices, and profits, and wages, and taxes and debts," including price and wage controls, rationing of commodities, credit restrictions, and heavy taxation that reflected Roosevelt's fear of war profiteering. He believed that "no American citizen ought to have a net income, after he has paid his taxes, of more than $25,000 a year" during the war.[89] The massive control wielded by administrative institutions like the War Planning Board—which was staffed with private industry executives—or the Office of

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[87] Zelizer, "Fiscal Conservatism," 355.

[88] Brinkley, *The End of Reform,* 104.

[89] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Message to Congress on an Economic Stabilization Program.," April 27, 1942, *The American Presidency Project, l*ast accessed on June 24, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16251.

Price Administration turned out to frustrate people as much as earlier attempts at cartel-style planning. In spite of this unpopular aggregation of administrative power, however, a booming war-time economy revived trust in the marketplace. The gross national product increased by 50% during the war and the unemployment rate approached zero. Even though the war boards were programmatically regressive, the widespread dissatisfaction they engendered, along with returning economic productivity, crystallized compensatory policy as an alternative, liberal program that sought to complement, not manage an independent marketplace.

After the 1938 spending programs, the second expression of compensatory policy came amidst Roosevelt's revival of associationalism, and it was produced not by Roosevelt, but by an otherwise obscure administrative committee of liberal elites. In 1943 Roosevelt released a document produced a year earlier by the National Resources Planning Board (NRPB) called *Security, Work, and Relief Policies*. It was ambitious, "recommend[ing] a comprehensive array of long-term government social insurance, work relief, general relief, and social services to combat chronic unemployment and economic insecurity."[90] The document called for "[m]easures to ensure full employment," and consequently "regarded public works and public employment as the solutions to the unemployment problem."[91] In terms of social relief, the NPRB was "strongly committed to general assistance and the setting of national standards, rather than continued reliance on special category programs such as aid to dependent children and old-age assistance," and viewed "general public assistance to be a top priority and

[90] Jeffries, "The 'New' New Deal," 412.

[91] Amenta and Skocpol, "Redefining the New Deal," 88.

called for increased federal funding and strict controls."[92] It also favored enhanced unemployment relief, reforming social security so that it relied less on payroll taxes, national healthcare, and urban planning and federal public housing. The NPRB's *Security, Work, and Relief Policies*, therefore, called for massive increases in federal spending, particularly in developing the country's social welfare system, with the explicit goal of compensating the economic productivity of the marketplace. In conjunction with the marketplace, government spending would ultimately spur consumption and demand to such a degree that the economy would reach maximal levels of productivity, and thereby employment. "To many liberals," this document "became something close to a programmatic bible."[93]

Security, Work, and Relief Policies communicated to liberal elites within Congress and the administration a way forward; it did not aspire to popular persuasion. From cautiousness or ambivalence, Roosevelt himself did little to prepare Congress or the public for such a document: "though permitting the NPRB to proceed quietly with its postwar studies and defending it from congressional conservatives, Roosevelt was not willing to involve himself in postwar planning or publicize it and risk diverting public attention from the war."[94] It did not help that the document was sent to Roosevelt only three days before the attack at Pearl Harbor. But when he did release it, Congress roundly rejected its proposals, and promptly dissolved the NRPB. In June, just two months after the release of its most important document, "Congress ordered that the NRPB be

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[92] Ibid.," 90.

[93] Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, 250.

[94] Jeffries, "The 'New' New Deal," 410.

liquidated by September, that its records be delivered to the National Archives, and that its functions not be transferred to another agency or its funding supplemented by any other moneys. Seldom has an agency been killed with such finality and relish."[95]

But *Security, Work, and Relief Policies* did have an effect on liberal elites within the administration and Congress, in spite of Roosevelt's cagey attitude toward it. The report presented a post-war economic program that put compensatory economic policy at the heart of New Deal liberalism, and in so doing elevated welfare and fiscal policy to prominence in place of economic reform and government planning. Roosevelt's ambivalence to the NPRB report was curious. On one hand, Roosevelt actually advocated an associational program that stood in direct contradiction to the emerging compensatory focus among New Dealers within and without his administration, though that compensatory focus comported with liberalism better than the actual policies Roosevelt advocated. This makes Roosevelt seem obtuse to the very program that embodied the principles he articulated. On the other hand, the NRPB report was vaulting, advocating a massive and permanent welfare program the likes of which the country had never known. This was a time in which, after all, other programs that could have compensatory benefits were actually downplayed: public works were sold as being temporary and Social Security was explained as insurance, not welfare; the FLSA was to regulate abusive employer behavior, not stimulate consumer demand. Roosevelt's ambivalence may have reflected the astute observation that the NRPB report was politically infeasible, and he may have remained aloof so as to avoid sharing the wrath that Congress had for the NRPB.

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[95] Ibid., 415.

In any case, two years after releasing *Security, Work, and Relief Policies* his public rhetoric assumed a definitively compensatory character. In his final budget message in 1945, he called for a continuance of public works, and asked for a "larger shelf of detailed plans in order to be prepared for the postwar period," which would allow "the completion of additional plans for highways, flood control, river development, stream pollution control, power transmission, reclamation, hospital, and other construction, as authorized by law." Furthermore, Roosevelt endorsed the compensatory goal of "full employment." Full employment was a way for the government to measure its compensatory effects on the economy. Liberals reasoned that there was an ideal point at which the GDP was so high that the American economy operated at full production capacity, which in practice meant that all able Americans were employed and contributing to economic growth. The administration would know how much to compensate the marketplace based upon the difference between the ideal GDP and the purely market-based GDP. Roosevelt endorsed the compensatory rationale behind full employment by asserting that full employment was indeed the principal policy goal for the administration following the war: "full employment in peacetime can be assured only when the reduction in war demand is approximately offset by additional peacetime demand from the millions of consumers, businesses, and farmers, and by Federal, State, and local Governments." Roosevelt emphasized the need to continue war-time consumption levels after the war because only when consumption remained as high as war-time levels could the country maintain its war-time zero percent unemployment rate. He explained that "[i]t is the responsibility of business enterprise to translate market opportunities into employment and production," while maintaining that government

possesses a complementary role of "hold[ing] open the door of opportunity and . . . assur[ing] sustained markets. Then and only then can free enterprise provide jobs."[96] By 1945 Roosevelt accepted and forcefully advocated a compensatory program that placed individual material security and independence squarely at the center of an economic program designed to stimulate economic growth.

Roosevelt's 1945 annual message to Congress made similar arguments. Roosevelt focused on the need to "achieve a level of demand and purchasing power by private consumers—farmers, businessmen, workers, professional men, housewives—which is sufficiently high to replace wartime Government demands." Reflecting the continued role for the private marketplace that was characteristic of a compensatory program, Roosevelt acknowledged that the goal of creating jobs belonged primarily to the private industry: "[o]ur policy is, of course, to rely as much as possible on private enterprise to provide jobs." But then he stressed the indirect role for government to compensate the marketplace's inability to secure full employment, asserting that "the American people will not accept mass unemployment or mere makeshift work."[97] The continued vitality of the marketplace, therefore, depended upon sustaining exceptionally high levels of demand, thereby ensuring that America maintain full employment levels. Maintaining demand, however, ultimately meant ensuring more and more citizens had the means and incentive to consume more and more goods. Thus, the principle of assuring individual citizens' material security and economic freedom came to take on economic significance, as they were the primary means of ensuring continued economic vitality.

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[96] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Budget Message," January 3, 1945, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on June 7, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16584.

[97] Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address," January 6, 1945.

Beyond Roosevelt's public expression of compensatory ideas, two major legislative initiatives also illustrate that it became the principal aspiration of New Deal liberals: the G.I. Bill and the Full Employment Act. The G.I. Bill passed in June of 1944 as the biggest legislative success of the liberal compensatory program: "Like the reforms unsuccessfully advocated by the NPRB, the measures for veterans [in the G.I. Bill] were comprehensive."[98] It sought to facilitate soldiers' return into American economic life. It increased the likelihood of their finding remunerative jobs by paying for a college education for many servicemen, setting up a jobs bureau, and facilitating credit for servicemen for a variety of purposes, whether buying a home or looking for farm or business capital. It also created safety net precautions like unemployment compensation for out-of-work veterans, reflecting the New Deal promise of material security and the compensatory focus on increasing and expanding consumer purchasing power. Although these welfare benefits targeted a distinct, if large, class of Americans, it represented for liberals an example of a more general role of the national government to spend money in a way that encouraged job creating economic growth, and that enhanced consumer purchasing power. Roosevelt used his statement on signing the G.I. Bill to clarify that while this legislation "provide[d] the special benefits which are due to the members of our armed forces . . . there is still much to be done." By that, Roosevelt explained that he meant "the assurance of satisfactory employment upon their return to civil life. The first task after the war is to provide employment for them and for our demobilized workers."[99] In other words, Roosevelt explained the G.I. Bill as indicative of a larger government

[98] Amenta and Skocpol, "World War II and Social Provision," 82.

[99] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Statement on Signing the G.I. Bill.," June 22, 1944. *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on June 25, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16525.

responsibility to stimulate economic growth in a way that maximized employment and encouraged consumer purchasing power—and the G.I. Bill provided a model for doing so in its sweeping program of compensatory spending.

Roosevelt's suggestion of a broader, less specialized version of the G.I. Bill led to the Full Employment Bill. The Full Employment Bill was eventually passed as the Employment Act of 1946, and its final form reflected a toll taken by its conservative opponents: the "Employment Act of 1946 called for 'maximum' rather than 'full' employment, lacked explicit Keynesian prescriptions for compensatory fiscal policy, [did not guarantee a] 'right to work,' and was ultimately more a symbolic consensus statement of general government responsibility for a stable free-enterprise economy than a binding commitment to federal policy to ensure full employment."[100] But the Full Employment Bill, formulated by liberals at the end of FDR's term, and supported by Truman, signified that liberalism resided comfortably in a compensatory economic program; that meant indirect economic stimulus and welfare, each of which encouraged consumer spending to drive economic growth. The bill proposed by Democrats called for a "National Production and Employment Budget" that the President would submit to Congress, which estimated "'the number of jobs needed during the ensuring fiscal year or years to assure continuing full employment,' and it would calculate 'the estimated dollar value of the gross national product . . . required to provide such a number of jobs.' If it seemed likely that private-sector spending and investment would not create the necessary jobs, the government would be expected to step in with a program of loans, expenditures, and

[100] Jeffries, "The 'New' New Deal," 417.

public investment to bring the economy up to full-employment levels."[101] By compensating for the shortcomings of the private sector, government ultimately strengthened it by creating the kind of purchasing power that drove the GDP to ever higher levels, which in turn increased private sector production and employment. As a piece of legislation, therefore, it embodied the liberal aspirations of national activism while reflecting liberal sensitivity to the independence of the private sector and its continued value.

Conclusion: A Lasting Liberal Coalition

The disjunction between liberal principles and New Deal programming created a singular complexity for Franklin Roosevelt's liberal consensus. While his principled rhetorical leadership articulated liberal principles that could be shared by a new and diverse partisan coalition, the practice of the New Deal often controverted those principles. But this problem also reveals an interesting facet of principled rhetorical leadership: the principles that Roosevelt articulated imposed limits upon Roosevelt such that when he deviated from them programmatically his coalitional support waned. Meanwhile, discovering the compensatory economic program established clear and concrete policy goals which, due to their conformity to liberal principles, codified his coalition and vitalized liberal Democrats for decades, and arguably formed the core of liberal strength even today. The principled consensus, therefore, creates an intellectual framework for public policy, and when policy deviates from that framework the coalitional consensus breaks down. Conversely, when policy does work within the intellectual framework established by the principled consensus, it can significantly

[101] Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, 261.

enhance the partisan and political influence of the regime party. Principled rhetoric, therefore, is not the same as political programming, but it creates expectations for certain programming and imposes limits on politicians deviating from that programming. The first and second New Deals evince Roosevelt's deviance from his own principled rhetoric, while the compensatory movement of the third New Deal was a breakthrough for liberalism precisely because it finally instantiated the liberal principles first articulated in 1932.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Barry Goldwater Campaign: Extremism in Pursuit of Virtue

Introduction: Barry Goldwater's Ideological Leadership

Barry Goldwater's nomination to the presidency was, in one sense, only the latest in a long series of battles within the Republican Party, tracing back at least to the midst of the New Deal. With the nomination of Alf Landon in 1936, Wendell Wilkie in 1940, and Thomas Dewey in 1944 and 1948, Republicans presented the nation with candidates that identified themselves more with New Deal national activism than 1920s restraint. These candidates promised to deliver Democratic promises—prosperity, material security, etc—more efficiently than Democrats themselves. But for as long as there had been liberal Republicans, there were also conservative Republicans. Robert Taft stood prominently representing this wing of the party, leading the Republican-Sothern Democrat conservative coalition in Congress starting in 1938, championing the restrictions on labor unions in the Taft-Hartley Act, and nearly capturing the party's nomination in 1952. In the late 1950s and 1960s conservative and liberal Republicans continued to battle for the soul of the party. Conservatives' biggest triumph came when Barry Goldwater bested liberal Republicans John Rockefeller, George Romney, William Scranton, and Henry Cabot Lodge, and, for the first time in the post-New Deal era, took the party's helm. Goldwater's nomination, therefore, represented a significant moment within the partisan regime dynamic: the non-regime party was transformed into an opposition party that was no longer willing to accommodate the regime party. It marked, therefore, the first moment of a process of regime construction.

Goldwater captured his party's nomination by utilizing a grassroots campaign organization to counter established Republican machinery that drew strength from wealthier donors in the Northeast. His triumph, therefore, reflected a shift in the party's geographical and sociological base. The big-business influence of the Northeast waned, and the burgeoning, populist Sunbelt region of the South and Southwest took its place. Goldwater energized the conservative movements in these regions by his charismatic, unapologetic and passionate articulation of conservative principles and conservative indictment of New Deal liberalism. In 1960 he published *The Conscience of a Conservative*, a widely popular best-seller. But the very populist conservatism that effectively rebutted the regular Republican organization proved poorly suited to win a national majority. In as pivotal a moment as Bryan's "cross of gold" convention speech, Goldwater boldly asserted while accepting the Republican nomination that "extremism in defense of liberty is no vice . . . [and] that moderation in pursuit of justice is no virtue;" the statement was paradigmatic of Goldwater's problematic rhetorical leadership.[1] Goldwater's assertion that conservative truth should never compromise with liberal falsehood thrilled those conservatives that understood the stakes of ideological battle in the same way that Goldwater did. But the comment did more to confuse than elucidate the meaning of conservatism for those who did not already see with clarity the stark contrast of conservatism and liberalism. Goldwater's apparent embrace of extremism and derision of moderation did more to confirm the criticisms of his competitors than win converts to his movement. The very ideological fervor that invigorated the grass-roots

[1] Barry Goldwater, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco," July 16, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on December 4, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25973.

organizations and propelled Goldwater to the nomination, therefore, impaired his ability to persuade a diverse consensus to support him; Goldwater's rhetorical virtue was, from another angle, his liability.

Evaluating Goldwater's ideological rhetorical leadership helps explain his difficulties in the 1964 election. Goldwater relied principally upon ideology to persuade the groups that he wished to coalesce in support of him, which means that he depended upon a set of fixed and abstract principles that did not yield to the particular nuances of thought or preferences of the different groups that he targeted as members of his partisan coalition. His emphasis on ideology influenced the way he explained inter-party competition, intra-party unity, and his approach to policy. In this chapter, I shall show that Goldwater attempted to polarize the two parties according to ideology, that his rhetoric reflected the preferences of a narrow and homogeneous coalition, and that his approach to policy was inflexible. To demonstrate this, I begin by describing Goldwater's conservatism, and the coalition he intended to unite with his principled vision. I then evaluate his rhetoric in the 1964 campaign to illustrate his ideological rhetoric. I begin by focusing on what Goldwater proposed himself, showing that his appeal largely depended upon an ideology that was persuasive to few, and lacked clear and widely appealing policy proposals. I then turn to examine why Goldwater was so frequently put on the defensive during his campaign. To do so, I analyze some of Goldwater's most important rhetorical mistakes—loose talk about nuclear war and poverty—to show how they reflect the character of his intra-party appeal, and his inflexibility on public policy. Though Goldwater envisioned a principled restructuring of the national partisan consensus, his

ideological rhetoric undercut this purpose, and facilitated Lyndon Johnson's historic landslide victory.

Goldwater's Conservative Vision

Goldwater's conservative appeal aimed at activating an inchoate conservative segment of the American population. Goldwater said that he stood with the majority of Americans; that he spoke for "95 per cent of the population" that had become "forgotten Americans." Goldwater explained that the "forgotten American" was "not a member of a minority group, [but instead was] the man who pays taxes, the man who works, the man who stays out of trouble."[2] No one offered these Americans the conservative government that protected their liberty; instead, the fruits of their labor were taken for granted. Goldwater famously set out to change that by offering the American people a choice, and not an echo; to break free from the tweedledee-tweedledum contests that had defined inter-party conflict since the New Deal. Doing so would bring forth from the electorate a majority of forgotten Americans, and this tide would propel Goldwater on Election Day. Given the choice, they would far prefer, Goldwater contended, conservative policies from a conservative party, rather than varying degrees of liberal policies from relatively liberal parties. The choice meant, on the one hand, liberty and individuality at home with strength abroad or, on the other, collectivism and materialism at home with weakness abroad. The forgotten Americans preferred the former; they wanted a conservative choice, even if they did not know it.

[2] "The Forgotten American," The Warsaw Times-Union (IN), October 15, 1964.

A New Coalitional Base in the Sunbelt

Goldwater needed to shift the Republican coalitional base from its historic position in the Northeast to the South and Southwest to transform Republicanism from a liberal "me-too" party into a conservative opposition party. Notwithstanding Goldwater's conviction that conservatism speaks to the heart of 95 per cent of people, he understood that his electoral chances depended upon a specific regional coalition uniting the traditionally Republican Midwest with the growing conservatism of the West and the South. Competing in these areas meant Goldwater would be less beholden to the large, densely packed urban metropolises of the Northeast—whose preferences for an activist government were codified during the New Deal. Instead, the South-Midwest-West coalition depended upon medium to small cities, along with the burgeoning suburban areas that developed in the period of post-war prosperity. This meant Goldwater appealed to the preferences of a much more middling, traditional cross-section of the electorate. Suburban voters in general had potential because their "income and social position tend[ed] upward," which made Goldwater's criticism of Democrats' fixation with taxation and doling out money to special interests more appealing. Along similar lines, voters in more rural areas of the Mountain West were also important, and Goldwater's wariness toward governmental elitism resonated in these areas. Finally, to the extent that Goldwater anticipated any urban support, he hoped that his foreign policy hawkishness and his hard line with respect to the Soviet Union would draw support from ethnic, especially Eastern European immigrants, who have "continually urged a more belligerent policy toward the captive nations" and who have shown "a great concern for what they believe to be an internal Communist threat." Along with their avid anticommunism, these

ethnic groups were, to a great extent, second or third generation immigrants who experienced increasing economic success after the war, and, as a consequence, may have "shift[ed] their voting habits as their economic position improves."[3] In sum, Goldwater's conservatism targeted voters from the South, West, and Midwest that were wary of eastern, liberal elitism, including the perception of politics dominated by special interests, economic egalitarianism, moral cosmopolitanism, and softness toward communism.

While Goldwater's campaign proved wholly ineffective in winning the election, he did shift his coalitional base to those geographical areas of the Sunbelt that represented a more populist conservatism. "Goldwater still had a surprising measure of support," Robert Mason observed, "especially from the middle classes in the South and West. According to author Norman Mailer, these supporters believed that the "'basic war was between Main Street and Wall Street' and willingly offered their time and energy in support of Goldwater by serving in numerous citizens committees." While Rockefeller and Scranton could appeal to financial and professional elites and big businesses—a facet of Republican politics since at least William McKinley's time—Goldwater appealed to the more enterprising proprietors of small businesses that contributed to the core of his populist strength. Thus, among Goldwater's most enthusiastic supporters, the ranks of "the urban professionals and executives," who as a group "often preferred a more moderate form of Republicanism," were outnumbered by main-street conservatives that "had a special commitment to laissez-faire economics—car dealers, real estate agents,

[3] Alan K. Campbell and Seymour Sacks, "Goldwater Seeks a New Coalition," *New York Times*, August 23, 1964.

lawyers in small or medium-sized practices, and owners of small businesses."[4] Goldwater's fund-raising record demonstrated the extent to which he relied on a middling segment of the population: Goldwater's team "consciously sought to replace party's reliance on large donations from eastern financial institutions with reliance on a wider constituency." In this goal, Goldwater succeeded: "72 percent of the Republican individual contributions were under $500. . . . Proving that a conservative would not necessarily alienate contributors, Goldwater raised $7 million more than Nixon had received in 1960."[5]

Goldwater's Principles

Goldwater conservatism spoke of a politics to restore the dignity of the American way of life, and to displace a liberal politics of bureaucratic overreach and narrow interest groups. His focus on dignity and liberty reflected widespread feelings of restless Americans of the 1960s. In the Prescott, Arizona speech that kicked off his campaign, he described "a stir in the land" and a "mood of uneasiness." He continued by observing that "[w]e feel adrift in an uncharted and stormy sea. We feel that we have lost our way."[6] Journalist Theodore White, trying to identify the discontent that Goldwater tapped into, described what he believed was an emotional recoiling at what ultimately amounted to "a general resentment of all forms of increasingly impersonal control over an increasingly

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[4] Robert Mason, *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 8.

[5] Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 88.

[6] Barry Goldwater, "Peace Through Strength," September 3, 1964, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, October 1, 1964.

accelerating complexity."[7] Goldwater explained this discontent by focusing on a political philosophy and policies that could restore individual responsibility.

Goldwater argued that this discontent was associated with a fixation on egalitarianism and collectivism. The impulse toward egalitarianism derived from a belief—stated or not—that human beings suffer most by unequal material conditions. According to this argument, material differences atomize individuals, rendering them vulnerable and materially isolated, truncating their capacity for higher, spiritual pursuits. More equal economic conditions, on the other hand, foster a kind of community that conduces to higher and more satisfying aims than mere material subsistence. Its emphasis on material equality, Goldwater argued, revealed that liberalism operated narrowly in strictly economic categories, despite the Democratic charge that conservatism was merely a reactionary and self-interested economics of a powerful, elite minority. Liberalism "tend[ed] to look only at the material side of man's nature" by promising to satisfy an ever expanding definition of economic necessity. This preoccupation with material satisfaction obscured the "*superior* side of man's nature," his spirit, which "take[s] precedence over his economic wants."[8] In losing sight of this, liberalism spawned a massive, centralized bureaucracy imbued with a paternalistic attitude toward the specialized interests of its constituency.

Conservatism countered this materialistic liberal philosophy by emphasizing a conception of liberty founded in self-rule and self-reliance, and in so doing, Goldwater

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[7] Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President: 1964* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 317.

[8] Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (Shepherdsville, KY: Victor Publishing Company, Inc., 1960), 10-11 (the emphasis is mine).

claimed it alone accounted for "the *whole* man."[9] Goldwater believed spiritual satisfaction derived from individuals' character and the use of virtues to responsibly provide for themselves and families. By contrast, when government took a role assuring material equality in service fostering unity in the community as a whole, it diminished the relevance of individual character and responsibility. Consequently, liberals mistook the virtues and vices of individualism and community: too much emphasis on community—understood narrowly as material equality—left individuals feeling isolated and alone, because there was little the individual could claim as his own. Conversely, individualism—understood as the individual pursuit of well-being—did not atomize the community, but instead served as its prerequisite by making room for the kind of individual character that ensured the community did not degenerate into a homogeneous mass. As Goldwater stated it, "[o]nly a philosophy that takes into account the essential differences between men, and, accordingly, makes provision for developing the different potentialities of each man can claim to be in accord with Nature. . . . The Conservative knows that to regard man as part of an undifferentiated mass is to consign him to ultimate slavery."[10] Material egalitarianism marred the human spirit by inhibiting the individual's character as it was developed by the exercise of his or her unique talents. Liberal policies emphasizing consumption and prosperity did not foster economic freedom—as FDR claimed—but merely multiplied expectations for material satisfaction while compounding spiritual dissatisfaction.

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 16.

This criticism applied broadly to liberalism's proclivity toward achieving its social goals through centralized bureaucracy. Perhaps most obviously, that meant the liberal "welfare state," as Goldwater called it, which provided individuals with direct economic benefits. Goldwater's conservative critique of liberalism invited liberal rebuttals that he merely rehearsed a social Darwinist preference for *laissez-faire* capitalism (a criticism he sometimes encouraged by callously observing that when povery sprang from low intelligence and ambition, the poor could deserve their lot).[11] But Goldwater argued that welfare worsened and institutionalized poverty, rather than alleviating it. Welfare crippled the individual's spirit by forcing him to "[mortgage] himself to the federal government," by which he conceded "any feeling of responsibility for his own welfare and that of his family and neighbors." This transformed a "dignified, industrious, self-reliant, spiritual being into a dependent animal creature without his knowing it."[12] Welfare fostered poverty by dampening the innate spirit and ambition men have for self-betterment and by offering material relief without any expectation or obligation to eventually stop receiving welfare. In this sense, Goldwater acknowledged a limited but legitimate role for welfare; he "granted that unemployment compensation had 'a small but definitely noticeably part in the softening of severe economic blows,'" and he had "no great objection to a public works program in a prolonged depression."[13] But he believed that poverty was most responsibly addressed by private philanthropy, or by state welfare offices. The widespread and permanent federal welfare business, in contrast,

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[11] Charles Mohr, "Goldwater Says Not All the Poor Merit Public Aid," *New York Times*, January 16, 1964.

[12] Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 51-52.

[13] Jack Bell, *Mr. Conservative: Barry Goldwater* (New York, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962), 220-221.

engendered a permanent poverty that ultimately reflected a spiritual deprivation that required a solution better attuned to the spiritual nature of human beings.

Goldwater's attack on centralized planning implicated more than welfare offices. Under the liberal order, economic and fiscal planning dampened the business cycle in a way that artificially stimulated economic growth. This imbued all citizens with a kind of material interest and dependence on government activism that shielded them from economic difficulty. In this way, liberalism did more than foster spiritual poverty among welfare recipients; it extended that poverty to most Americans. This strain of critique reflected Goldwater's anti-establishment flair because it attacked the interests of traditional Republican business interests. By counter-acting troughs in the business cycle, liberals of both parties extended consumer consumption, and, thereby, corporate profits. The kind of economic planning that benefited Wall Street was thus akin to the dole of welfare recipients. In both cases, government aimed to shield individuals from hardship and challenge in a way that disaffected their spirits. While Wall Street depended upon government activism, Goldwater looked to Main Street for a laudable free-market alternative. Its proprietors endured the kind of uncertainty and insecurity that fostered character and virtue—the very things that liberal materialism undermined. Goldwater saw in their efforts, as opposed to those entrenched, northeastern business interests, the promise of restoring "greatness in this nation." Their character typified what was required to restore "[g]reatness of soul," and the "inner meaning to every man's life in a time too often rushed, too often obsessed by petty needs and material greeds, and too often controlled by the pressure of groups rather than the conscience of the individual."

Goldwater's domestic critique principally focused on economic and fiscal policy, and the sprawling federal bureaucracy. But, as a secondary area, Goldwater's structural critiques of liberalism lent themselves to arguments about liberty and moral traditionalism. For Goldwater, moral traditionalism fitted in with a larger structural argument about the diminished role of the local instruments of self-rule in the face of an increasingly intrusive federal bureaucracy. Goldwater wondered if Americans could be said to rule themselves if their own traditional moral preferences were replaced by the elite morality of centralized bureaucrats. Thus, Goldwater observed that "[r]esponsibility has shifted from the family to the bureaucrat, from the neighborhood to the arbitrary and distant agency. Goals are set, roles are assigned, promises are made—all by the remote control of central government." But this kind of centralization, Goldwater argued, could only mean a degeneration of traditional values. Though the politician and the bureaucrat "want to tell you how to behave, how to think, how to live, what to study, and even where or if to pray," they were poor substitutes for the private institutions of a robust civil society.[14]

Goldwater linked this general critique with specific examples that resonated strongly in the biblically minded South. For instance, in October 1964, with his campaign in full pitch, Goldwater would focus this argument about the erosion of traditional morality by calling attention to Supreme Court decisions disallowing prayer in public school, which reflected a "'rot and decay' in the nation's moral fiber." He then went on to connect the moral elitism of federal institutions with the declining morality of the Democratic Party, evident in at least one place: the absence in their platform of a

[14] Goldwater, "Peace Through Strength," September 3, 1964.

reference to God. Goldwater said that "this utter disregard of God was written to the exact specifications of Lyndon Johnson."[15] Goldwater argued that this religious indifference was a concomitant of liberalism's paternalism and centralized administration.

Goldwater also contrasted the government's antagonism toward the traditional values of ordinary citizens to government's lenience toward criminals and its lax support for law and order. He proclaimed that "[i]t is on our streets that we see the final, terrible proof of a sickness" overcoming society, which had not been redressed by liberal "social theories." Referring to the specter of crime, which "grows faster than population," and alluding to recent criminal rights cases from the Supreme Court, he asserted that criminals "are accorded more consideration than those who try to enforce the law."[16] Goldwater pointed to increasing crime rates and urban unrest to highlight the growing crisis in law and order; in one speech he "quoted a report by the Federal Bureau of Investigation that he said showed a 15 per cent rise in the crime rate in the first six months of the year and then deplored youth riots in Oregon and New Hampshire and 'gang rape in California'"[17] Goldwater summed it up in one pithy statement: "our wives, all women, feel unsafe in our streets."[18] Liberal idealism and abstraction imposed real and deleterious consequences on American citizens, and a seeming collapse of law and order was but one of the consequences.

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[15] Charles Mohr, "Goldwater Hits U.S. Moral 'Rot'" *New York Times*, October 11, 1964.

[16] Goldwater, "Peace Through Strength," September 3, 1964.

[17] Charles Mohr, "Goldwater Links the Welfare State to rise in Crime," *New York Times*, September 11, 1964.

[18] Goldwater, "Peace Through Strength," September 3, 1964.

Another major issue in Goldwater's domestic policy was civil rights. Goldwater's opposition to many aspects of the civil rights movement of the day was criticized at the time, and raised concerns that continue to be expressed to this day. Most famously, he voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlawed discrimination in places of public accommodation. Goldwater presented coherent arguments against the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and in general publicly aired his disapproval of civil rights movements and federal desegregation efforts that all comported with his principles of liberty. Goldwater opposed the Civil Rights Act for the same reason he opposed state-mandated segregation: each threatened the basic civil freedom of association. Thus, compulsory integration—whether that meant in public schools or in private businesses offering public accommodation—violated the citizen's freedom to *not* associate with people of their choosing. "Our aim is neither to establish a segregated society nor to establish an integrated society . . . It is to preserve a *free* society."[19]

Similarly, he criticized the civil rights movement out of a principled objection to the practice of civil disobedience, and not because he judged the cause of the movement itself to be unworthy. Liberals praised these activists, Goldwater argued, merely because the liberals sought to achieve "political advantage," though they gained such advantage only "by turning their eyes away from riots and violence." But this disregard for law at the highest level explained "why lawlessness grows even while we pass more laws."[20] Goldwater believed the principles of civil liberty and law and order were jeopardized by

[19] Barry Goldwater, "Campaign Speech in Chicago," October 16, 1964, in White, *The Making of the President—1964,* 348-349.

[20] Goldwater, "Peace through Strength."

the civil rights efforts of the day, and the laudable goals of racial equality should not undermine those foundations of free society.

Goldwater also argued that Republican growth in the South had to do with economic principles, and was not a reaction to Democratic civil rights legislation. He contrasted his own economic conservative principles with the older parochialism of southern Democrats: "'A new and different kind of conservatism is rising to displace the old, rural traditional—almost hereditary—conservatism of the Democrats. . . . It is primarily an economic conservatism stemming from the growth of business activity, the increase in per capita income, and the rising confidence of the South in its own ability to expand industrially and commercially.'"[21] To bolster this argument, he pointed to the ways that he advanced Republican gains that were first established by Eisenhower and Nixon. Both shared with Goldwater a place in a Republican Party that long appealed to generally bourgeois social and economic preferences, and toughness on communism—while the success of those issues in the South indicated the presence of a burgeoning, and less provincial middle class.

Goldwater believed that his conservatism's principled grounding in liberty made it incompatible with segregation. His conservative principles nevertheless produced outcomes desirable to prejudiced voters in the South. Robert Mason quotes an organizer from the racist Citizens' Council movement: "We took four states for Goldwater in 1964, and hell, we didn't even like him. He voted against the Civil Rights Act, and we just showed our appreciation."[22] Joseph Crespino persuasively argues that Goldwater likely

[21] Crespino, "Goldwater in Dixie," 160.

[22] Mason, *Richard Nixon*, 13.

saw little to gain from vigorously attacking segregation (whether compelled by law or the practices of private businesses), seeing it as a lesser threat to liberty than the menace of communists abroad and socialist liberals at home.[23] Such a calculation would explain his readiness to appear in public with Strom Thurmond, an avowed segregationist. While Goldwater appealed in some ways to the better sensibilities of southern conservatives, he did not attempt to transform the older, parochial conservatism of the South, either—the conservatism harboring racism. He never denounced the racist sentiments behind many anti-integration movements so clearly as to make his appearance with Thurmond or the support he received from groups like the Citizens' Council implausible or unfitting. This qualifies his claim to be an anti-establishment candidate motivated purely by principle—inasmuch as such associations with the Southern establishment muted his principled opposition to segregation.

Finally, Goldwater extended his message of self-rule and self-reliance into a program of assertive foreign policy. Just as liberal promises of economic security sapped individual self-rule, so too did the liberal promise of peace lull America into such weakness that the nation's well-being depended upon the beneficence of America's enemies, or the propitiousness of fortune. Liberal prevaricating pandered to "a craven fear of death"—and thereby reflected the liberal preoccupation with material security.[24] Goldwater called for a foreign policy dedicated to victory, and derided one dedicated to peace. He demanded that America build its foreign policy upon the proposition that "we

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[23] "[G]*iven all that hung in the balance*" for Goldwaterites, "white southerners' desire to preserve a range of segregated practices—to have the races attend separate schools, to allow restaurant owners to decide whom they wanted to serve, to have business owners free from the federal government telling them which employees to hire—none of these things seemed terribly unreasonable or even controversial propositions." Crespino, "Goldwater in Dixie,"162 (the emphasis is mine).

[24] Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 88.

would rather die than lose our freedom." This was "the first step toward saving American freedom" and the "cornerstone of our foreign policy." Goldwater was not suggesting that the desire for self-preservation was itself ignoble, but instead that material desires of that kind ought to be ordered by loftier, spiritual desires; thus, "[w]e want to stay alive, of course, but more than that we want to be free."[25] Just as liberalism assured material security at the cost of individual liberty, so too did its promise of international security jeopardize collective, national self-determination. Only when Americans discarded the craven fear of death, accepted peace through victory instead of avoidance of war, and pursued the military strength and the national fortitude to assert itself, would it regain what was lost. The spiritual foundation of liberty, and the rejection of mere materialism, formed the backbone of his foreign policy just as much as his domestic policy.

Goldwater's campaign for the presidency appealed to the country on the basis of liberty—the freedom of self-rule and individual responsibility in domestic affairs, and the freedom of self-assertion against passive submission to exigency and fortune in foreign affairs. Goldwater's appeal to liberty was inseparable from his critique of liberalism, since liberalism in his view threatened liberty more than anything. And this dichotomy—liberalism versus conservatism—was powered by a deeper philosophic one—materialism versus spiritual striving. Liberalism threatened liberty at home and abroad precisely because it sought, above all else, to attenuate material suffering. Conversely, conservatism promised to restore individual liberty precisely because it understood that spiritual satisfaction and contentment required a kind of self-reliance that necessitated some risk of material discomfort. Only by confronting that threat, and developing the

[25] Ibid., 91.

character to control rather than be controlled by exigency, could the individual be truly satisfied.

Goldwater's Campaign: The Difficulties of Ideological Rhetoric

Goldwater's campaign for the presidency reveals how the principled defense of liberty limited him just as much as it animated him. His principled argument against liberalism explicitly denigrated any political appeal to material interest. But such a principled stance meant that Goldwater struggled to explain the material benefits of conservatism; he was forced to rely almost entirely upon the persuasiveness of the abstract principle of liberty. This kind of abstract appeal typifies ideological rhetoric. Thus, Goldwater relied almost entirely upon the alleged spiritual degradation of liberalism to persuade voters of the value of tax cuts and budget cuts, and in this way his campaign was analogous to that of William Jennings Bryan, who relied almost entirely upon the alleged perfidy of eastern Capitalists to persuade industrial laborers of their interest in free silver.

From this ideological appeal, the other characteristics of ideological rhetoric follow. He depended upon polarizing the electorate along ideological lines to get the most value from his ideological indictment of liberalism. He spoke to his own coalition in a way that only a homogeneous group of conservatives could understand, rather than in a way that could expand the appeal of conservatism. The reason for that, in turn, was an inflexible stance toward public policy: he rarely proposed policies of his own, instead leaving people to infer his intentions from his principled attack on liberalism. When he did talk about specific policies, he explained them only by reference to ideological orthodoxy or heterodoxy, not the benefits that they would produce. In sum, Goldwater's

campaign appeal depended almost entirely upon the persuasiveness of principle and ideology.

Public Policy and Self-Interest

One illustrative example of Goldwater's ideological rhetoric was his tax-cut proposal, which was one of the few concrete policies he suggested. Goldwater proposed to cut corporate and personal income taxes up to 25% in a five-year period, which meant cutting taxes by $5 billion each year. Goldwater had nevertheless voted against President Johnson's $11.6 billion tax cut that reduced the income tax by 20% across all brackets, and which became law earlier that same year. He voted against the Johnson tax cut because he claimed it was a "scheme to buy votes with a sudden handout." But what distinguished Goldwater's tax cut from Johnson's tax cut, and why was a second tax cut necessary after Congress just passed the largest tax cuts in history?

The difference between the President Johnson's and Goldwater's positions came down to the fiscal policies underlying the respective tax cuts, and how they explained those fiscal policies. In a nationally broadcast address, President Johnson said that his "'tax cut will bring greater abundance to all Americans,'" by encouraging "'American enterprise . . . [to increase] investment and expansion'" and to create "'new production and new products,'" along with "'new jobs.'" This "'bold approach'" to stimulate the economy" would incentivize private industriousness, and thereby create economic prosperity for all Americans.[26] But for Goldwater, this argument about economic stimulation smacked of Keynesian fiscal manipulation. He explicitly rejected the idea that his tax cut was designed to "stimulate the economy." Goldwater in fact "heaped scorn on

[26] "President Signs Tax-Cut Measure," *The Spokesman-Review*, February 27, 1964.

that theory." He said that it was "'designed to drug the economy into an artificial boom.'" The heterodoxy of Johnson's tax cut was that it coincided with a "period of deficit spending," and consequently exacerbated the budget deficit.[27] He voted against the Johnson tax cut, therefore, because it contributed to the deficit, while his own tax cut, by implication, would not contribute to the deficit.

Goldwater's focus on tax cut and a balanced budget therefore required budget cuts which would offset the loss of revenue. While he nodded to the "desire to 'find ways to keep more money in your pockets,'" Goldwater evidently meant something different by that than stimulating a period of economic prosperity. He desired, instead, to stabilize federal spending "at a balanced budget level."[28] But that was advantageous for ideological, not economic reasons. Cutting federal revenue forced the government to reduce its reach and activity, and thus made it smaller and easier to monitor. Thus, the tax cuts (and the budget cuts they implied) were "'an open and above-board way to keep government's hands where they belong. And we say that government's hands do not belong in your pockets."[29] Despite Goldwater's discussion of individual's pocketbooks, he did little to explain how the ideological goal of smaller, less active government would produce specific, material benefits; indeed, were he to do so his tax cut explanation would start to sound a lot like Lyndon Johnson's. Goldwater's explanation of his tax program was even more curious because his top economic advisor—Milton Friedman—publicly argued that the tax cuts would "strengthen private incentives and so foster a

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[27] "$11.6 Billion Tax Cut Passed By Senate," *St. Petersburg Times*, February 8, 1964.

[28] Charles Mohr, "Goldwater Calls Tax Cut 'Cynical,'" *New York Times,* September 9, 1964.

[29] "Goldwater Blasts Johnson on Taxes," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, September 9, 1964.

healthier and stronger economy."[30] Goldwater resisted this argument, and instead rested on his ideological case.

Democrats used this logic to accuse Goldwater of callous disdain for those benefitting from federal programming in order to further his conservative ideology. For instance, Hubert Humphrey asked how Goldwater could fulfill his promises to "'increase [defense] spending, reduce revenues and balance the budget at the same time?'" The question implied two possibilities: Goldwater's cut in social spending would have to be even more severe to make room for increased defense spending because not only would revenues decrease drastically, but a greater portion of the remaining revenues would be shifted to defense spending. That compounded the austerity of Goldwater's budget cuts. The alternative was that Goldwater would fail to balance the budget, while the loss of revenue would "'cause the biggest Federal deficit in peacetime history.'"[31] Humphrey's savvy attack hit both of Goldwater's flanks: Goldwater either wanted to drastically slash federal support for the needy for conservative ideological goals, or he was a fiscal libertine who would run bigger deficits than he assailed the Democrats for incurring. He positioned Johnson as the liberal and conservative alternative, simultaneously.

Typically, however, Goldwater discussed public policy not to propose something (like the tax cut), but to voice his principled objections to various existing policies. But in doing so, and much like William Jennings Bryan, he "consistently violated perhaps the most fundamental axiom of campaigning, by ignoring—or even arguing against—the obvious needs of many audiences he addressed."[32] For instance, one junket through the

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[30] Milton Friedman, "The Goldwater View of Economics," *New York Times*, October 11, 1964.

[31] Earl Mazo, "Humphrey Scores GOP Fiscal Plan," *New York Times*, September 13, 1964.

[32] Hammerback, "Goldwater's Rhetorical Legacy," 323.

South typified this kind of rhetoric. In Alabama, he argued against the system of federal grants to state governments for various projects, including highways, welfare, schools, and urban renewal. Goldwater preferred that the federal government "return to the states a share of income taxes collected in them, plus a greater credit on estate taxes." The difficulty, however, was that Montgomery was the capital of a state "which gets more in federal grants than it pays in taxes." To justify this loss of revenue, however, Goldwater did not promise a greater degree of prosperity and efficiency to Alabamians. Instead he relied on three tenets of his conservatism: 1. Federalism: Such matters properly belong to state control, and his proposal would give resources to the states "free of control by the federal bureaucracy"; 2. Defense as the proper function of the federal government: The president and Congress should focus on "defense and foreign policies" instead of "wast[ing] much of their valuable time . . . arguing over matters that are none of their business"; and 3. Criticism of interest group politics: Ending federal grants would free "our top officials . . . from most of the pressure groups which now beset them."[33] In all three cases, Goldwater presumed that a principled commitment to limiting the federal government would be reason enough to support a policy that required the same voters to abandon federal aid that had become a matter of course.

But in this case, Goldwater's appeal was asymmetrical: he asked ideology to displace interest, rather than explaining how interests and principles might align and support each other. For example, he neglected to explain the concrete or material effects

[33] Ronald Reagan would also travel through the South arguing that the federal government should stop their categorical grant programs. The difference was that Reagan explained that one, they should be replaced by block grants which would still reduce the amount of money coming to states, but allow governors to use it more efficiently; and, two, that the material risks associated with this change would be outweighed by the benefits to other specific interests—increasing local self-governance in according with traditional values. These arguments were nascent within Goldwater's statements, but Goldwater did little to explain those benefits beyond incanting "federalism" or "special interest."

of ending national grants, such as specific social or economic benefits of the proposal. Instead, Goldwater presumed that the benefit of limiting the government was self-evident. Goldwater repeated this asymmetrical appeal in Knoxville, the "heartland of the Tennessee Valley Authority," where he "defended his proposal to sell off portions of the TVA not related to flood control or hydroelectric power" based upon the "desirability . . . [of] private enterprise."[34] Private enterprise may offer unique tangible benefits, but as an abstract concept it could only appeal to a very narrow, highly ideological group of activist conservatives. Examples abound of what John Kessel described as the "supremacy of ideology first, regardless of political consequences." This included criticizing reapportionment in Atlanta, "a city long hostage to rural Georgia," calling the War on Poverty "'as phony as the three dollar bill'" in West Virginia's Appalachian country, and an attack on farm subsidies in Fargo, North Dakota, "the border between the Midwest and the West, his major political targets."[35] Goldwater's negative attacks implied that these policies' ideological deviance from conservatism was a sufficient basis to oppose them.

Goldwater's dismissal of an interest-based explanation of conservatism need not only be inferred from these missteps. He explicitly derided a campaign that appealed to concrete interests. Goldwater let on that he was aware of an alternative path, but he rejected it. In a Madison Square Garden speech in the final week of the campaign, he mused aloud:

> I wonder, my fellow Americans, if you think I don't *know* what views would be most popular. Do you think I don't know what Labor wants to hear, what

[34] "Goldwater Asks End to Federal Grants," *St. Petersburg Times* (FL), September 17, 1964.

[35] John Kessel, *The Goldwater Coalition* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), 197.

> Management wants to hear, what housewives and diplomats and white collar workers want to hear? Do you honestly think after all these years in politics, that I don't *know* the easy way to get votes? The promises to make? The subjects to talk about--and the ones to avoid? . . . One thing we all know, and I assure you I do, that [there is] a much easier way to get votes than in my way. [There] always has been. It's political daddyism and it's as old as demagoguery and despotism.[36]

Goldwater's criticism of interest group politics lay at the heart of his conservative philosophy, but as a consequence, he associated any explanations of material benefits with the paternalism he associated with liberalism. But all Goldwater could appeal to was the righteousness of conservative ideology. That kind of pure and principled argument could only reach those highly informed voters—elites and activists—who already understood this intellectual critique. Goldwater's moral opprobrium was an abstract concept that could do little to explain conservatism to those not already committed to it. Goldwater's rhetoric was ideological because he relied upon abstract principles to unite his coalition, he spoke only to narrow and homogeneous groups within the party, he sought to polarize the electorate along liberal-conservative lines, and he stubbornly refused to propose specific policies of his own, or to explain the benefits of the few he did propose. In short, Goldwater foreclosed the possibility of consensus because he could not offer reasons beyond restating the content of ideological orthodoxy.

Goldwater on the Defensive

Goldwater's ideological approach was also evident in one of the most prominent features of the 1964 campaign: Goldwater's "gaffes." These gaffes were the result of his propensity to muse openly about conservatism in a way that reinforced its the negative caricatures. For example, his discussing conventional nuclear war while trying to explain

[36] Ibid., 215.

the significance of a focus on victory, or making Social Security a voluntary program while discussing the pecuniary liabilities of the welfare state, reflected his careless meandering into controversial topics and the problems associated with ideological rhetoric. First, since he neglected to explain the benefits of conservative policies, his opponents were happy to do so themselves, and Goldwater's gaffes provided ample opportunity. Thus, Goldwater never seemed to move beyond his careless musings—many of which he uttered in January or during the primary campaign—because the gaffes filled a vacuum that should have been filled by his own explanations of conservative policy. In lieu of those explanations, Goldwater's gaffes reverberated. But the gaffes reflect a second aspect of Goldwater's ideological rhetoric, his reliance on a homogeneous group of "true believers." As journalist Robert Novak surmised, "Goldwater had pulled himself up from obscurity to national political status over the past decade as a preacher of conservatism before mass audiences of faithful supporters in banquet halls and auditoriums—audiences that were convinced in the first place and were given no opportunity to cross-examine the Senator in the second place."[37] The gaffes themselves were the musings of a man accustomed to speaking to those who already agreed with him and of one who gave little thought to explaining his politics to those who did not already accept it.

Foreign policy. Criticism of Goldwater's foreign policy perhaps damaged him the most. Generally he argued for a more aggressive foreign policy dedicated to peace through victory, instead of the more prevaricating liberal peace through accommodation and rapprochement. But Goldwater struggled from start to end to persuasively deliver this

[37] Robert Novak, *The Agony of the GOP* (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1965), 306.

message. A Harris Poll during the Republican New Hampshire primary found that of the top five issues upon which voters most disagreed with Goldwater, the first four were foreign policy issues, including withdrawing from the UN, increasing NATO access to nuclear weapons, theF assertion that American ICBMs were not dependable, and opposition to the atom bomb test ban treaty. On some issues, Goldwater was strikingly unpopular: 84% of people polled disagreed with Goldwater on the UN, while 88% disagreed with increasing NATO access to nuclear weapons (an issue I address in more detail momentarily).[38] Later in the election, LBJ would codify perceptions of Goldwater's with the infamous "Daisy" commercial, which juxtaposed a young girl picking petals from a flower with a nuclear countdown and explosion in the background. Though Goldwater believed he simply reiterated Eisenhower's winning message of "Peace through Strength," he utterly failed to explain that as effectively as Eisenhower did. Far from it, Goldwater consistently marred this foreign policy message, and instead merely appeared belligerent and impulsive.

Take, for instance, an example from the New Hampshire primary, during which Goldwater stumbled into many foreign policy imbroglios that would shape his first impression with the nation. In one instance, Goldwater accused Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara of "[lying] to the American people about [the dependability of American] weapons systems," claiming that American ICBMs were unprepared for a nuclear war. Goldwater's cavalier talk about nuclear war, his suggestion of deception, and his apparent eagerness to upgrade American ICBM capacity suggested a kind of nonchalance about nuclear conflict that he would struggle to rid himself of during the

[38] Louis Harris, "Lodge Would Win N.H. if Name On Ballot," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 2, 1964.

whole campaign. Following that, in the same interview, Goldwater seemingly called for a reprisal of a Bay of Pigs type invasion of Cuba. Ironically, however, he did so in an attempt to diminish perceptions of his belligerence. Thus, he began by saying that he "'never' [thought] a United States invasion of Cuba was necessary," but maintained that "'something has to be done to get this Communist base out of our back yard,'" before going on to suggest "train[ing] 'exiles and mercenaries' who might stage their own invasion."[39] On Cuba in particular he raised alarms during the primary. In January of that year, Castro cut off the freshwater supply to the American base in Guantanamo Bay. Goldwater suggested that he would respond by sending a Marine detachment to compel Castro to restore the water supply. His readiness for military confrontation was unsettling, and exploited by his rivals. In another interview apropos to Cuba, Goldwater shared his opinion that the United States should never have ended its naval blockade after the missile crisis, and that it should reinstate it "to prevent the Communist nation from importing weapons and exporting subversion to Latin America."[40] Goldwater rattled off so many controversial comments that his bellicosity ultimately obscured his desire for peace through strength.

Goldwater damaged himself most when he spoke about nuclear weapons. In one important example, a theme he returned to repeatedly, Goldwater stated his desire that NATO commanders should have access to low-yield tactical nuclear weapons. In January of 1964, Goldwater stated in a *Life* magazine interview that "'[a]ll NATO forces stationed in Europe . . . should be equipped with, and trained in the use of nuclear

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[39] Charles Mohr, "Goldwater Says Not All the Poor Merit Public Aid," January 16, 1964.

[40] "Blockade Cuba, Goldwater Urges," *The Milwaukee Journal*, February 9, 1964.

weapons, particularly of the so-called battle field or tactical variety.'"[41] In fact, NATO commanders had had authority to use tactical nuclear weapons since the Eisenhower administration, and these weapons had become a more prevalent part of American military strategy as a result of President Kennedy's "Flexible Response" initiative. Nevertheless, Goldwater's casual discussion of easing access to nuclear weapons and easing the strictures against using them within conventional combat meant that he "came across in the media as a zealot eager to provoke nuclear confrontation."[42] In spite of the backlash these comments engendered, Goldwater repeated the call after getting his party's nomination, noting in August to a VFW meeting that America must develop a way to "'provide NATO with its own stock of small, tactical, nuclear battlefield weapons—what may truly be called conventional nuclear weapons."[43] Goldwater even spoke about specific ways he would use the weapons, such as in an interview he gave for television where he suggested that the military utilize "low yield atomic weapons" to defoliate Vietnamese jungles and disrupt North Vietnamese supply lines.[44] Goldwater failed to consider how such a public discussion of what were admittedly conventional military tactics would be perceived, especially after the Cuban missile crisis.

This provided ample opportunity for Goldwater's opponents—first liberal Republicans, then Democrats—to stress how lightly Goldwater took the prospect of nuclear war, with all the danger such carelessness implied. Goldwater's sensationalistic

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[41] "Goldwater Favors Sharing Atom Arms with NATO Allies," *New York Times*, January 14, 1964.

[42] Peter Iverson, *Barry Goldwater: Native Arizonan* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 109.

[43] John A. Goldsmith, "Goldwater Calls for Arming NATO with Nuclear Weapons," *Middlesboro Daily News*, August 25, 1964.

[44] Novak, *The Agony of the G.O.P.,* 402.

ponderings allowed his opponents to characterize him as "trigger happy." During the Republican Convention, the Scranton camp widely distributed a letter addressed to Goldwater and signed by Scranton himself, which assailed Goldwater's foreign policy. Articulating a criticism that Johnson and Democrats would adopt, Scranton accused Goldwater of "too often casually prescrib[ing] nuclear war as a solution to a troubled world."[45] During the campaign, vice-presidential candidate Humphrey predicted a Johnson victory because "most Americans don't want a president 'who has a nervous finger on the nuclear trigger.'"[46] Johnson himself painted an ominous picture of nuclear war to emphasize that the idea of a conventional nuclear weapon would be inconceivable: "'The first nuclear exchange would kill 100 million Americans and more than 100 million Russians. . . . And when it was over our great cities would be in ashes and our fields would be barren and our industry would be destroyed and our American dreams would be vanished.'"[47] Democrats readily contrasted the horrors of nuclear war with Goldwater's suggestion that it should be easier to use nuclear weapons, and that the country should employ them more frequently in lower-level conflicts. Johnson's "Daisy" television commercial concluded with the foreboding tag-line set over an atomic explosion "the stakes are too high for you to stay home." A vote for Goldwater, Johnson and Humphrey reiterated, was a vote for nuclear holocaust.

Goldwater so poorly conceived the preferences of anyone beyond the conservative believers to whom he was accustomed to speaking, that when facing a

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[45] Barry Goldwater, *With No Apologies: The Personal and Political Memoirs of United States Senator Barry M. Goldwater* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1979) ,185.

[46] "Barry's 'Nervous Finger' Will Win For Johnson—Humphrey," *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, August 3, 1964.

[47] "LBJ Takes Exception to Barry," *The Florence Times Daily* (AL), September 8, 1964.

national audience he severely damaged his appeal to those not already convinced that toughness on communism was the only means to peace. Herein lies Goldwater's missed opportunity: "instead of emphasizing eight years of relative tranquility under Eisenhower's Republican leadership, he stressed the need for nuclear brinkmanship; instead of emphasizing NATO's success in keeping peace in Western Europe, he stressed its need for more control over nuclear weapons; instead of emphasizing Eisenhower's potential role in resolving the Vietnam conflict, he stressed victory through military escalation."[48] Rather than emphasizing the ways in which his conservative foreign policy more effectively produced the very benefits that liberals promised, he instead wandered into specific tactical proposals with little thought to how his speech would be perceived or used against him.

Domestic Policy. Goldwater also failed to temper and broaden his explanation of domestic policy, which created just as many problems. Just as the Republican primaries generated some of the most lasting and damaging first impressions with respect to foreign policy, so too did they create persistent headaches regarding domestic policy. For instance, Goldwater had long criticized welfare programs both for poor management and for pecuniary insolvency, but also for diminishing self-reliance and thereby damaging the American social fabric. In this vein, one of Goldwater's most injurious election year speculations was suggesting that Social Security could be made voluntary. It provided an opportunity to demonstrate Goldwater's alleged intent to dismantle the New Deal entirely, as well as his callousness toward the suffering of the poor. Goldwater labored

[48] Jeffrey J. Matthews, "To Defeat a Maverick: The Goldwater Candidacy Revisited, 1963-1964," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27 (1997): 673.

throughout the campaign to dispel the idea that his musing on voluntary Social Security revealed an imminent intention to dismantle the program, or that he would indulge this musing once in office. For instance, in a jaunt through Pennsylvania Goldwater received reports from state party leaders that "in the depressed regions through which he traveled from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh his biggest problem is a fear of voters that he wants to scrap Social Security." He dedicated his time in the area pledging his support to Social Security, and "[n]ot only did he beat the drums" in his speeches, but his "aides moved through the crowds distributing printed statements of his position."[49] Goldwater's gaffes therefore caused him to stray from his message, as he travelled central Pennsylvania touting his commitment to the premier social welfare program of the New Deal.

Goldwater's public discussion of a voluntary social security program was almost as infamous as his discussion of nuclear holocaust—Johnson produced a second television commercial of a hand tearing up a social security card as a narrator reminded viewers of Goldwater's suggestion. In fact, Johnson simply adopted the argument from Goldwater's Republican primary opponents. In New Hampshire Governor Rockefeller said that a voluntary approach to Social Security "would bankrupt the system and 'be a personal disaster to millions of senior citizens and their families.'"[50] In October, Johnson said that while Goldwater wanted to make social security voluntary, "our answer is that old age—and the sicknesses that comes with it—is not voluntary. We believe in more insurance, not less."[51] The primary campaign and the general election campaign were peppered with references to Goldwater's desire to dismantle Social Security. It made no

[49] "Barry Says He Supports Social Security," *St Petersburg Times*, October 30th, 1964.

[50] "Social Security Stand of Goldwater is Rapped," *The Telegraph* (NH), February 28, 1964.

[51] "Goldwater's Social Issues Vote Scored," *The Spokesman Review* (WA), October 28, 1964.

difference that Goldwater presented the idea as a way of making Social Security solvent—thereby rescuing it from the ruinous path he believed it was travelling. Goldwater had no clear policy proposal to fix the program, and in conjunction with his persistent degradation of appealing to people's interests, Goldwater had little basis to rebut the claim that he wished Social Security's demise. Consequently, his campaign merely tried to control the damage of his errant comments, rather than presenting his own viable policy.

Goldwater routinely made comments that seemed to reinforce his opponents' assertions that conservatism was a program of Spartan austerity endured for the sake of an abstract, and callous, conservative ideology. For instance, while delivering a speech to the Economic Club of New York in January—days after announcing his candidacy—Goldwater postulated that "most people who have no skill have no education for the same reason—low intelligence or low ambition." Goldwater appeared to suggest that attitude, work ethic, and intelligence engendered poverty, thereby implying that the pauper warranted his indigence. He went on to say that "[i]n a society where the vast majority of people live on a standard that is envied by all other nations, it must be appropriate to inquire whether *the attitude or action* of the small group not participating in the general prosperity has anything to do with the situation."[52] Goldwater's suggestion that poverty resulted from individual apathy or low intelligence contrasted vividly with Johnson's War on Poverty program, which he announced the same week as Goldwater made these comments.

[52] Barry Goldwater, "Economic Realities," January 15, 1964.

Goldwater, in contrast, appeared more interested in poking holes in the liberal ideology that concocted the War on Poverty, and affirming the conservative ideology of individual initiative, than he did in addressing social problems associated with poverty. Like his Social Security musings, he never really abandoned this line of criticism himself. In September, for instance, he suggested that receiving federal aid made people more likely to become criminals, and that the ubiquity of the dole explained the country's law and order problem: "[i]f it is entirely proper . . . for government to take from some to give to others then won't some be led to believe that they can rightfully take from anyone who has more than they"[53] These comments, especially in the absence of a concrete public policy program, made it appear that there was little more to Goldwater and conservatism than contempt, an impression that his opponents were more than happy to amplify in order to use them against him.

Goldwater also called attention to his own neglect of substantive public policies by fixating on ad hominem attacks on his opponents. Most often, Goldwater assailed his Democratic opponents for being covert socialists. He railed that he was "'scared stiff' at the prospect of Senator Hubert H. Humphrey ever becoming president" because of Humphrey's role in founding the Americans for Democratic Action, which, as Goldwater said, "'is the only group of socialists I know of organized in America today except for the socialist party."[54] Of Johnson, he said that "'He won't be satisfied with just an election – he wants to be crowned. . . . He wants total trust, total love, total power over your lives. . . . [He is the] most power hungry man in American politics," whose election would "'lead

[53] Charles Mohr, "Goldwater Links The Welfare State To Rise in Crime," September 10, 1964.

[54] "Goldwater Fears Socialism Near; He's 'Scared Stiff' of Humphrey," *The Milwaukee Journal*, October 26, 1964.

to a socialist America," and who has already led "this plunge into socialism, this careening, 90-mile-per hour ride to ruin, in violation of every limit that the majority of Americans want to set."[55] He suggested in another address that the Democratic Party "would change its name to the 'Socialist' party because 'that's what they are,'" while the President has "an insatiable thirst for power" and "'whether he likes it or not, or even knows it, he's backing socialism.'"[56] These comments were ubiquitous in Goldwater's stump speeches.

Goldwater's focus on Johnson and Humphrey as ideological opponents simply reinforced Goldwater's own fixation on ideological arguments; castigating his opponents as ideologues only made him appear more rigidly ideological. Whether it was due more to Goldwater's campaign misstatements, or to his dismissal of an interest-based appeal grounded in public policy, Goldwater's campaign appealed solely to an abstract ideology that could resonate only with the narrow and homogeneous group that spurred the movement to nominate Goldwater in the first place; as a campaign, it did little to foster an electoral majority.

Conclusion: A Party of One

Whether in foreign policy or domestic policy, Goldwater's campaign was marked by the candidate's propensity for careless comments, followed by his defensive efforts to control the damage caused by those comments. The comments themselves reflected two things. First, they indicated that Goldwater gave little thought to explaining conservatism to non-conservatives, and to those he needed to persuade. He spoke as if his national

[55] "Goldwater Claims Johnson Seeks Power Over All Lives," *The Telegraph-Herald*, October 26, 1964.

[56] "Goldwater Says LBJ Heads the 'Socialist' Party," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 9, 1964.

audience—those reading newspaper articles from stump speeches—was the same as the largely homogeneous group of conservative grassroots activists or conservative intellectual elites that propelled him to prominence in the first place. But the careless comments also revealed the extent to which his policy had no foundation in a concrete program of public policy. Lacking a public policy program, Goldwater had nothing positive to present, and consequently fell back into a comfortable, ideological critique of the dangers in liberalism. And his lack of a public policy program, again, points back to his ideological commitment to ideology, or his principled objection to appealing to the specific interests of the coalitional groups he intended to target.

In sum, Goldwater's misstatements and his vague public policy programs illustrate that he imposed an abstract ideology upon the electorate, instead of explaining how the principles undergirding that ideology could unite a diverse coalition. Without public policy proposals, he had no tangible way to unite the diverse interests of different groups by demonstrating how one set of principles could comprehend many different interests. He needed specific policy proposals to show how conservative philosophy engendered specific benefits. He therefore failed to appeal to multiple interests, and weave them together behind a common conviction in a conservative public philosophy. But Goldwater eschewed this consensus-building approach, and instead espoused conservatism as a blanket and indiscriminate set of principles. For those who understood the contempt for "peace at any price" or the foolishness of expending government funds that reinforced the indolence of a small minority of American city dwellers, Goldwater spoke the truth. But for those who had not accepted these maxims, Goldwater's careless conservative musings or his ad hominem attacks were exactly what his opponents

portrayed them as: an ideologue more concerned with his ideology than with the material interests of American citizens.

CHAPTER SIX

Lyndon Johnson: President of All the People

Introduction: Lyndon Johnson's Pluralistic Coalition

Lyndon Johnson's experienced spectacular successes during the five years of his presidency. He vitalized Kennedy's languishing New Frontier, while at the same time he pushed beyond the frontier toward the Great Society. But Johnson's exit from the Oval Office was almost as remarkable as his success. Only four years after the greatest landslide in presidential history and one of the most prolific records of legislative accomplishments, Johnson did not seek a second term and Richard Nixon, by a slim margin, beat out the Democratic candidate, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, as well as former southern Democrat turned third-party candidate George Wallace. Scholars and commentators have scrutinized Johnson's fall from such great heights, the quixotic promises of the Great Society, and the debilitating escalation of the Vietnam War.[1] In this chapter, I provide a systematic account of how Johnson's pragmatic rhetorical leadership fostered coalitional conflict which, over the course of his administration, destabilized his presidency and the Democratic partisan regime.

Within the literature on the presidency and the parties, two prominent models have sought to explain the demise of Lyndon Johnson, both of which represent a species of the American political development approach. Stephen Skowronek's explanation of

[1] Consider, for instance, a few of the monographs composed about the paradox of Johnson's presidency: Joseph A. Califano, *The Triumph & Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson, The White House Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991); Irving Bernstein, *Guns or Butter: The Presidency of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991);

LBJ depends upon cyclical historical patterns of "political time," while Sidney Milkis represents a "modern presidency" approach that depends upon the linear development of the president as an administrative, rather than party leader. For Skworonek, Johnson typifies the paradoxes of an affiliated president in a resilient regime; the Johnson presidency manifested the conflict between the "authority . . . to change the regime he is presumably in office to affirm."[2] His rapid decline from power, moreover, demonstrated how the secular changes that pooled increasing executive power in the presidency exacerbated the tension inhering in the position of the orthodox innovator. Sidney Milkis also focuses on the growth of administrative power to show that Johnson was a key figure in the developmental process whereby modern presidents displaced the political party as the apparatus for supporting the presidency and replace it with a powerful administrative apparatus.[3] But neither Skowronek nor Milkis spend much time with Johnson's rhetoric as a way of explaining his downfall, though, as this chapter shows, it contributed independently to the destabilization of the Democratic regime. For instance, both focus on Johnson's non-partisan leadership, though that had less to do with the conflict between administration and party as institutions, or with the conflict between regime affirmation and creation, as it did with a tactical response to Barry Goldwater's hyper-partisan, polarizing campaign. My own model of rhetorical leadership provides an rigorous account of how Johnson's specific actions—not the developing circumstances around him—contributed to the coalitional instability of his party.

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[2] Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 327.

[3] Sidney M. Milkis, *The President and the Parties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), ch. 8.

Neither model provides a rigorous account of the character of, or the context for Lyndon Johnson's campaign rhetoric. Much like William McKinley, Johnson ran for election opposite a nascent opposition party, whose candidate exemplified the characteristics of ideological rhetorical leadership. Consequently, as Skowronek ably points out, Johnson reasserted but modified the principled commitments of the regime party that were first established by Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. But presidents in Johnson's position—responding to a nascent and ideological opposition—tend to counter their opponent's ideology with pragmatism in order to draw together elements of his own partisan coalition with those elements of the second party that are put off by the changes within their own party. Accordingly, we find that Johnson's leadership typified all four characteristics of pragmatic rhetoric. His rhetorical appeal largely depended upon self-interest, he downplayed Goldwater's attempt to polarize the parties and cast himself as non-partisan, he spoke in such a way as to foster a pluralistic coalition, and he was vague on specific policies that might divide his coalition. Although Johnson won by a landslide, his pragmatic rhetoric accommodated such heterogeneous preferences on the basis of self-interest alone, and when those interests diverged in his presidency, Johnson had little basis to hold his coalition together. Consequently, Johnson's coalition ruptured four short years later, leading to Richard Nixon's 1968 election and the destabilization of the partisan regime.

In this chapter, I describe the principled foundation for the Great Society, and the ways it reflected an evolving and new liberalism. Following a description of Johnson's principled vision, I turn to describe the thoroughly pragmatic rhetoric that Johnson actually used on the campaign, focusing specifically upon his appeal to vague, uplifting

national sentiments and his attacks on Goldwater by conjuring vivid and fearful images to manifest his irresponsibility. In the final section, I turn to the Johnson administration to show how his rhetoric invited coalitional conflict which deepened over the course of his term. I focus on the advancement of the Great Society and the escalation of the Vietnam War; the former repudiated Johnson's claim to fiscal conservatism, while the latter radicalized anti-war liberals. As a result, liberals dissatisfied with the dubious results of the Great Society and repulsed by Vietnam eventually transmuted the Great Society into a more radical and anti-establishment critique called the New Politics. In the 1968 election, these elements diverged further to the left and the right, cleaving Johnson's centrist coalition. Johnson's most vocal New Politics critics, Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, challenged Johnson's claim to the party's nomination before he abruptly announced he would not continue to compete in 1968. Meanwhile, disillusionment on the right over inflation, bureaucratic inefficiency, and lawlessness drove George Wallace's third-party campaign and Nixon's "Silent Majority" campaign. In sum, the very pragmatism that fostered Johnson's massive electoral victory also invited such principled incoherence that the exigencies of his administration strained and ultimately broke his coalition.

Johnson's Vision, the Great Society, and the Democratic Coalition

The Johnson administration represented a turning point in Democratic thought and the composition of the Democratic coalition. Johnson was the first president of the post-industrial, post-material, or universalist Democratic Party.[4] The social circumstances

[4] The term "post-industrial" was employed by Everett Carl Ladd in *Transformations of the American Party System* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978), chs. 4 and 5. John Gerring uses

and context differed significantly between post-material liberalism and New Deal liberalism, and those circumstances affected the partisan commitments of the old and the new liberalism. The new liberalism reflected the extraordinary economic growth and prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s, while the old liberalism reflected the economic deprivation of the 1930s and 1940s. As John Gerring put it, "[a] psychology of plentitude replaced the previous generation's anxiety over scarcity. . . . An emphasis on growth thus replaced the zero-sum nature of Populist economic theorizing."[5] The new liberalism focused less on curbing the powers of the "malefactors of great wealth," and instead more on the social concerns of an economically diverse coalition. More specifically, it assumed liberal economics "solved" the problem of scarcity and so it turned to address the widening anxiety and malaise of a consumerist, abundant society.

Why was it that liberals believed that the problems of scarcity had been solved? The New Deal economic program transformed materialism and consumption into something akin to civic virtues, which endowed government with a responsibility to pursue programs that fostered the individual's power to consume. While the politics of the New Deal encouraged ever-increasing levels of consumption, sociological changes like the baby boom, an influx in college enrollments, and rapid technological developments worked together to bolster mass consumption; it was easier and cheaper to consume than ever before. Household appliances, automobiles, higher education, and scores of products formerly reserved for upper-income individuals proliferated as individual income went up. The suburbs boomed. Far from worry about basic material

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the term "universalist" to describe Democratic ideology between 1952 and 1992 in *Party Ideologies in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), ch. 7.

[5] Gerring, *Party Ideologies*, 237.

subsistence, the 1960s ushered in an ever-greater degree of material comfort, convenience, and individualism to American life. From 1945 to 1960, the Dow Jones Average increased by approximately 400%, and in the five years from 1960 to 1965 it increased by approximately 150%. Between 1947 and 1973 and controlling for inflation, "the median family income about doubled between . . . increasing from $5,665 to $11,120." Furthermore, "[t]he percentage of families earning $10,000 and over, again in these same constant dollars, quadrupled—from 15 to 60 percent—over this quarter century span."[6]

But this new affluence created a spiritual discontent in American society. Americans now struggled for moral satisfaction. As Evertt Carl Ladd put it simply, "Americans have begun to learn the larger societal truth of the old polite cliché that 'money doesn't buy happiness.'"[7] Journalist Theodore White, observing the 1964 election, noted of the national mood or psyche: "it was as if a radioactive dust, called money, was in the air, invisible but everywhere, addling or mutating old habits of life. . . . U.S. crime in the one year rose 15 percent . . . . syphilis was rising, from 6,251 cases in 1957 to 22,733 in the year ending June 30th, 1964. Dryly, the [Public Health Service] . . . without editorial comment, ascribed it to a decline in morals among young people. Drinking was up, reported another group: 71 percent of all adults in America now drank hard liquor, and among doctors, lawyers, journalists, and professional people the

[6] Ladd, *Transformations of the American Party System*, 196.

[7] Ibid., 202.

effective figure was approximately 100 percent."[8] Society's ills were not solved, but they appeared transformed from material ills to social ones.

Shifting the Democratic Coalition

The New Deal coalition began to shift as the economic conditions which forged their bonds began to change. The political status of the labor union in the Democratic coalition was one area of remarkable change. The New Deal elevated the union to major political influence, and dramatically increased its membership, but by the mid-1960s labor lost considerable political clout. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 scaled back some of the privileges granted by the Wagner Act, such as outlawing the closed shop, allowing states to pass "Right-to-Work" laws, and restricting unions' electioneering capabilities. Union membership declined during the 1960s as working-class Americans came to enjoy material success that dampened their reform spirit and replaced it with more conservative, status quo-preserving sentiments; "the unionized labor force has moved up the socioeconomic ladder. For this group, the victory over economic privation has been won. Producing a wonderfully American semantic contradiction, this segment of the *working class* had become *middle-class*."[9] As workers within the labor movement became more bourgeois, intellectuals and reformers became more liberal and viewed labor with suspicion, seeing "the unions as little more than a self-aggrandizing interest group, no longer a lever for progressive change."[10] Democratic leaders, cognizant of

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[8] Theodore White, *The Making of the President—1964* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 322-323.

[9] Ladd, *Transformation of the American Political System*, 193.

[10] Nelson Lichtenstein, "Pluralism, Postwar Intellectuals, and the Demise of the Union Idea," *The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism*, ed. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 85.

labor's declining clout and credibility, distanced themselves from the once powerful coalitional partner. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Democrats became sensitive to accusations that their party stood for special privilege: Adlai Stevenson defensively observed "'[t]hey describe me as a captive candidate. They say I am a 'captive' of the city bosses, and then the CIO.'"[11] Thus, as labor was degraded in the public mind, Democratic presidential candidates became "increasingly reluctant . . . to identify themselves publicly with the cause of labor;" meanwhile "Republicans lambasted the CIO as the secret power behind the Democratic throne, a bastion of special privilege."[12] The economic conditions which conduced to populist rhetoric empowered the labor union, but as those conditions evolved, liberals abandoned populism, and the typical coalitional groups associated with it.

Meanwhile, southern Democrats steadily moved away from the Democratic Party. In 1948 Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrats won over a million popular votes and 39 electoral votes. Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, and Nixon in 1960 experienced limited gains in the rim South. Goldwater won all the states in the Deep South. Republican competitiveness in the South stemmed in part from the commercialization of the South, as well as the fact that the Democratic Party increasingly was dominated by northern liberals. Meanwhile, other New Deal mainstays in the North—working class Protestants and ethnic Catholics—steadily declined in their support of the Democratic Party: "Blue-collar whites, for instance, 12 percent more Democratic than the populace generally in the 1940 election, 12 percent more Democratic in 1948, by 1968 gave the Democrats a proportion

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[11] Adlai E. Stevenson, *Major Campaign Speeches of Adlai E. Stevenson* (New York, Random House, 1953), 15-16, in Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America*, 244.

[12] Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America*, 251.

of their ballots only 3 points higher than the entire electorate, and in 1972 were actually *4 points less Democratic than all voters*."[13] Just as striking, as the lower socio-economic classes of the New Deal ascended into the middle-class, suburban, higher socio-economic classes began to identify with liberalism. Ladd describes a "curvilinear pattern, with the top more Democratic than the middle but the middle less Democratic than the bottom."[14] But if lower-status whites moved up, lower-status blacks did not experience the same movement; they "disproportionately [were] in the lower socioeconomic strata and at the same time [were] very highly supportive of change. The long history of discriminatory treatment to which blacks have been subjected readily explains their generalized aversion to the status quo and their generalized commitment to extending equality."[15] Thus, the prosperity of post-war, 1960s America accompanied secular shifts within the electorate, wherein liberalism lost its populist, working-class antagonism toward wealth, and instead made gains with the top and the bottom—the wealthy and the poor.

New Principles for a New Party

The shifting social circumstances and coalitional composition of the Democratic Party affected a change in the ideas that animated the party and its political programming. Liberalism increasingly emphasized social change, not economic issues. Liberals turned their focus to the quality of life for all Americans, but especially marginalized minority groups (the clearest examples are the civil rights push for blacks and the War on Poverty for the very poor). Arthur Schlesinger Jr. contrasted New Deal "quantitative liberalism,"

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[13] Ladd, *Transformation of the American Party System*, 234. Emphasis in the original.

[14] Ibid., 240.

[15] Ibid., 212.

which fought economic hardship, with "qualitative liberalism," which fought "spiritual unemployment as [quantitative liberalism] once fought economic unemployment. It also turned to the quality of popular culture and the character of lives to be lived in our abundant society.'"[16]

Johnson's vision of a Great Society epitomized this transition from the old liberalism to the new liberalism. In his May 1964 University of Michigan speech announcing the Great Society, Johnson began by distinguishing the contemporary problems from those of the past, when the country had "labored to settle and to subdue a continent" so as to "create an order of plenty for all of our people." But government aimed at what was low if its activity only sought to assure economic subsistence. "A great nation," Johnson explained, did not "flower . . . from wealth and power, but from a society which spurs [individuals] to the fullness of their genius."[17] Of course, Roosevelt had explained that his economic goals were the starting point of enhancing the citizen's quality of life, but that the citizen himself was responsible for achieving those higher goals. To the contrary, Johnson contended that while Americans were "in the midst of abundance," government should not limit itself to economic questions because economic freedom—as Johnson presented it—was not freedom at all so long as "man walks oppressed by forces which menace and confine his quality of life."[18] Thus, just as FDR explained how the market alone failed to provided economic freedom, which warranted a

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[16] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Liberalism," *Saturday Review* 8 (June 1957), 11-12; as quoted by Daniel DiSalvo, *Engines of Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 53.

[17] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," May 22, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on August 23, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26262.

[18] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 12, 1966, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on August 23, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28015.

positive role for the government to assure the material subsistence that engendered economic freedom, so too did LBJ explain that if the civil society, in the midst of material abundance, failed to offer higher meaning and satisfaction, this failure thereby warranted the state to assure the quality of life that engendered spiritual satisfaction. For Johnson, the state itself fostered community, and in making this argument, he dismissed the old liberal argument that egalitarianism protected economic rights in order to foster civil society.

Having achieved material plenty, the new goals of American life were distinctly post-material and spiritual: "to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization." Johnson presented Americans with the choice of whether the undeniably successful progress of the last thirty years would be "the servant of our needs" or whether society would be "buried under unbridled growth." The Great Society did not seek to provide material security—economic freedom—but far more ambitiously "abundance and liberty for all." After scarcity, government was to afford citizens' "leisure" as an opportunity to "build and reflect," and save them from the existential specters of "boredom and restlessness." Government also was meant to foster a society where humanity "honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race." Finally, government after scarcity meant that ending "poverty and racial injustice" required distinctive social, not economic transformations.[19] Johnson's Great Society speech crystalized new liberalism's qualitative, not economic, concerns.

The Great Society represented and heralded a new liberalism that built upon the economic advancements of the New Deal while quietly rebuking its parochial outlook.

[19] Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," May 22, 1964.

The new, social emphasis in Johnson's liberalism reflected the new realities of widespread wealth. Attacking economic oligarchs had more traction during the Depression than it did during the 1960s, when prosperity, not poverty, pervaded American society. By transforming liberalism into a social movement, Johnson and other new liberals could avoid attacking the economic interests of their own coalition. Even the War on Poverty, which addressed a distinctly economic issue, focused on remedying the "distinctive cultural profile" of the poor, referring to the "way of life pass[ed] on from generation to generation to generation, characterized by unstable families, high rates of illegitimacy, low levels of voting and political participation, poor self-esteem, and traumatic childhood experiences."[20] The Great Society sought to update liberal principles of egalitarian nationalism to the new realities of American society, and in so doing brought to American consciousness new problems that required new solutions.

The Johnson Campaign: Unity, Prosperity, and Peace

The Great Society represented Johnson's foundation in principled arguments about what makes America good, and the relationship between government and civil society achieving that good. Interestingly, however, Johnson's campaign for the presidency, though at times referencing Great Society proposals, did little to reiterate his principled arguments for new liberal policies and programs. In practice, Johnson's campaign rhetoric reflected the characteristics of pragmatic presidential rhetoric: he relied upon self-interest to explain the purpose of his coalition and persuade groups to support him; he downplayed Goldwater's attempt to polarize the two parties by offering

[20] Bruce J Schulman, *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism: A Brief Biography with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2007), 104.

himself as the non-partisan, non-ideological candidate; rather than providing a coherent account of what united intra-party groups, he aggregated groups with vastly different preferences and neglected any purposive explanation for what they had in common other than that all would derive benefit from his presidency; finally, he relied on vague themes of unity, prosperity, and peace rather than specific and coherent policy and programmatic proposals. Johnson's rhetorical approach, in sum, sought to cultivate a coalition of interest stacked upon interest, with little regard to how those interests may conflict and pull Johnson in different directions. Johnson touted his ability to deliver policies favorable to nearly everyone, and such promises obscured his actual programmatic and policy intentions, leaving coalition members unprepared for the directions in which Johnson would take the nation. As Johnson pursued specific policies within his administration, those conflicts were laid bare, and Johnson's presidency and his party began a downward spiral into crippling factionalism and decay.

Johnson's Argument for Unity

Positive. Lyndon Johnson presented himself as the epitome of unity and cooperation. As a southern man with northeastern principles, Johnson eschewed sectional, group, or socio-economic distinctions in order to present himself as the shepherd for an "all-American party for all Americans." In several speeches, Johnson emphasized the non-ideological values and goals he pursued, which united all Americans, regardless of party identification. In his speech accepting the Democratic nomination, Johnson conveyed his non-partisanship by emphasizing people instead of party: a land of "prosperous people" and "reasonable men" had "no place for petty partisanship or

peevish prejudice." He sought to serve all men, and "[t]he needs of all can never be met by parties of the few. The needs of all cannot be met by a business party or a labor party, not by a war party or a peace party, not by a southern party or a northern party."[21] Similarly, in a late September stump speech, Johnson rebuked partisanship by emphasizing the values that, in belonging to all men and women, transcend parties: "There is a time for party and there is a place for partisanship," he lectured in a late September speech on the stump, "[b]ut there are times in the history of a Nation when higher values matter more than party, and there are greater issues than partisanship."[22]

In a slightly different example of Johnson's non-partisanship, he attempted to highlight how little party identification meant in an election pitting Johnson's human values against Goldwater's ideological extremism. He often argued that, between the two, Johnson himself and not his Republican opponent was closer in mind and goals to popular Republican president Dwight Eisenhower: "I looked up my record the other day on foreign policy matters, and I had voted with President Eisenhower three times as much as the Republican leader had voted with him."[23] In another example, Johnson boasted that he "voted for and . . . supported that Republican President more on his Republican program than some present members of the Republican Party did. And I never at any time called it by another name . . . you never heard from the lips of a single member of the Democratic Party that President Eisenhower's program was just a 10-cent model of the

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[21] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks Before the National Convention Upon Accepting the Nomination.," August 27, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on January 30, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26467.

[22] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in Hartford, Connecticut," September 28, 1964, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on August 9, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26536.

[23] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in Peoria at the Convention of the Illinois State Federation of Labor.," October 7, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on August 9, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26573.

New Deal."[24] This was a thinly veiled reference to Goldwater's widely-reported 1958 criticism that Eisenhower's budget proposal was nothing but a "dime-store New Deal." Johnson appealed across partisan and ideological lines to amass as wide and heterogeneous a coalition as possible, and he did so by explicitly diminishing the relevance of different principles or the goals of different parties.

Johnson's campaign speeches were so generic as to have no discernble audience, as one journalist observed of Johnson's Labor Day campaign address. Whereas each Democratic candidate before him—Harry Truman, Adlai Stevenson, and John Kennedy—used this address to deliver good partisan fighting speeches that spoke directly to the labor portion of the Democratic coalition, Johnson equivocated. "A careful reading of the President's opening campaign speech," the journalist observed, "shows that it could have been delivered equally effectively before a farm or business audience or a college commencement."[25] In that speech, Johnson mixed labor issues with a message of generic "brotherhood among men." Thus, he acknowledged that there were "issues which stir passion and conflicting interests," only to dismiss those differences on the basis of the "same hopes" that conflicting groups had "for themselves and their children." He did address the interests of labor specifically when he spoke of the need for "fair wages" to achieve prosperity, but he then immediately turned to suggest that labor has an interest in "fair profits" to create "rising employment," thereby identifying labor interests with management interests. He went on to tie together the preferences of farmers and city dwellers, bankers and laborers, who all benefit from economic growth. Johnson aimed, in

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[24] Johnson, "Remarks in Hartford, Connecticut," September 28, 1964.

[25] Ted Lewis, "Johnson's Speech Is Categorized," *The Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, WA), September 8, 1986.

sum, to emphasize "the common purpose of most Americans"—prosperity, justice, and peace—to highlight the "unity in our country."[26] Despite traditionally serving as a venue to emphasize the specific partisan commitment to labor interests, Johnson used his Labor Day address in Cadillac Square to diminish the unique interests of labor, equating labor's preferences with those of very diverse groups, including management, farmers, bankers, and urban dwellers. Johnson's pragmatic rhetoric appealed vaguely to the self-interest of all, but only by diminishing those preferences and ideas which make each group distinctive.

Negative. Johnson's unity campaign also entailed a harsh criticism of Goldwater's divisiveness, which was sometimes tacit and other times explicit. Johnson's emphasis on unity demonstrated the way that pragmatic presidents avoid inter-party polarization, and how they mute potential conflicts within the coalition by redirecting attention through personalistic attacks. Johnson advisor John Kenneth Galbraith cautioned LBJ "to stay away from any liberal-conservative debate because such a contest would only 'dignify Goldwater's position' and alienate the voters who did not want to be thought of as liberals."[27] Engaging Goldwater as a spokesman for conservatism would validate his contention that the 1964 election required all Americans to take stock of their ideological proclivities and make a choice based upon that evaluation. In his convention speech, for instance, Johnson avowed that the contest "is not between liberals and conservatives, it is not between party and party or platform and platform . . . It is between

[26] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in Cadillac Square, Detroit.," September 7, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on January 21, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26490.

[27] Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties,* 90.

those who welcome the future and those who turn away from its promises."[28] Unity itself was the first issue of the campaign, and it was an issue that made Goldwater especially vulnerable.

While Johnson eschewed a clear ideological contest, he offered the American people his own version of "a choice, not an echo." Avoiding Goldwater in direct ideological confrontation allowed him to isolate and caricature his opponent as an idiosyncratic radical, captured by fringe groups and interests. Accordingly, Johnson asked Americans to choose between two distinctly non-partisan, non-ideological alternatives: responsibility and irresponsibility. In a campaign stump speech in Hartford, Connecticut Johnson proclaimed that "no partisans can conceal the issue before America this year because that issue is responsibility." Putting himself above partisan and ideological conflict, he asserted that "[t]here are people who are trying to divide us now, trying to turn our course off sharply to the left, or trying to turn our course off sharply to the right." He went on to lament that responsibility versus irresponsibility "ought not to be the issue," and that it would not be the issue "if the responsible views of the responsible men in the responsible party were represented in this campaign." Johnson presented this election as unique because one party became so captured by radical extremism that Johnson and the Democrats stood not for Democratic policies *per se*, but for sane, responsible, and humane policies that would counter Goldwater's extreme and irresponsible proposals.

Johnson crystalized this image of Goldwater as a radical by casting himself as the true conservative, properly understood. Johnson contended that Goldwater's campaign

[28] Johnson, "Remarks Before the National Convention Upon Accepting the Nomination.," August 27, 1964

was predicated on a wholesale attack on the New Deal, and its programmatic legacy. Johnson sought to conserve the developments of the twentieth century, while Goldwater, he argued, would radically discard all those hard-earned accomplishments. He framed the choice starkly: "The issue of our domestic affairs is whether the whole course of American development up to this time is right or wrong."[29] In this way, Johnson appealed to the *status quo* conservatism of the country, and the voters' willingness to maintain established political practices: "we are not going to repeal these laws that we have been passing ever since the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt. We are going to keep them."[30] This was a powerful appeal to a broad and general self-interest that cut across economic and social distinctions, because the alternative to status quo conservatism, as Johnson presented it, was risking social, political, and economic upheaval for the purposes of a purist *economic* conservatism that objected in principle to government welfare, regardless of the immediate and practical consequences of acting on those objections.

But, just as promising unity obscured real differences that might divide the coalition, building coalitional support out of personal attacks against one's opponent does little to create a clear and positive consensus as a foundation for pursuing a political program. Robert Dallek reported, for instance, that, according to special assistant to the President Jack Valenti, "polls and conversations with newsmen and state political leaders [suggested that] 'our main strength lies not so much in the FOR Johnson but in the AGAINST Goldwater.'" Dallek went on to observe that "[a]bove all, the Democrats

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[29] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks at a "Salute to President Johnson" Dinner in Cleveland.," October 8, 1964. *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on February 20, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26579.

[30] Johnson, "Remarks in Peoria at the Convention of the Illinois State Federation of Labor," October 7, 1964

needed to encourage fear of Goldwater as 'unstable, impulsive, and reckless.'"[31] Johnson pragmatically focused on the material advantages he would offer as president, in this case, by defeating Goldwater. But, as Dallek observes, focusing on Goldwater's shortcomings ensured that people would vote for Johnson, but it would also obscure the positive reasons that they should support him, and continue to support him throughout his tenure. Johnson neglected to explain clear partisan principles and policies that could prepare the coalition for the coming actions of the administration.

Johnson's Argument for Prosperity

Johnson coupled his campaign with another theme that was almost as vague: prosperity. Johnson's prosperity campaign pragmatically appealed to the material self-interests of diverse groups. But it did so in two ways. First, Johnson simply stressed general, wide-spread prosperity as evidence of the non-partisan beneficence of Democratic policies; the appeal was generic in a way that could appeal to all groups, regardless of distinct preferences. Secondly, however, Johnson's prosperity rhetoric reflected the way pragmatic leadership specifically cultivated inter-party support by promising to deliver traditionally Republican policies and preferences, specifically lower taxes and a balanced budget. Together, Johnson's message of prosperity, like his message of unity, muted distinctions between groups in order to unite as large and heterogeneous a coalition as possible.

Johnson benefited from standing atop a remarkable wave of American prosperity, and he repeatedly reminded the American people that the country was experiencing "the

[31] Dallek, *Portrait of a President,* 183.

longest and largest period of prosperity in American history."[32] In his 1964 annual message to Congress, he boasted that "for the first time in history, we crossed the 70 million job mark" and that in "1963 our gross national product reached the $600 billion level—$100 billion higher than when we took office" and that "Wages and profits and family income are also at their highest levels in history." Of course, none of this implied that Johnson's work was complete, and indeed he presented them as an indication that he ought to be allowed to continue the historic march of economic prosperity: 5 million more jobs ought to be added, the GNP should be $30 billion higher and "4 million workers and 13 percent of our industrial capacity are still idle today."[33] Johnson's prosperity message emphasized generic self-interest instead of the principled arguments or distinct preferences unique to a Democratic coalition, and in this sense pragmatically appealed to as many groups as possible.

Johnson did, however, present two specific economic policies—tax cuts and a balanced budget. But both these proposals reflected Johnson's pragmatic attempt to blur partisan and ideological preferences. To do so, Johnson employed a liberal, Keynesian explanation for tax cuts, while also explaining them in terms that would resonate with traditionally Republican business interests. Thus, on one hand, he explained the power of tax cuts to contribute to consumption and encourage employment: "every month [cuts are] delayed dilutes their benefits in 1964 for consumption, for investment, and for

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[32] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in Portland, Maine, on the Steps of the City Hall.," September 28, 1964. Last accessed on August 9, 2013. , *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26539.

[33] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 8, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, Last accessed on August 9, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26787.

employment. . . . Our goal is to create more jobs.""[34] On the campaign trail, having successfully pushed the $11 million cut through Congress, he boasted in an address to the Convention of the United Steelworkers of America that his tax cut bill "expands purchasing power to meet our power to produce."[35] This tax-cut rationale tended to reinforce the Keynesian influence in liberalism, and its emphasis on increasing purchasing power and consumption among lower and middle-income Americans.

On the other hand, however, Johnson readily adopted a conservative rationale for tax cuts in order to appeal to traditionally Republican interests. Speaking to a group of businessmen attending a White House luncheon, Johnson explicitly described "[a]n ever-broadening consensus [among] conservative and liberal, labor and business, Republican[s] and Democrat[s]" behind his tax cuts, making clear that they represented conservative goals as much as liberal ones. Thus, he explained how his 1964 tax cut would "achieve a balanced budget out of the rising revenues of a healthy and prosperous economy"—the very policy that Barry Goldwater sought himself. Johnson's tax cut proposal, therefore, implied that Republicans need not vote for Goldwater to see their preferences enacted. Indeed, the difference between Goldwater and Johnson, as Johnson explained it, was not at the level of program, policy, or principle; instead, one saw tax cuts as a means of economic growth, and the other saw it as a means to impose austerity on the American people. Thus, he asserted that Goldwater proposed "reckless cutbacks of

[34] Johnson, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 8, 1964.

[35] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in Atlantic City at the Convention of the United Steelworkers of America," September 22, 1964, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on January 21, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26519.

expenditures to fit the shriveling tax revenues of a sick economy."[36] Tax cuts, as Johnson explained, were a policy that all Americans could share because, as Johnson implied, it accommodated distinctive preferences and principles of distinctive groups.

Johnson continued his balanced budget appeal to conservatives outside of the context of tax cuts. Johnson seized this issue in his first annual message to Congress in January of 1964. Johnson called on Congress to, amongst other things, enact "the most far-reaching tax cut of our time," advance the War on Poverty, pass Medicare, increase foreign aid, and "build more homes, more schools, more libraries, and more hospitals than any single session of Congress in the history of our Republic." Remarkably, Johnson claimed that all of these ambitious items—each of which would significantly affect the federal budget—could be accomplished "without any increase in spending. In fact, under the budget that I shall shortly submit, it can be done with an actual reduction in Federal expenditures and Federal employment." Johnson went on to promise to "cut our deficit in half," making it the "smallest budget since 1951."[37] Johnson implied that the policies liberals urged did not conflict with the policies that conservatives urged, and that he could significantly expand the activity of the federal government without sacrificing the fiscal responsibility that Republicans so often stressed when resisting liberal government activism.

Johnson continued his balanced budget theme during the campaign. In his remarks to the White House Luncheon for Businessmen, Johnson also offered several examples of his fiscal restraint and responsibility: "My first budget called for a reduction

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[36] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks at a White House Luncheon for Businessmen," October 6, 1964, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on August 13, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26566.

[37] Johnson, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 8, 1964.

in the level of expenditures--an event which happened only once before in the last 9 years. . . . Federal spending this year will be lower in relation to gross national product than at any time since 1951. . . . The Federal debt will be lower in relation to gross national product than at any time since 1941."[38] He consistently argued that Americans in fact need not choose between an activist federal government and fiscal responsibility in government (and prosperity throughout the nation).

A *New York Times* author noted in October that "[w]ithin a month of taking office as President, Mr. Johnson had seized the economy issue and was riding it hard. A few weeks later he was able to announce a reduced budget for fiscal 1965. Coupled with the passage of the tax-reduction program initiated by President Kennedy, that gave him the best opportunity to pick up support on the right—without losing the left—of any Democrat since Grover Cleveland."[39] Another contemporary account argued that Johnson's "chief bait to conservative businessmen is a promise to keep the budget below $100 billion for the second year running. If this is true, it means that the conservative revival is going to pay off no matter which party wins the election."[40] Promising to balance the budget indicated Johnson's pragmatic attempt to diminish the significance of substantive differences between the preferences of different partisan groups, or of fundamental principles and goals underlying those preferences. The effect, another journalist noted, was that Johnson reiterated the theme that he was "the 'President of all the people'" because his positions really meant "no more than the occupation of a

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[38] Johnson, "Remarks at a White House Luncheon for Businessmen.," October 6, 1964.

[39] Tom Wicker, "Four Tactics in the Johnson Campaign," *New York Times*, October 4, 1964.

[40] John Chamberlain, "Goldwater, LBJ Not Far Apart on Basic Ideas," *The Sumter Daily* (SC), October 5, 1964.

sprawling middle position in which Mr. Johnson keeps his left flank secure by pushing welfare and social programs (primarily civil rights), and extends his right flank with his economy drive and his perfervid appeals to businessmen and moderate Republicans."[41] Such rhetoric conduced to short-term electoral success, but indicated little foresight concerning the problems that he was creating for himself by building a coalition with vastly different expectations and conflicting preferences and principles.

Johnson's Argument for Peace

Positive. While unity and prosperity were the twin pillars of his domestic support, Johnson repeatedly presented himself as the embodiment of the American harmony in foreign affairs as well. Goldwater derided the Johnsonian goal of peace, and instead proposed that Americans should dedicate themselves to victory. But peace—like unity and prosperity in domestic politics—allowed Johnson to appeal simultaneously to the preferences of distinct, and even opposing groups. Specifically, Johnson's foreign policy comprehended both hawkish anticommunists from both parties and doves populating the Democratic Party. Hence Johnson explained that there were "two foundations" of his foreign policy: "strength and reason." Strength was for the anticommunists, while reason was for the doves.

Strength was Johnson's calculated appeal to co-opt Goldwater's foreign policy message just as he had his domestic, economic message. Johnson consistently presented himself as an unequivocal opponent of communism and advocate for military strength. In his address to the nominating convention, Johnson boasted that he and Kennedy bolstered

[41] Wicker, "Four Tactics in the Johnson Campaign," *New York Times*, October 4, 1964.

American military strength more than Eisenhower: "I report tonight that we have spent $30 billion more on preparing this Nation in the 4 years of the Kennedy administration than would have been spent if we had followed the appropriations of the last year of the previous administration." Johnson went on to assert, speaking "as President of the United States and as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces," that "American military strength is greater than the combined might of all the nations, in all the wars, in all the history of this planet" and that "our superiority is growing."[42] Johnson touted himself as the peace through strength candidate, and in this sense carried with him the legacy of John Kennedy's 1960 campaign, and his promise to lead a military ready to respond with promptness and resolve to defend American interests.

Beyond standing on his record of supporting the military, Johnson embraced moral rhetoric that pitted American freedom against Soviet totalitarianism, and its quest for global domination. In one instance, addressing a North Carolina audience, Johnson unequivocally championed American freedom in the face of expansionistic communist totalitarianism. While acknowledging that "we don't see everything alike," in North Carolina, in America, or in the world, everyone could recognize that "communism is on the march and freedom is on the march, and these two philosophies are at each other's throats." But in this mortal contest, Johnson proudly reported that, as far as the "record of freedom in the world" goes, "freedom has not lost a single nation to communism since we lost Cuba in 1959." Johnson reiterated these themes in the urban and old-Midwestern cities that harbored the avid anticommunism held by the ethnic, Eastern European-Americans, on whom Goldwater also counted for support. In Detroit, Johnson reiterated

[42] Johnson, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 8, 1964.

that no nation had fallen to communism in the four years of Democratic leadership, then asserted his work to "extend the domain of liberty," while going on to claim that "the solid unity of communism has begun to crack." He went on to say that "[w]e have worked to help the nations of Eastern Europe move toward independence," before concluding that "[i]t is not enough . . . just to want peace or to talk peace or to hope for peace. We must constantly work for peace. And I want you to know that today your Government is working for peace."[43] In Indianapolis he again struck the martial theme, proclaiming that "[f]reedom is marching in the world" and that communism was an "adversary" that "thrive[s] on the ancient enemies of mankind: disease, illiteracy, [and] ignorance," before noting once more that no nation has "joined the Communist orbit" since 1959.[44] Johnson's "strength" message allowed him to speak of the the Cold War as a moral conflict, and to acknowledge the threat to America's distinctive way of life presented by the Soviet desire for ideological and territorial domination.

Johnson also used the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August to reinforce this message. When American warships reported attacks from Vietnamese torpedo boats, Johnson immediately ordered American counter-attacks on Vietnamese targets. He also obtained the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which ultimately provided the legislative basis for Johnson's massive troop deployment in Vietnam. Johnson's actions spoke volumes, and he readily pointed to these actions on the stump as *bona fides* evidence of his hawkishness. In October, Johnson remarked to an Iowa audience: "Recently near Viet-Nam, in the Gulf of Tonkin, when they fired on our flag, we retaliated in kind. We not

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[43] Johnson, "Remarks in Cadillac Square, Detroit," September 7, 1964.

[44] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in Indianapolis at Soldiers and Sailors Square.," October 8, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on August 12, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26577.

only sank the boats that fired upon it, but we immediately moved to destroy the nests that housed those boats." He went on to then distinguish toughness and resolve from recklessness, tacitly comparing himself with the trigger-happy caricature of Goldwater. A reckless response would have been one that "drop[ped] a bunch of bombs on civilian women and children in an act of desperation or in a thoughtless moment." By contrast, Johnson called attention to his capacity to "use our power with judgment and restraint."[45] By introducing this distinction, Johnson hoped to dispel the Goldwater critique of weakness in a two-step movement: first demonstrating his readiness to send the military in action, and then to imply that to have gone any further—to have acted more aggressively—would have demonstrated not military resolve but dangerous impulsiveness.

Negative. Johnson's message of strength accompanied his message of reasonableness. He portrayed himself as the "reasonable" alternative to Goldwater. But as was the case in his domestic campaign, Johnson called attention to his own approach in order to highlight caricatures of Goldwater; in this case, Johnson's reasonability implied Goldwater's recklessness. For instance, when Johnson spoke of his "willingness to use our minds and our hearts as well as our muscles and our strength,"[46] he implicitly touted all those aspects of foreign policy that Goldwater loathed—aid to foreign countries, participation in the United Nations, food shipments abroad, and the Nuclear Test Ban

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[45] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks at the State Capitol in Des Moines," October 7, 1964, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on August 12, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26570.

[46] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in Springfield, Ill., at the Sangamon County Courthouse.," October 7, 1964, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on September 30, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26571.

Treaty. Johnson effectively insinuated that Goldwater disapproved of those instruments of foreign policy because he refused to use mind and heart when leading the country. In short, as Johnson said, "[w]e want to learn to live with other nations," while Goldwater presumably wanted nothing but belligerence toward those same nations.

Johnson did far more than imply Goldwater was rash and uninterested in compromise. His "Daisy" television advertisement, discussed in the previous chapter, nearly assured Americans that a vote for Goldwater was a vote for violent, nuclear death. Johnson's stump speeches censured Goldwater just as pointedly: "We want to be able to exist in a land where we don't have to worry about a nervous thumb moving up toward pushing that button that will wipe out 300 million lives. We don't want to sit there and listen to that 'hot line' ring and the call coming from Moscow, and what they are going to say on the other end of the line." Such ominous warnings would become all the more chilling when Johnson reminded the American people how the previous administration "went through the terrifying and frightening experience of the Cuban missile crisis, when two men looked at each other eyeball to eyeball" before forcing "Mr. Khrushchev … to pick up his missiles and take them home."[47] Surely, Johnson implied, Goldwater lacked the diplomatic nuance to resolve the missile crisis as deftly as the Kennedy administration. Such references to Cuba surely provoked memories of Goldwater's well-publicized statements about sending American troops to Cuba to restore freshwater supplies to Guantanamo Bay, reinstating the Cuban naval blockade, or attempting a second Bay of Pigs style invasion. Johnson's promise of a reasonable foreign policy

[47] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks Upon Arrival at the Greater Cincinnati Airport," October 16, 1964, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on August 14, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26618.

dedicated to peace and cooperation conjured images of Goldwater the warmonger, allowing Johnson to appeal to "peace" preferences in the electorate while also identifying himself as the "strength" candidate to anticommunists. Johnson occupied both poles because the hawkish voters trusted his rhetoric and his credentials, while the doves saw in Johnson their only hope in preventing global annihilation.

In sum, Johnson consistently implemented a strategy of non-partisan, non-ideological unity in both foreign and domestic policy. He either stressed non-partisan, non-ideological themes such as unity or prosperity, or he explicitly co-opted specific Republican, conservative, or Goldwaterian policies such as the balanced budget or toughness on communism. Despite Johnson's promises of harmony, he did advance a liberal, and partisan public policy program at home, and he advanced a very controversial and specific foreign policy which belied his campaign appeals to concord. Theodore White, writing in 1965, captured this tension within the Johnson campaign when he observes that Johnson speech writers struggled over whether they would seek to:

> 'broaden the base' or to 'shape the mandate' . . . Should they go ahead and crush [Goldwater] entirely by expanding the safe middle ground of consensus to include the largest conceivable number of Republicans and Democrats? Or should they press the campaign in another way? To spend in advance some of this certain margin of victory by putting before the people such hard, cleaving issues as might lose a few million votes but would shape an explicit mandate to give the President clear authority for the new programs of his next administration? . . . Lyndon Johnson decided both to broaden the base and to shape the mandate at the same time.[48]

As the four years of Johnson's administration would bear out, he failed to shape any mandate at all. The divergent preferences of his electoral coalition would grate against each other as Johnson's pursuit of the Great Society precluded fiscal conservatism, and as

[48] White, *The Making of the President—1964*, 372.

his handling of the Vietnam War undercut the expectations of the peace constituencies to whom he appealed. Johnson's rhetoric was paradigmatically pragmatic: he obscured his actual policy intentions in order to draw support across partisan boundaries and add varied groups into his coalition with little explanation of what they had in common other than a shared self-interest in Johnson and dislike or fear of Goldwater. And, as characteristic of pragmatic rhetoric, Johnson weakened his capacity to govern effectively by dividing his loyalties among an incoherent and irreconcilable plurality of interests and principles.

The Demise of the Johnson Administration: The New Left and the Silent Majority

Johnson's administration fomented internal partisan conflict over the Vietnam War and the failures of many Great Society programs. Johnson declined to seek a second term and his vice-president took the party reins despite strong primary showings by Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy. The partisan consensus ruptured and descended into ideological factionalism. Stephen Skowronek says of LBJ: the "'tragedy of Lyndon Johnson' is a drama without parallel in modern American politics. It is the story of a master politician who self-destructed at the commanding heights, of an over-arching political consensus shattered in a rush of extraordinary achievements, of a superpower that squandered its resources in a remote conflict with people struggling on the fringes of modernity."[49] Historian Vaughn Bornet reports the appraisal of a contemporaneous intellectual and White House aide, Charles Frank: "'It seems to me . . . that the president genuinely wants economies and a Great Society; he wants to fight a war in Vietnam *and* to build dams and democracy in the Mekong Valley. He hopes all these things are

[49] Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make,* 325.

simultaneously possible. Still, down here where I sit, the effect is disconcerting. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays we receive messages to go full speed ahead; on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays we're told that we're going to have to retrench.'"[50] This is what Irving Bernstein referred to as Johnson's "Guns and Butter" approach—that America could boldly and ambitiously advance an enormous domestic reform agenda while waging an increasingly costly Vietnam War requiring more and more American troops and materials. Quoting Johnson from early in his first full term, Bernstein reports: "I believe we can do both. We are a country which was built by pioneers who had a rifle in one hand and an ax in the other. We are a nation with the highest GNP, the highest wages, and the most people at work. We can do both. And as long as I am president we will do both."[51] Bernstein rightly notes the contradictions Vietnam created for the Johnson administration, but fails to explain how the contradictions of Vietnam were symptomatic of a larger coalitional leadership that increased the party's commitments while simultaneously using rhetoric that pragmatically obscured its commitments from the American people. Vietnam abroad, and the Great Society at home, belied Johnson's pragmatic rhetoric of non-partisan, non-ideological prosperity for all.

Beyond Vietnam, therefore, Johnson suffered coalitional fractures on the left and the right from the failures of the Great Society—including ballooning expenses, inflation, administrative corruption, and lawlessness. The legislative frenzy of Johnson's administration served only to heighten the "gaps between lofty rhetoric and the more mundane reality" and to highlight the "examples of waste and abuse." The War on

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[50] Vaughn Davis Bornet, *The Presidency of LBJ* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1983), 244.

[51] Bernstein, *Guns and Butter*, 526.

Poverty was one of the most problematic parts of the Great Society, in part because Johnson accorded it such a prominent position. The War on Poverty, first of all, had very limited success. Johnson administration member Daniel Patrick Moynihan discovered that while "'[t]he number of persons classified as poor in the span of 1959 to 1968 decreased by 36 percent," in that same time period "'[t]he number of public-assistance recipients rose 41 percent."[52] Meanwhile, the period following the Johnson administration did little to vindicate the War on Poverty: "The number of poor would decline, from 1968 to 1976, only from 12.8 to 11.8 percent, measured in terms of cash income."[53] Despite doing little to help the poor, it created the impression that the Democratic Party became myopically focused on their special needs; it earned "the Great Society . . . a reputation as an effort to help the few [the poorest] rather than the many. . . . A Democratic congressman from the West observed in 1968 that new forgotten Americans were 'being ignored in favor of people who live in the 'ghettos'—the poor and the indolent.'"[54] This Democratic congressman articulated an impression shared widely at the time that the War on Poverty seemed only to exaggerate welfare commitments with little evidence that they bore much fruit.

The War on Poverty also engendered skepticism toward centralized bureaucracy. Bornet notes that if one were to consider only the opinions of those administrators associated with the War on Poverty, the impression would be that it "had to get along essentially without funds;" but in fact the "whole effort cost about $15.5 billion, a

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[52] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income* (New York: Random House, 1973), 39, quoted by Bornet, *The Presidency of LBJ*, 239.

[53] Bornet, *The Presidency of LBJ*, 238.

[54] Mason, *Richard Nixon*, 18.

sizeable figure despite unfavorable comparison with the $120 billion spent on the Vietnam War." Administration members assumed that the program would pay for itself based upon the economic dividends of eradicating poverty; namely "increases in employment would increase tax revenues."[55] But when the program failed to eradicate poverty and welfare commitments only ballooned, the War on Poverty appeared as an insatiable consumer of public funds. In part, that was because the diffusive character of the War on Poverty relied upon pseudo-independent administrators who absorbed funds before distributing them to beneficiaries. Psychologist Kenneth Clark reported that the War on Poverty became "'political pork-barrel-type programs and were taken over by sophisticated middle class bureaucrats.'"[56] Amidst the dubious administration of the War on Poverty, the massive spending related with it and the war sent inflation up to 3.4%, "the highest figure since 1951."[57] In sum, the War on Poverty did not simply fall short of its vaulting promises, it appeared to disproportionately benefit special interests and liberal radicals.

Aside from expanding social welfare, the Great Society promised to remedy the racial injustices done to black Americans by years of segregation and disenfranchisement. But just as the failures of Johnson's War on Poverty were far more evident than its successes, so too were the racial riots of 1964-1968 far more vivid in the eyes of many Americans at the time than were Johnson's civil rights accomplishments. The Watts riot of 1965 and the Detroit riot of 1967 seared an image of civil and social unrest that

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[55] Bornet, *The Presidency of LBJ*., 237.

[56] In Emmette S. Redford and Marlan Blisset, *Organizing the Executive Branch: The Johnson Presidency* (Chicago: Univesrity of Chicago Press, 1981), 94; quoted in Bornet, *The Presidency of LBJ*, 239.

[57] Mason, *Richard Nixon*, 18.

undermined Americans' confidence in the federal government's advancement of civil rights. The 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Acts were "met in the black community, not by quiet contentment, but by what Johnson much later called 'all that crazy rioting which almost ruined everything.'" In the period of time between 1964 and 1968, there were approximately "225 'hostile outbursts' in the nation's cities in which 191 were killed, 7,924 wounded and 49,607 arrested."[58] These staggering numbers largely undercut support for civil rights and confidence in Johnson's ability to shepherd the kind of social change he promised: "When Johnson became president in 1963, according to polls, only 31 percent of Americans believed that the federal government was pushing racial integration 'too fast.' By 1968, however, that figured exceeded a half." At the same time, "new splits emerged between liberals and radicals within African American movements. Black nationalists won prominence, and their high-profile activities under the 'black power' slogan further alienated many in the white American mainstream."[59]

Anti-war protests and the increasing visibility of the anti-war radical paralleled the racial unrest and the increasing visibility of the black radical. There were 23,000 American troops in 1965, but "that number had risen to 184,000 within a year. The nation's troop commitment grew to 385,000 by the end of 1966 and reached 535,000 by early 1968." This issue begot a significant faction animated by virulent opposition to the war. The unanimity of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution disappeared, and by 1968 "thirty Democratic senators and representatives opposed Johnson's policies."[60]Anti-war radicals believed that "the [war] policy was the product of a corrupt regime" and consequently

[58] Bornet, *The Presidency of LBJ*, 228-229.

[59] Mason, *Richard Nixon*, 15-16.

[60] Mason, *Richard Nixon*, 16.

they "supported victory for the Vietcong and revolutionary change at home. Radical protest was often particularly noisy, attracting disproportionate attention."[61] Many Americans resented anti-war protestors as unrest proliferated around the country—particularly on college and university campuses; "even many doves opposed the noisier examples of antiwar protest. A poll in 1968, for example, reported that 53 percent of those who saw the war as a mistake viewed the protesters in a negative light; nearly three-quarters of all Americans saw protesters in this way."[62]

The general lawlessness associated with Johnson administration policies at home and abroad corresponded with a general increase in violent crime. Journalist Theodore White notes that New York—once "one of the safest of the big cities of the United States"—became increasingly dangerous, and it served as a bad omen for upticks in violent crime across the country: "By 1968 . . . [n]o less than 904 persons were killed in the nation's safest large city." That "represents nearly a 300% increase since 1951," while "the single year 1968 had shown a 21-percent jump over the 745 murders of 1967."[63] Violent crime accompanied other cultural markers of distress like declining sexual mores, prevalent obscenity and pornography, and increasingly common and open drug use. Many Americans perceived "their society was becoming more 'permissive,'" as there arose a prominent "'counterculture' or people who repudiated American norms to pursue an alternative lifestyle."[64] In short, society frayed at the edges as violent crime

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[61] Ibid., 16-17.

[62] Ibid., 17.

[63] Theodore White, *The Making of the President—1968* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1969), 191.

[64] Mason, 21.

waxed and traditional morals waned. "By the summer of 1968," a Harris poll reported, "81 percent of people surveyed even believed that the system of law and order had broken down."[65]

Fragmentation on the Left: New Politics Democrats

The war divided Democrats more than any other issue. Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy gave voice to liberal anti-war sentiment. Perhaps more than anything else, their near success taking the Democratic nomination from President Johnson, then from Vice-President Hubert Humphrey indicated a profound rupture in the Democratic coalition. The New Hampshire primary first revealed the tenuous grasp Johnson had over his party. Eugene McCarthy contemplated not running in New Hampshire because he considered the state too hawkish.[66] Notwithstanding New Hampshire's preferences for foreign policy assertiveness, McCarthy came within 4,000 votes of beating Johnson (27,243-23,280) by relying on little more than anti-war sentiment. McCarthy's candidacy excited activist sentiment throughout the country. Theodore White recounts a McCarthy stump speech wherein he boldly proclaimed that "'[t]he central point . . . is what this war is doing to the United States itself, in terms of its potential to influence world history, what it's doing to us around the world today, this draining of the material and moral resources of the country from our really pressing problems. It's the old Roman problem—their policing of the Mediterranean world as Rome decayed at home.'"[67] In a northern Wisconsin campaign junket, McCarthy "got the biggest cheers when he said the

[65] Ibid., 20.

[66] White, *The Making of the President—1968*, 82.

[67] Ibid., 79.

Vietnam war was not justified. 'Not on military grounds, or diplomatic grounds . . . and certainly not on moral grounds.'"[68] McCarthy's unexpected strength in New Hampshire encouraged Robert Kennedy to enter the race based largely on the same sentiment: "'[W]e have a right to expect an honest government in South Vietnam . . . . [We've got the right to expect the [South Vietnamese] to draft their eighteen-year-old boys if we're going to draft our eighteen-year-old boys—that's what I'd do, I'd clean up that government of South Vietnam.'"[69] Kennedy eventually won Indiana, Nebraska, South Dakota and California, while McCarthy won Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Oregon, New Jersey, and Illinois.

While opposition to Vietnam brought the most energy to these insurgent Democrats, they also criticized Johnson's domestic policies. Insurgents on Johnson's left coalesced around the New Politics political movement. The New Politics articulated a renewed and keen interest in participatory democracy and community. It was born out of the frustrations over the failures of administrative centralization of the Great Society programs like the War on Poverty. A contemporary journalistic account described the New Politics as "turbulent, noisy, rambunctious. It was as vague in meaning as its name. But it knew what it wanted. A leader who would commit himself, without equivocation, to ending the war in Vietnam. A leader who could communicate with, if not embrace, the beatniks and the peaceniks and the hippies and the yippies and the middle class and the new class who clamored to end the war and begin a new era."[70] Theodore White,

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[68] Gordon L. Randolph, "Crowds Cheer McCarthy Attacks on Johnson," *The Milwaukee Journal,* March 29, 1968.

[69] White, *The Making of the President—1968*, 171.

[70] "Dem Conflict Deeper Than Vietnam Issue," Beaver County Times, August 30, 1968.

describing Robert Kennedy's political appeal, explained how he drew support from two groups of liberals. First were "those who had served with John F. Kennedy," and whose "prime motivation [for] action in 1968 was the war in Vietnam, the war which had sabotaged the slow, steady progress toward Kennedy goals which they had once helped to set." Examples of such supporters included Arthur Schlesinger and Ted Sorenson. But accompanying these men were "[t]he new radicals" that "[h]ad abandoned the old liberal ethos of centralization, the thought of Washington as the source of all national good. People had to be heard; people had to be met at the grassroots."

Kennedy gave succor to these New Politics liberals in a series of speeches in the years prior to the nomination. In one, Kennedy discussed an urban crisis, explaining how "the welfare programs of the federal government were no answer to the problems of the poor, but a positive destructive factor; the poverty program, for example, had hired thousands of middle-class people to tell poor people how not to be poor, a corps of 'government-paid bitchers' competing to escalate their demands."[71] These Democrats "sought to broaden the party's agenda to include a host of social groups and political issues that did not fit into the populist socioeconomic categories of the opulent rich versus working stiffs. It wasn't the middle class that needed attention but the desperately poor."[72] These New Politics Democrats shared the Great Society's critique of FDR and New Deal liberalism's focus on economic freedom and individualism. But in disposition and approach, New Politics Democrats were radicals whose pique for establishment Democrats and the status quo left them disillusioned with the Great Society.

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[71] White, *The Making of the President—1968,* 168-169.

[72] DiSalvo, *Engines of Change*, 54.

Fragmentation on the Right: George Wallace

While Johnson's foreign policy misadventures fueled an insurgency on the left, the right seethed under the domestic tumults of the mid-1960s. George Wallace, former Governor of Alabama, led a populist, conservative third-party campaign that he built upon resentment toward bureaucratic elitism and social engineering, and distaste for lawless and disrespectful youth participating in protests on college campuses around the country. He claimed to be acting for the "'workin' folk fed up with bureaucrats in Washington, pointy-headed intellectuals, *swaydo*-intellectual morons tellin' 'em how to live their lives.'"[73] Though he drew his core support from the south, his appeal extended throughout the nation. All across the country, urban and sub-urban, white, middle-class voters resented the heavy hand of forced integration, the civil unrest of both black nationalist and students anti-war activists, the decline of law and order, and, in general, the prevalent feeling of alienation. "His message was absolutely simple, short and clear. He was telling the people that their government had sold them out."[74] Wallace's candidacy jeopardized both the Republican and Democratic constituencies, threatening to "take conservative votes from Nixon in the South and working-class votes from Humphrey in the North."[75] Democrats, recognizing this threat, tried to stem Wallace's appeal in the North. They were so concerned about his appeal that Democrat ally, the AFL-CIO, undertook "a massive program of education with literature which underlines Wallace's segregationist commitment and his neglect, as governor of Alabama, of the workingman's concerns with education, unemployment benefits, and the right-to-work

[73] Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 224.

[74] White, 350.

[75] White, The Making of the President—1968, 351.

law." Meanwhile, Wallace's selection of Cold War hardliner and former head of the Strategic Air Command General Curtis LeMay as his vice presidential nominee demonstrated his fierce anticommunism and commitment to victory in Vietnam. This potentially appealed to those Democratic hawks alienated by Democratic association with New Politics, anti-war movement. Wallace's run reflected a backlash amongst the Democratic center-right, which New Politics Democrats prompted by their radical critique of Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society.

Republican Return: Richard Nixon and the Silent Majority

While Democrats fragmented into extremes on the left and the right, Richard Nixon aimed at the moderate conservatives and Republican leaners of the suburban middle-classes that had gone for Johnson in 1964. For these voters, Goldwater's apparent rejection of the welfare state, and his seeming eagerness to enter a shooting war with the Soviets had placed him too far right to support, but they nonetheless distrusted the Democratic tendency toward bureaucratic centralization, and the apparent capture of the Democratic Party by various radicals. Johnson recognized these vaguely conservative sentiments and pushed Goldwater further and further right to increase his credibility as a bridge between moderate conservatism and moderate liberalism. Now, Johnson's war policies and sputtering Great Society energized liberal radicals in a way that pushed the Democrats far left of center.

Within this context, Nixon made his appeal to the "silent majority" of Americans that were wary of Johnson's domestic liberalism, tired of the Vietnam War but unwilling to accept the indignity of defeat, and resentful of civil unrest, lawlessness, and crime. The "basic theme" uniting his appeal to the silent majority was "the reassertion of

individualism against the growth of government bureaucracy. He therefore contrasted his vision of an electoral majority with his characterization of the Democratic Party's coalition as groups united by selfish economic interests."[76] Thus Nixon appealed to the disappointing social deterioration wrought by the Democratic Party, rather than the indictment of liberal economics that so animated Goldwater. In another sense, however, Nixon's "silent majority" appeal was not altogether different from Goldwater's attempt to reach the "forgotten American." Both contended that liberal utopianism ended up in corruption, waste, and cultural degradation that offended the sentiments of most Americans whose intrinsic conservatism rendered them wary of government activism.

Despite these similarities, Nixon's unique coalition was far more pragmatic than Goldwater's, and in this sense his rhetorical approach shared more with Lyndon Johnson than with the conservative insurgent. Nixon all but abandoned the tenets of economic conservatism—in his campaign speeches and in his policies as president—while relying instead on claims of social deterioration. Nixon eventually won with as much as "40 percent of the . . . vote . . . provided by people who had supported Johnson in 1964."[77] Nixon's rhetoric depended more upon articulating feelings of resentment common to Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s; he lacked a positive, principled vision that could bind a new consensus to a specific policy program. His speech accepting the Republican nomination, therefore, sought to encourage party unity by reminding his party how those things that they opposed brought them together: "[A] party that can unite itself will unite America . . . As we look at America we see cities enveloped in smoke and

[76] Mason, *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority,* 27.

[77] Ibid., 35.

flame. We hear sirens in the night. We see Americans dying on distant battlefields abroad. We see Americans hating each other; fighting each other; killing each other at home. And as we see and hear these things, millions of Americans cry out in anguish." These were the concerns of "the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans – the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators."[78] Nixon won because he articulated American's frustration with their government and society more effectively than George Wallace or the New Politics liberals.

Meanwhile, as president, rather than presenting a distinctive public policy program, Nixon sought to consolidate the gains he made through pragmatic rhetoric by advancing policies that benefited the self-interest of his constituents, including expanding access to welfare as well as new welfare initiatives and macroeconomic policies intended to produce favorable economic outcomes, most notably price and wage controls. Nixon's silent majority evinced an ambition for a new Republican majority, but Nixon's pragmatism provided an elusive ground this effort, as his support depended upon frustration with the status quo, and his ability to satisfy the self-interests of his constituents.

Following Watergate, the coalitional consensus established by the New Deal continued the downward spiral from 1968. While Nixon's pragmatism failed to produce a lasting consensus, Gerald Ford, who served as President without campaigning for it, largely extended Nixon's pragmatic coalitional leadership for the remainder of his predecessor's term. Meanwhile, President Carter also lacked a sufficiently principled or

[78] Richard Nixon, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida," August 8, 1968, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on February 11, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25968.

coherent vision for a new coalitional consensus. In some ways similar to Nixon, Carter was popular with the American people as a critic of politics who pragmatically cut across normal partisan boundaries. He argued that Democrats and Republicans failed American citizens, and his status as a Washington outsider meant he was untainted by either of those corrupted brands. But, as was also the case for Nixon, resentment was a limited basis to appeal to the American people. Carter was eventually consumed by the very factionalism he denigrated in his campaign, as an initial wave of legislative successes gave way to intractable economic and foreign policy difficulties that eventually stymied the administration in feuds with Congressional Democrats. Campaigning as an outsider could produce short-term success, but the key to long-term success depended upon providing a principled, positive vision for the future that could unite different elements of the party rather than castigate the factionalism that divided them.

Conclusion: Johnson and Pragmatic Leadership

Johnson's spectacular victory in 1964 suggested a degree of partisan strength and unity of purpose which was simply not there. To some degree Johnson recognized that his popularity owed, in part, to the nation's horror at his predecessor's assassination, and that his strength would surely wane as time passed. This helps explain his frenetic legislative pace. But the rupture of the partisan consensus in 1968 was far more serious and troubling for the regime party than the passing of a "presidential honeymoon." That rupture occurred because the campaign of 1964 built severe structural deficiencies into the partisan coalition by drawing together groups with deeply conflicting preferences and principles. The electoral triumph was "more the product of anti-Goldwater than pro-

Johnson or pro-administration sentiments," and Johnson campaigned in a way that would make full use of widespread anti-Goldwater sentiment.

Johnson's problems were not idiosyncratic to him, however. Instead, they reveal the problems associated with pragmatic rhetorical leadership that he employed in response to a major change in the coalitional dynamic of the partisan regime. Barry Goldwater signaled a major break from the dominant political pattern since 1932: for the first time conservative Republicans captured the party's helm. While Goldwater's ideological rhetoric effectively stimulated a new coalitional base in the sunbelt, it was unappealing in a way that prompted Johnson to counter it with pragmatic appeals to self-interest and non-partisanship. But rather than reinforcing the strength of the partisan regime in the face of an emerging opposition, it confused the partisan consensus by diluting its unifying principles. Consequently, "[b]y failing to make explicit where he intended to take the country in the next four years, Johnson won less than a solid consensus for bold change in either domestic of foreign affairs."[79] Because coalitional groups did not know why they supported Johnson—other than his promise to bring them prosperity and peace—they had little reason to continue to support him when they perceived their interests to diverge from the Great Society. This happened on the left and the right, and it facilitated the rupture of 1968. Johnson's pragmatic appeal to self-interest generated widespread and diverse political support, but at the cost of a principled incoherence that very quickly undermined his presidency.

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[79] Dallek, *Portrait of a President*, 189.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Ronald Reagan and the Conservative Principled Consensus

Introduction: the Triumph of Conservative Republicanism

Ronald Reagan's 1980 victory was the triumph of a conservative movement that Barry Goldwater had initiated fourteen years earlier when Lyndon Johnson beat him with staggering margins. And, as if looking at 1964 in a mirror, Ronald Reagan won with one of the biggest electoral landslides in presidential history, winning a total of one more state and three more electoral votes than Johnson did in 1964. Reagan's victory heralded a new era for the Republican Party. Republicans held the presidency from 1980 to 1992. And though they lost the presidency to Bill Clinton twice, Clinton ran as a New Democrat who appealed to the reigning conservative consensus against expansive and expensive government. After an early and unsuccessful foray into healthcare reform and Newt Gingrich's Republican takeover of the House—the first time the Republicans won a majority since 1952—Clinton tacked right and by 1996 he boldly declared that "the era of big government is over" in his annual address to Congress. Republicans held the House until 2006, and regained the presidency from 2000 to 2008.

Reagan's coalitional success, however, is widely questioned in political science literature, from many different angles. Though colloquially he was known as "the great communicator," both Jeffrey Tulis and Samuel Kernel criticize Reagan's use of rhetoric. Tulis emphasizes Reagan's detachment from the regular administration from the law and his disproportionate interests in "personal or charismatic power" that "delegitimizes

constitutional or normal authority."[1] Kernell focuses on Reagan's efforts to use the bully pulpit to pass tax reform, and shows that despite his initial success in that initiative, Reagan's failed to make a substantive policy change because his rhetoric could not consistently persuade ephemeral public opinion.

From the angle of coalitional politics, James Sundquist and Stephen Skowronek raise doubts about Reagan's success achieving realignment or creating a new partisan regime. Sundquist argues that the dealigning issues of the 1960s and early '70s—civil rights, Vietnam, communism, etc—disrupted regular party loyalties, but the new issues of the late '70s and '80s—abortion, budget and tax cuts, federalism—failed to polarize the electorate in a way that could produce a new alignment; "the dislodged voters stayed that way—displaced, independent, unattached, floating in political space."[2] Skowronek's analysis of Reagan is similar. The conditions seemed to align for Reagan to reconstruct a partisan regime—Carter's disjunction and Reagan's claim to reconstructive authority—but Reagan's presidency fell short of the task. The reason, Skowronek argued, was institutional thickening: the linear development whereby national administrative institutions proliferated and exercised independent will, effectively "decouple[ing] . . . the personal will of the reconstructive leader" from the larger reconstructive process.[3] Reagan's reconstruction fell victim to the institutional thickening; his early successes in 1981 gave way to partisan gridlock that crippled significant reform of the welfare or bureaucratic institutions. In the end, for Tulis, Kernell, Sundquist, and Skowronek,

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[1] Jeffrey Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 190.

[2] James Sundquist, *Dyanmics of the Two Party System* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1983), 411.

[3] Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 416.

Reagan's rhetoric fell short of his ambitions because it failed to create a durable foundation for public support.

Developing an account of Reagan's principled rhetorical leadership provides nuance to both of these criticisms of Reagan's rhetoric and his coalitional politics. The criticisms of Reagan's detached administrative style or his mixed record with using the bully pulpit notwithstanding, it is now clear that Reagan's principled articulation of a conservative consensus has profoundly shaped the character of the subsequent inter-party competition. The Wall Street Journal observed in 1987—just as Sameul Lubell observed of liberals in the 1950—that at the conclusion of Reagan's tenure it is the "conservatives who are fashioning much of the national agenda."[4] Analyzing Reagan's principled rhetorical leadership better accounts for this success because, rather than measuring Reagan by his public opinion polls or tangible welfare reforms, examines his rhetoric with respect to his capacity to persuade different, even conflicting conservatives—social and economic conservatives and traditional Republicans—to work together as a whole. His establishment a conservative principled consensus, more than anything, demonstrates his profound effect on party politics in the 20th century.

Reagan's Republican coalition united traditional Republican groups with more ideological conservatives motivated by, alternately, social issues like abortion, school prayer, and traditional social mores or economic issues like inflation, taxes, government spending, and bureaucratic expansion. From these strands, Reagan drew the working and middle-class voters from the old New Deal coalition, as well as the new Sunbelt region which comprehended both bible-belt social conservatives from the Deep South as well as

[4] David Shribman, "They Must Choose Whether to Emphasize Economics Or Socially Related Causes," *Wall Street Journal*, April 29, 1987.

libertarian conservatives from the South-Southwest regions. But Reagan did more than critique: his principled consensus depended upon articulating conservative principles and advancing conservative policies that instantiated the diverse conservative sentiments and preferences scattered in various groups across the electorate. In so doing, Reagan proclaimed a return to a traditional American way of life that was widely popular among the American electorate and provided structure to Republican rhetoric and policy for decades beyond the conclusion of Reagan's tenure.

In this chapter I describe Reagan's principled rhetoric as it relates to his construction of a new principled consensus. First, that means examining the principles by which Reagan persuaded his Republican coalition to unite. By principles, I mean that Reagan presented fundamental arguments about the relationship between the state, civil society, citizenship, and national purpose in domestic and foreign policy. I describe his principles in the first section of this chapter, after briefly discussing the coalition members whose preferences and values structured Reagan's own vision of conservatism. Following this section, I turn to explain how Reagan's principled arguments displayed the characteristics of principled rhetorical leadership.

He identified between what in liberalism he intended to repudiate and what he intended to preserve—welfare for the most needy, for instance. He fostered a diverse coalition by advancing a conservative economic policy that would appeal to social conservatives, and advanced a moderate social policy (e.g. education) that gave him the opportunity to highlight the shared goals of social and economic conservatives. Thus, he advanced specific policies that appealed to the interests of his coalition, but he moderated those policies in order to explain them as part of a larger principled consensus.

The Republican Coalition and Reagan's Conservative Principles

Ronald Reagan's Republican coalition threaded together several distinct parts of a fractious conservative movement known as the New Right. Daniel DiSalvo delineated four intellectual strands to conservatism: "traditionalism, libertarianism, natural right, and biblical faith." Each strand shares with the others a concern about a decay of American society, wrought by long liberal political dominance. But each strand differs from the others in important ways. However, three of these threads—traditionalism, natural right, and biblical faith—could be weaved together into a dominant strand known as social conservatism, inasmuch as moral and cultural issues were more salient for them than free-market economics. Traditionalist conservatives were some of the earliest contributors to the movement, and included intellectuals Russell Kirk and William F. Buckley. They espoused a Burkean political philosophy that emphasized traditions as the "set of shared cultural practices that had not developed according to a rational plan but rather emerged organically." Biblical faith conservatives were the latest addition to New Right Republicanism, and were politicized by the moral tumult of the 1970s. They drew strength from Evangelical and Protestant communities, as well as sections of Catholic communities, and were generally focused on "bring[ing] their religious convictions to bear on policy issues of concern to them."[5] Finally, natural right conservatives, often referred to as neo-conservatives, focused more than the other strands of conservatism on international relations. They were hawkish because they understood the Cold War as an attempt to preserve American liberal democracy from the debasement of totalitarian communism. These conservatives critiqued liberalism for threatening American culture—

[5] DiSalvo, *Engines of Change: Party Factions in American Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 44-47.

and freedom worldwide—through a dovish policy that tended to diminish the moral superiority of liberal democracy to totalitarianism. In each case, these intellectual groups concerned themselves with preserving the distinct characteristics of American heritage and culture: freedom and traditional values.

Libertarianism was the fourth strain of thought in the New Right conservative movement, and its focus on economic issues aligned it with the concerns of business interests that traditionally been associated with the party since at least the McKinley era. Consequently, libertarianism, often in coalition with traditional Republicanism, constituted a wing of economic conservatives. Traditional Republicans emphasized fiscal responsibility, a balanced budget, lower federal spending and lower deficits, and efficient, business-like management of the government. Economic libertarians shared many of these commitments, though with more ideological fervor. They were more likely to criticize Republicans for being utilitarian in their willingness to manage an expansive liberal government more efficiently. Economic libertarians desired a more brazen attack on big government, and a more fervent commitment to the free market. Consequently, while neither economic nor traditional Republicans would favor taxes *per se*, traditional Republicans would place a higher premium on a balanced budget while economic libertarians, no friend of deficits themselves, would place more emphasis on tax cuts.

Economic libertarians contributed to the supply-side fervor in the late 1970s and during Reagan's administration. Reagan's economic advisors comprised a coalition of economic libertarians and traditional Republicans. Economic libertarian and Reagan economic advisor William A. Niskanen observed that "'The Reagan economic program, like the Reagan constituency, reflected a range of views on economic policies. . . . For the

traditional Republicans a lower growth in federal spending was a necessary complement of any reduction in taxes. . . . For the new 'supply-siders,' a reduction in tax rates was necessary to induce the economic growth that would permit a lower growth in federal spending.'"[6] The traditional Republicans during the 1980s included "most of the senior Republican senators and administration officials who had served in prior Republican administrations, such as Martin Anderson. Many of the younger Republicans in the House, epitomized by Jack Kemp of New York, adhered to the supply-side view that massive reductions in taxes and government regulation would unleash pent-up entrepreneurial energies and produce an economic boom."[7] Tax cuts and stimulating economic growth were the two principal goals of these conservatives, while balancing the budget was an ancillary concern.

While economic libertarians and traditional Republicans agreed on the primacy of economic issues, libertarian zeal was also associated with the connection they saw between cultural vitality and economic purity. These conservatives criticized the way government intervention and planning, particularly at the national level, disturbed "spontaneous order," or the idea that "human affairs naturally work out for the best through the cooperation induced by markets."[8] In this, libertarian social conservatives possessed a certain theoretical overlap with traditionalist, Burkean conservatives, who stressed organic growth and bucked under the burden of centralized planning. Economic libertarian's emphasis on economic freedom was complemented by a return to smaller,

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[6] William A. Niskanen, *Reaganomics: An Insider's Account of the Policies and People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4; quoted in Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 235.

[7] Cannon, *President Reagan,* 235-236.

[8] Daniel DiSalvo, *Engines of Change*, 45.

decentralized government, and consequently they also brought a renewed focus on federalism. National government activism not only corrupted the spontaneous order of market cooperation, it also spawned massive centralized bureaucracies that replaced individual rule and voluntary associations with centralized, and generalized regulations. Consequently, economic libertarians favored free-markets and federalism because each reduced the extent to which remote government smothered a civil society that could and should rule itself.

The Development of the Reagan Coalition: Coalitional Dynamics in the '60s and '70s.

Broadly speaking, economic and social conservatism each took root in the electorate with two distinct presidential candidates: Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon. Barry Goldwater and his conservative followers came to symbolize a primarily economic critique of New Deal liberalism, along with a new hawkish, hardline against Soviet communism. Goldwater argued that economic dependence on government assistance was the greatest drain on American liberty, and consequently, restoring the spiritual and moral satisfaction of a life well lived necessitated scaling down the national government's economic activism and its pervasive bureaucratic institutions that implement national policy. Goldwater encouraged individual responsibility and self-government as a means toward restoring traditional American values and individual self-fulfillment. His populist conservative message was also designed to reseat the authority of the Republican base, shifting it to the Sunbelt of rapidly emerging economic development in the increasingly bourgeois South and Southwest, and away from the old centers of power in the big-business, professionalized Northeast.

But for many of the Midwestern, urban, and ethnic voters that Goldwater targeted for his coalition, his economic conservatism appeared too harsh, especially when they largely heard about Goldwater's intentions for social welfare programs from Lyndon Johnson. This allowed Richard Nixon to make his own appeal in turn to the "Forgotten American," those whom he called "the Silent Majority." Like Goldwater, Nixon asked Americans if they still recognized their country, and he asked them what kind of country they wanted to have. But the similarity between the two ended there. Nixon dropped the economic conservatism that formed the backbone of Goldwater's moral message. Instead, he articulated a social critique that would convert the "lower-middle-class and Democratic" constituencies as the new foundation for an economically moderate-to-liberal but socially conservative Republicanism.[9] Appealing to these coalitional groups required Nixon to temper economic conservatism—though he "continued to sound a theme of opposition to big government, he did not seek to challenge the existing emphasis on government activism. . . . In short, Nixon's idea of the forgotten American represented a reaction to the tumult of the 1960s."[10] Nixon set aside the traditional Republican economic conservatism, and fostered the growth of a new, socially minded conservatism.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter, calling attention to his southern Baptist roots, stimulated Evangelical Protestants political activism and showed that the bible belt could be a powerful voting bloc. Carter relied "on his own born again identification to win him

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[9] Kevin P Phillips, *Post-Conservative America* (New York, NY: Random House 1982), 48.

[10] Robert Mason, *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. North Carolina Press, 2003), 6.

favor" among southern Evangelicals.[11] Of course, Carter's actual policy positions subverted his personal connection with southern Evangelicals, and the generally socially liberal Carter administration disillusioned and angered these voters, making them more receptive to the far more socially conservative Reagan in 1980. According to pollster Louis Harris, in 1976 Carter won "the white Baptist vote . . . by 56 percent to 43 percent," but in 1980 he "'lost the white Baptists by 56 percent to 34 percent margin.'"[12]

In 1980 Reagan sought to meld together these groups into a coherent and united political coalition. Politically, that meant targeting specific groups comprising both Goldwater's "Sunbelt" strategy and Nixon's "Silent Majority" strategy, while expanding the latter to encompass both urban, Northern Catholicism and southern, rural, biblical Protestantism. In terms of the electoral vote, the biggest uncertainties were in the industrial Midwest and the South. The Southwest and Mountain West had been unambiguously Republican at the presidential level in all three elections since Nixon vs. Humphrey (with the exception of Texas in 1968 and 1976). The most important states for Reagan to attract in 1980 were concentrated in the industrial Midwest or Northeast, and the South. Since 1968, the industrialized Midwest and Northeast had swung between Democrat and Republican. The deep South was even more enigmatic, since "[i]t had voted for Goldwater in 1964, Wallace in 1968, Nixon in 1972, and Carter in 1976."[13]

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[11] Bruce Newsmith, *The New Republican Coalition: The Reagan Campaign and White Evangelicals* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994), 63.

[12] Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *The Reagan Revolution* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), 214-215.

[13] Andrew Busch, *The Election of 1980 and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 104.

Each of these states comprised voters that largely fitted in with the socially conservative or biblical faith thread of conservatism.

Andrew Busch specifically designated three principal groups within these regions. First, the industrial Midwest contained "blue-collar white ethnic voters—most of them patriotic, economically besieged, and culturally conservative—who would decide states like Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. . . . The stagflation and the national humiliation of the Carter years" (e.g. the Iranian hostage crisis) "provided an opportunity for a challenger." The second group comprised Catholics, who were "also concentrated in the Northeast and Midwest," and who began a shift out of the New Deal coalition with Nixon in 1972. As a group, they were "patriotic, culturally conservative, [and] concerned by the fate of their coreligionists besieged by communism in the old countries." Finally, "Evangelicals would decide the South and would help decide some northern states with large rural populations, such as Ohio."[14]

The most important coalitional groups in the 1980 election shared socially conservative policy preferences. This area favored Reagan and the Republicans, since Reagan was a leader among Republicans on major social issues, such as private school vouchers or opposition to abortion and support for a constitutional amendment banning the practice. The difficulty was that the overwhelming issue of the election-year was economic, not social: "the economy (especially inflation, then unemployment and a balanced budget) was the top issue on people's minds."[15] This did not necessarily put Democrats at an advantage, since it was Carter who most recently presided over an ever-

[14] Busch, *The Election of 1980*, 104-106.

[15] Ibid., 130.

worsening economy, but, since the conservative catastrophe in 1964, Republicans had not tested the American public's taste for conservative economics. Lyndon Johnson showed how easily conservative economics could indicate an alarmingly cavalier attitude toward dismantling New Deal welfare and economic programs.

Secondly, in the midst of the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, foreign policy was a major issue in 1980. The three principal coalitional groups—blue collar workers, urban and ethnic Catholics, and Evangelicals—were "unashamedly patriotic,"[16] and while Carter's foreign policy weaknesses hurt Democrats in this area, this policy area had proved disastrous for conservatives when Goldwater's careless comments suggested to many that he would act recklessly with nuclear weapons. It was unclear, therefore, whether conservative economics and hawkish foreign policy would be any more popular in 1980 that in 1964.

In sum, Reagan's overture to blue collar workers, urban and ethnic Catholics, and southern evangelicals constituted core constituencies within Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal coalition--"the old Democrats . . . who still adhered to the old values. These were the 'Reagan Democrats.'"[17] But rapid social changes gave rise to new issues and new attitudes among these constituent groups. Reagan needed to blend their economic preferences with those of more economically conservative, libertarian, and traditional Republicans, while advancing the social principles and issues which so energized these groups in 1980. These electoral groups and the economic, social, and international tumult of the day shaped Reagan's challenge and his goals in 1980.

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[16] Ibid., 136.

[17] Ibid., 136.

Reagan's Principled Argument

Reagan sought to unite this coalition behind common conservative principles. In a 1977 address to the Conservative Political Action Conference, Reagan explicitly stated his desire to articulate a "principled conservatism" in order to forge a "politically effective whole" from the different and competing strains of conservatism. Reagan meant to explain to social and economic conservatives that, despite their different policy preferences and material interests, they shared a coherent conservative philosophy that provided an overarching, common purpose. Reagan began by acknowledging the differences between members of the conservative coalition he desired. Social conservatives, he argued, were moved by the "so-called social issues—law and order, abortion, busing, quota systems" and were "usually associated with blue-collar, ethnic, and religious groups themselves traditionally associated with the Democratic Party." Economic conservatives coalesced around "[t]he economic issues—inflation, deficit spending, and big government," and were usually associated with "Republican Party members and independents who concentrate their attention on economic matters."[18]

Reagan believed conservative principles cut across partisan boundaries, and if adequately articulated, could bridge the partisan divide between these two conservative groups. Thus, he did not merely propose "a melding together of the two branches of American conservatism into a temporary uneasy alliance, but the creating of a new, lasting majority." Conservatism provided a shared political philosophy of coherent principles, not a temporary coincidence of distinct interests. He intended to articulate

[18] Ronald Reagan, "The New Republican Party," February 6, 1977, Federalism and the New Conservatism, last accessed on February 17, 2014, http://reagan2020.us/speeches/The_New_Republican_Party.asp.

principles that both groups would "recognize as [their] own." This "principled conservatism" could "combine the two major segments of contemporary American conservatism into one politically effective whole."[19] Accomplishing this, Reagan argued, would help these diverse conservatives recognize the principled goals they shared in a broad partisan platform that pointed beyond their divisive and specialized goals.

The unifying principle of conservatism was limited government and the restoration of the individual and the community's capacity for self-rule. To articulate that principle, Reagan tried to show social and economic conservatives that their respective problems came from a common source: an overweening federal government. One of Reagan's most memorable and succinct deliveries of this principle came in his first inaugural address:

> In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem. From time to time we've been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. Well, if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else? All of us together, in and out of government, must bear the burden. The solutions we seek must be equitable, with no one group singled out to pay a higher price.

For Reagan, like Goldwater before him, liberty was the core principle of conservatism. Liberty meant preserving the individual's capacity to rule himself and to take responsibility for himself, his family, and his community. Liberalism threatened that self-rule because it became preoccupied with a kind of government activism that, in seeking solutions for problems relevant to a variety of political minorities, disproportionately burdened the sundry groups and peoples constituting the majority of American people. Liberalism, in other words, asked the majority to "bear the burden" and "pay a higher

[19] Reagan, *The New Republican Party*, February 6, 1977.

price" for the minority. Reagan made the Democratic preoccupation with the fringe more explicit by noting that "[w]e hear much of special interest groups." But his purpose was to give voice to "a special interest group that has been too long neglected. It knows no sectional boundaries or ethnic and racial divisions, and it crosses political party lines. . . . They are, in short, 'We the people,' this breed called Americans."[20] Reagan was not simply talking about democratic majoritarianism; but he argued instead that the practices of the government actually worked against the interests and liberties of a majority of Americans. The growth of government, paradoxically, made it remote, and restoring the limits to government would restore the liberty of citizens to live private lives, and to participate in ruling their community.

This generalized conception of liberty as self-rule applied in concrete ways to the unique concerns of economic and social conservatives. Reagan's words—that no one should "pay a higher price"—have an obvious economic connotation that economical conservatives would recognize. Higher taxes, inflation, and "bracket creep"—when inflation pushed individuals into higher tax brackets, without any corresponding increase in real spending power—asked all Americans to "pay a higher price" for Democratic egalitarianism and welfare programs. But Reagan's meaning was broader than that. Paying a higher price also implied, metaphorically, the numerous ways that the preferences of social conservatives were impinged by liberal activism. Social conservatives forfeited a degree of their liberty and self-rule when centralized bureaucrats forced them to relinquish the practice of their traditional values—prayer in local schools,

[20] Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1981,*The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on September 20, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43130.

legal protections for prenatal life, an increased financial burden for sending children to parochial or religious schools, etc. In each of these cases, social conservatives sacrificed their liberty and prerogatives of local self-government for the purposes of elite, liberal abstractions. In this sense, liberalism took individual economic liberty and social self-determination belonging by right to the various individuals and groups composing the majority of American citizens, and imposed upon them a burden that justified a government activism aimed almost entirely at benefiting political minorities.

These principled statements about liberty attempted to explain conservatism in ways that could be broadly understood. But this broad narrative could take Reagan only so far in his desire to create "one political effective whole" out of social and economic conservatives, whose principles and interests did deviate when it came down to many issues. Lou Cannon likens Reagan's position to Roosevelt's in 1932, saying that, "[l]ike Roosevelt, he came to office as leader of a political coalition that was united in its longing for economic recovery and national renewal but divided on many points of policy."[21] For some conservatives, the Reagan revolution meant dismantling the liberal welfare state, especially the most fiscally problematic programs like Social Security and Medicare. For others, such a direct assault would be radical and undesired, and moreover unrelated to the more pressing economic goal of restoring American economic productivity and lowering inflation. Some surely felt that energy and political capital should be spent on a full scale culture war, especially regarding issues like abortion and school prayer. For some conservative Republicans, supporting one issue did not exclude the others, though the difficulty came down to ranking the priority of social or economic

[21] Cannon, *Reagan*, 110.

issues. Consequently, for Reagan to create a coherent conservative coalition, he needed to explain conservatism in a way that did not undermine the material interests and immediate goals of his diverse constituencies. That meant that he could not simply rely upon an inherent distrust of government—one that might be shared by social and economic conservatives alike—but he had to pursue conservative policies that social and economic conservatives believed adequately represented their own principles and interests, policies that social and economic conservatives could understand as their own.

Economic Issues and Social Conservatives

Economic distress formed the backdrop of Reagan's assent to office in 1981, and this factor decisively shaped Reagan's governing priorities. Steven Hayward describes a palpable "sense of national crisis in 1980" that rivaled that in 1932: "Starting in 1979, for the first time since public opinion surveys had begun to be taken, the majority of Americans doubted that the future would be better than the past, or even equal to the present. The number of Americans who told the Gallup poll that the country was on the wrong track hit a new peak of 84 percent in August 1979; 67 percent agreed with the statement that the United States was in 'deep and serious trouble.'"[22] Lou Cannon recounts the grim economic statistics of the day: "In 1980 . . . The prime interest rate averaged 15.26 percent, inflation 12.5 percent and civilian unemployment 7.1 percent."[23] These troubling economic figures meant that Reagan's assent to office, "first and foremost," was a repudiation of Carter "in the same way that [the] 1932 [election] was, first and foremost, a repudiation of Hoover." Andrew Busch goes on to explain that

[22] Hayward, *The Age of Reagan,* 27.

[23] Cannon, *President Reagan,* 20.

"voting choice was highly correlated with approval of Carter's economic and foreign policies and with voters' assessments of their own personal financial prospects."[24] All of this indicates that Reagan's principal mandate were clear and practical: reduce inflation and increase employment.

Reagan's solution to his problem, however, was unabashedly conservative, and clearly articulated throughout the campaign: cut federal spending, cut taxes, economize a bloated and wasteful federal bureaucracy, and restore a sound monetary policy. These four points became Reagan's "Program for Economic Recovery." But even in his conservative response, Reagan felt the influence of the different and sometimes conflicting forces comprising his conservative coalition. While Reagan advanced these conservative economic policies, he also moderated economic conservative expectations by, for the most part, avoiding major reform of entitlements —the principal contributor to national debt—and even accepted continued deficits.

In this sense, Reagan's actual economic practice fell short of any kind of "revolution" that some avid conservative intellectuals desired—both inside and outside of his administration. David Stockman, Reagan's director of the Office of Management and Budget from 1981to1985 and author of the 1986 indictment of Reagan, *The Triumph of Politics: Why the Reagan Revolution Failed*, was the most vocal and brazen of a category of conservatives who were disappointed by the actual path Reagan followed. Stockman concluded that "Reagan was an insufficiently ideological 'consensus politician' who lack the stomach for a serious assault of the New Deal."[25] Similarly dissatisfied with the

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[24] Busch, *The Election of 1980*, 141.

[25] Cannon, *Reagan*, 109.

disjunction between expectations and realities, conservative Congressman Newt Gingrich lamented in 1984 that "Ronald Reagan is the only coherent revolutionary in an administration of accommodationist advisors."[26] In a meeting with Reagan late in his second term, Gingrich personally complained to the President, laying out all the "important things the administration had left undone." But Reagan gave an instructive response to Gingrich: "Reagan put his arm around the young Georgia congressman and said in his typically gentle fashion, 'Well, some things you're just going to have to do after I'm gone.'"[27]

The anecdote reveals an important aspect of Reagan's approach to conservative programming generally and economic programming specifically: Reagan tempered his economic goals in a way that allowed him to educate traditionally Democratic groups that economic conservatism benefited instead of threatening them. Specifically, that meant advancing conservative economic policies—focusing on cutting the budget and taxes—in a way that social conservatives could understand and appreciate. To do so, he preserved popular welfare programs—Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, among others—and adopted the new, supply-side rationale for tax cuts, which stressed prosperity and growth first, and only discussed a balanced budget as the byproduct of prosperity. In this way, he adopted the rhetoric that Goldwater eschewed, and in so doing used the self-interest of the blue-collar, ethnic, and lower-to-middle class, socially minded conservatives to explain the benefits of economic conservatism.

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[26] Newt Gingrich, "What Conservatives Think of Ronald Reagan," *Policy Review,* Winter 1984, 16; quoted by Hayward, *The Age of Reagan*, 10.

[27] Hayward, 10.

Budget Cuts: Cautious Conservative Economics

Throughout the campaign Reagan ran on a theme of cutting the budget to reduce the size and reach of the federal government, while working toward a balanced budget. Reagan built his argument for budget cuts by distinguishing between the concept of welfare itself—which he did not object to and asserted that he sought to strengthen—and the flawed welfare policies of past Democratic administrations, which actually jeopardized legitimate welfare. Reagan explained that a leaner federal government would more effectively tend the social safety net. But additionally, curtailing federal activism would have a far more profound effect on social solidarity than simply preserving the social safety net. Scaling back federal activism could reinvigorate private life and civil institutions, and thereby encourage social prosperity that would strengthen the social bonds of family and community independent of the national government.

Budget cuts, the economy, and the family. Reagan's economic program sought, in part, to slow the growth of the federal government by cutting federal expenditures. But unlike Goldwater, Reagan explained budget cuts as a means toward growth and prosperity first and foremost. In a September 1980 address to the International Business Council in Chicago, Reagan laid out his economic program to a free-trade advocacy group of Illinois businessmen. In that address, he associated government activism with economic stagnation, promising to "move boldly, decisively and quickly to control the runaway growth of Federal spending," in order to "keep the growth of government spending at reasonable and prudent levels." Limiting the size and cost of the federal government would spur economic growth that could bring prosperity to American families. Thus, Reagan's budget cuts would remedy Carter's "economic failures," which

struck "at the very heart of every American family, every factory, every farm, every community. Make no mistake about it: what Mr. Carter has done to the American economy is not merely a matter of lines and graphs on a chart. Individuals and families are being hurt and hurt badly."[28]

By tying budget cuts to the family, Reagan articulated an important part of his economic proposal: less government activism strengthens and enriches the community by first and foremost assisting the American family. Thus, speaking to these economic conservatives, Reagan highlighted the social importance of economic policy; prosperity was a means to enhancing social solidarity, and not an end itself. This distinguished him from Goldwater, who spoke as if a balanced budget or the ideological triumph it signified was a sufficient political goal. Instead, Reagan tied the principles of limited government to the self-interests of middle-class Americans by explaining conservative economics as capable of delivering results that would have concrete benefits for the American family.

To reinforce Reagan's message of a pro-family, conservative economic policy, Reagan exempted certain entitlement and welfare budget items that were both popular and perceived as important to assisting the American family. Reagan purposely excluded "cuts in two Social Security programs and any substantial reduction in five others: Medicare, veterans benefits, school lunches, Head Start, and summer youth jobs."[29] Exempting these programs significantly limited the extent of Reagan's budget cuts. In 1981, 48% of the federal budget was spent on entitlement programs, such as "Social Security, pension and welfare benefits, and money paid out to doctors and hospitals who

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[28] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the International Business Council in Chicago," September 9, 1980. *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on February 20, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85198.

[29] Cannon, *Reagan*, 241.

provided care for the elderly and poor" while 25% went to military spending, and 10% was left for interest on the national debt, leaving 17% of federal spending, "some of which was soon exempted from reduction." That meant that, "'administration policies and political decisions have progressively insulated 90 percent of the fiscal equation from consideration.'"[30] By pursuing more measured cuts Reagan's achievements in budget cuts were far more modest than the rhetoric would suggest: "Throughout the Reagan first term, real spending . . . increased at a rate of 3.7 percent annually, less than the 5 percent annual increase of the Carter years but hardly revolutionary."[31] For some—including David Stockman—this decision seemed to betray the "Reagan Revolution."

Despite the disappointment experienced by some economic conservatives, Reagan intended to clarify the terms of the Reagan Revolution, not to abandon it. Reagan cemented a diverse coalition committed to broadly conceived conservative principles by assuring that the implementation of those principles would not alienate large swaths of that coalition. Preserving Social Security and other entitlements perhaps compromised his economic goals, though Reagan sought to do so only in order to preserve a larger conservative coalition whose commitment to limited government would prove durable. Thus, he moderated his economic goals in order to articulate a conservative philosophy that would encourage socially minded conservatives to support conservative economics over time. Exempting these major programs allowed him to parry liberal attacks that conservatives really favored economic recovery *at the expense of* social solidarity. In so doing, he preserved a core message necessary to a principled consensus: conservative

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[30] Cannon, *Reagan*, 241. Cannon notes that he quotes or paraphrases William Greider, "The Education of David Stockman," *The Atlantic*, December 1981.

[31] Cannon 240

economics and budget cuts are means to strengthening the family by spurring economic growth; they are not means of achieving abstract ideological goals which can too easily be perceived as hurting families.[32]

Stopping waste, fraud, and corruption. A second indication that Reagan moderated his economic attack on the welfare state came in his attack on waste, fraud, and corruption. Beyond the salutary economic effects of his budget cuts, Reagan explained that budget cuts were necessary to protect the integrity of social welfare for the truly needy. Without cuts, the expansive, complex, and unwieldy federal bureaucracy fostered inefficiency among administrators and fraud among beneficiaries. The size of the welfare state made it an obnoxious burden on taxpayers by undermining the soundness of the system itself. Reagan's focus on waste, fraud, and corruption allowed him to distinguish cutting benefits in the best interests of the programs and cutting benefits in an attempt to dismantle the program. Reagan once again articulated a conservative economic program that held social solidarity as the preeminent goal.

In the same Chicago address to free-market conservatives in which Reagan explained budget cuts as a means to economic prosperity, he also argued that "[o]ne of the most critical elements" in his economic program designed to reduce federal spending

[32] After the 1982 budget passed, Reagan did approve an ill-conceived plan advanced by David Stockman to dramatically cut Social Security benefits for those taking early retirement. By all accounts, Reagan's decision to allow the proposal was inconsistent with Reagan's budget discipline during 1981, and Reagan's consistent affirmation of Social Security throughout his whole administration. Cannon suggests that Stockman obfuscated the extent of the cuts, while Hayward, questioning that account, suggests that Reagan was over-confident from his 1982 budget triumph. In any case, the White House almost immediately distanced itself from the proposal, and did not fight for it as Republicans and Democrats in Congress decisively rejected it. Smarting from this episode, and facing a crisis in Social Security funding, Reagan supported bi-partisan Social Security reform in 1983 that raised taxes and raised the retirement age, demonstrating both his political penance for the Stockman plan, and his commitment to the rhetorical promises he made to protect Social Security.

meant stopping "[w]aste, extravagance, abuse, and outright fraud."[33] He elaborated on this message in a nationally televised campaign address. He stated that fighting such corruption would account for "spending reductions of 10 percent by fiscal year 1984," which meant that his "strategy for spending control does not require slashing necessary programs. To the contrary, I will defend the integrity of the Social Security system and work to improve those programs which provide for the disadvantaged and those in need."[34] His promise to avoid "slashing necessary programs" was emblematic of his attempt to justify cutting a significant portion of discretionary welfare expenses from the federal budget without attacking a welfare state *per se*.

In perhaps the most evident appeal to assuage New Deal Democrats that limited government need not mean austere government, Reagan likened his proposals to Franklin Roosevelt's refrain for economy in government. Thus, in his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, Reagan went so far as to liken himself to Franklin Roosevelt by quoting the Democratic icon's acceptance speech at the 1932 Democratic National Convention, where he said that "[f]or three long years I have been going up and down this country preaching that government—federal, state, and local—costs too much. I shall not stop that preaching. As an immediate program of action, we must abolish useless offices."[35] Quoting FDR in this way showed that a responsibly administered federal welfare system required a degree of cuts in discretionary programming, but that

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[33] Reagan, "Remarks at the International Business Council in Chicago," September 9, 1980.

[34] Ronald Reagan, "Televised Campaign Address 'A Vital Economy: Jobs, Growth, and Progress for Americans,'" October 24, 1980, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on September 23, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85201.

[35] Ronald Reagan, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit," July 17, 1980. Last accessed on September 23, 2013.*The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25970.

such cuts did not in themselves suggest that federal welfare was improper or next on the chopping block.

In his annual address to Congress in 1982, Reagan reiterated that he proposed cutting welfare benefits in certain discretionary programs because doing so would ultimately strengthen the welfare system for the truly needy, while also protecting the interests of all taxpayers. He began by reiterating that "waste and fraud are serious problems," citing evidence from the testimony of federal investigators that "'corruption has permeated virtually every area of the Medicare and Medicaid health care industry,'" while also reporting that "many of the people who are cheating the system were 'very confident that nothing was going to happen to them.'" These examples of fraud and waste meant that "[n]ot only the taxpayers are defrauded; the people with real dependency on these programs are deprived of what they need, because available resources are going not to the needy, but to the greedy." In making this argument, Reagan sought to dispel the notion that "these or any programs cannot be made more efficient and economical." His search for efficiency and economy was not, he argued, a preoccupation with pinching pennies, but instead an attempt to protect "[t]he entitlement programs that make up our safety net for the truly needy," and in so doing protect the "worthy goals and many deserving recipients" of these programs. In order "to see to it that these programs really help those whom they were designed to help," it was necessary "to bring their spiraling costs under control." For this reason, he asked his audience to not "be fooled by those who proclaim that spending cuts will deprive the elderly, the needy, and the helpless. The Federal Government will still subsidize 95 million meals every day. That's one out of seven of all the meals served in America. Head Start, senior nutrition programs, and child

welfare programs will not be cut from the levels we proposed last year. More than one-half billion dollars has been proposed for minority business assistance." Reagan was careful to show that even traditionally Republican interests were not off limits, and thus called on Congress to "plug unwarranted tax loopholes and strengthen the law which requires all large corporations to pay a minimum tax."[36]

The idea of trimming welfare to make it more lean and healthy pointed back to the argument he made about prosperity and social solidarity. Neither message was necessary to persuade economic conservatives of the need for cutting budgets (nor, for the reasons stated above, were economic conservatives particularly pleased about Reagan's defense of welfare). To the contrary, both explanations reflect Reagan's belief that socially minded conservatives could come to appreciate and see their interests served by budget cuts, in so much as they were compatible and even affirmed their own conceptions of limited government. Polling data indicates that Reagan developed significant support among middle-income Americans generally (which included but was not coextensive with social conservatives). In September 1981, a majority of families making $15,000 or more annually expected improvement as a result of Reagan's economic policies. From $10,000 to $14,999, support "split evenly," while only those making $10,000 or less "thought they would be hurt."[37] Reagan maintained the support of these lower-to-middle income groups in the 1984 election and with respect to his 1986 tax reform legislation. In 1984, Reagan won 46% of those making less than $12,500

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[36] Ronald Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Reporting on the State of the Union," January 26, 1982, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on September 23, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42687.

[37] "Approval of Reagan and Economy Plan Found Stable in Poll," *New York Times*, September 10, 1981.

annually, while winning 58% of those making between $12,500 and $24,999.[38] In one illustrative example, Reagan polled much stronger that Walter Mondale among union members, despite the strong backing Mondale received from labor leaders. For instance, in Michigan, Reagan "held a slight edge among union members polled, 50 percent to 49 percent.[39] Nationally, Reagan lost a majority of union households, though he would hold 46% of their support.[40] With respect to the 1985 tax reform, Reagan—once again—drew a clear majority—60%--among families making between $12,500 and $24,999, while facing an opposition from 44% of those making less than $12,500.

These numbers demonstrate that Reagan presented his economic program in a way that could earn the support of many of the lower-to-middle income Americans, and traditionally Democratic socio-economic groups (like labor households), despite the fact that conservative economics had previously been understood as a threat to these very interests. Reagan anticipated and deliberately sought this outcome, in part, by using the language of social conservatism, and tempering the preferences of economic conservatives, to draw coalitional groups into an economic program that they may have otherwise perceived as alien to them.

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[38] Roper Center, "How Groups Voted in 1984," Survey by CBS News and the New York Times, last accessed on February 17, 2014, http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/how_groups_voted/voted_84.html.

[39] "Poll in Michigan Finds Majority Prefer Reagan," *The New York Times,* June 26, 1984.

[40] Roper Center, "How Groups Voted in 1984," Survey by CBS News and the New York Times, last accessed on February 17, 2014, http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/how_groups_voted/voted_84.html.

Tax Cuts: Prosperity over a Balanced Budget

The second pillar of Reagan's economic program—tax cuts—also demonstrated an attempt to advance a conservative economic program that moderated economic conservatives, and potentially drew in social conservatives who were once part of the New Deal coalition. Supply-side economics was vital to this goal. The economic theory that emerged in the mid-1970s provided conservative Republicans an economic rationale that emphasized prosperity and growth instead of thrift and responsibility—terms that were too easily turned against Republicans. This innovative economic policy cut against traditional Republican attachment to budget balancing achieved through coordinated budget and tax cuts. Of course, the supply-siders promised balanced budgets as well, but only as a consequence of the massive growth they predicted would occur as a result of drastic tax cuts. For traditional Republicans, this inverted cause and effect; a responsibly balanced budget spurred economic growth, not the other way around. Thus, in 1980 Reagan embraced the argument that Goldwater heaped scorn on and voted against in 1964: that the federal government can, through tax cuts, spur economic growth and prosperity.

The transformation allowed Republicans to take for themselves a feather that had been in the Democratic cap since the years immediately following the war: Republicans became the party of prosperity. Thus, as Lou Cannon noted, "[t]he conviction that the size of the economic pie must be increased, not simply sliced differently, was fundamental to supply-side doctrine. For [New York Representative Jack]Kemp and others who sought to convert traditionally Democratic blue-collar voters to Republicanism, this was a more appealing message than orthodox 'trickle-down'

economics that cast Republicans as defenders of wealth and privilege."[41] The Reagan tax cuts and supply-side economics were an "audacious break with existing economic thought, and its advocates . . . were nothing if not audacious in their representation of its promised effects."[42] Reagan's decision to pursue the supply-side program provided him the opportunity to reaffirm a principled consensus because it appealed to both economic and social conservatives.

Tax Cuts and the Rhetoric of Prosperity. Reagan's tax-cut rhetoric reflected the prosperity focus of supply-side economics. On Labor Day in 1980, Reagan tailored an address at Liberty State Park to New Jersey working-class voters who traditionally belonged to the New Deal coalition. Reagan began by contrasting liberal economic turmoil with the promise of conservative economic prosperity. Examples abounded of the contemporary economic plight, especially for working-class Americans: "[e]ight million out of work. Inflation running at 18 percent in the first quarter of 1980. Black unemployment at about 14 percent. . . . Through [Carter's] inflation he has raised taxes on the American people by 30 percent—while their real income has risen only 20 percent." Just as he did in Chicago, Reagan associated economic failure with a philosophy of government that championed a "crushing burden of taxation that limits investment, production, and the generation of real wealth for our people;" high taxes constituted a "no-growth policy" and bespoke an "ever-shrinking economic pie with

[41] Cannon, *Reagan*, 236.

[42] Hayward, *The Age of Reagan*, 60.

smaller pieces for each of us." By contrast, Reagan low-tax conservatism promised prosperity for all: "[w]e can have a bigger pie with bigger slices for everyone."[43]

Reagan's argument for prosperity was more than an appeal to self-interest, though. It was also a way to use concrete benefits to explain the principles behind conservatism. That is, Reagan argued that tax cuts would generate prosperity because of his principled conviction that independent civil society, not government activism would spur economic growth. Reagan's attack on government activism, therefore, had more to do with his optimism about the American people than an ideological vendetta, as seemed to be the case with Goldwater. He argued that Carter "favors the current crushing tax burden because it fits into his philosophy of government as the dominating force in American economic life."[44] The domination of government necessitated higher taxes, because increased government activity required it, but also because it perpetuated government superiority over the private institutions of civil society. That meant that high taxes were not an economic philosophy *per se,* but a political philosophy with deleterious economic consequences. Meanwhile, the conservative approach to taxation reflected a principled conviction as well; lower taxes indicated the conservative belief that smaller, less active (and therefore, less expensive) government would grant civil society the independence that allowed it to thrive. In this way, Reagan did not rest on an economic argument for tax cuts, but used that specific economic policy to point to larger, overarching and shared principles; he asked Republicans to support tax cuts because of

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[43] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at Liberty State Park, Jersey City, New Jersey," September 1, 1980, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on September 24, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85203.

[44] Reagan, "Televised Campaign Address 'A Vital Economy: Jobs, Growth, and Progress for Americans'" October 24, 1980.

their belief in civil society, not out of a sophisticated or especially self-interested understanding of economic policy.

Tax cuts and the American family. Reagan reinforced his message that prosperity strengthened civil society by expounding the benefits of tax cuts on the American family. Tax cuts would not only restore prosperity for the nation, but would encourage each American home to save and invest in the family. Reagan argued in his 1980 Labor Day address, for instance, that scaling back the "crushing burden of taxation" did more than diminish the limits on "investment, production, and the generation of real wealth for our people," it restored to individuals the hope to "acquire and own a home," to contribute more to savings, and to pass on more to "our children," so that they too can experience the American dream that "brought so many of us or our parents and grandparents to this land." He even spoke to the particular concerns of America's working class families by adopting a McKinley-like argument that labor was better served by policies that were predicated upon its shared interests with management rather than by following politicians that set it against management. Thus, he argued that prosperity induced by tax cuts would be the means to "bring labor and management together for America" because they would accomplish the growth and productivity desired by both labor and management. "When we talk about tax cuts," he said, "[w]e are talking about jobs, and productivity and wages."[45] In sum, tax cuts represented more than the promise of macro-economic prosperity; they were personal and bespoke a family's upward mobility. They contained the possibilities of savings and investment for homes, and of wages and profits that meant job security.

[45] Reagan, "Remarks at Liberty State Park, Jersey City, New Jersey," September 1, 1980.

Reagan reiterated this message in a nationally televised campaign address. He explained that the "home transcends mere economics. It is part of your life, not just a part of the economy." Tax cuts, and the prosperity they would spur, meant something concrete for building up the American family and home. Thus, to make this connection explicit, part of Reagan's tax cut proposal included a request that "Congress . . . increase the amount of savings account income exempt from taxation, to encourage Americans to increase their savings and generate new capital for home loans," all with a view toward helping spur in the American people the will to "regain control of their government."[46] In another example, now President and pushing for the passage of his tax cut, Reagan addressed the AFL-CIO to stress the relevance of tax cuts for ordinary working families:

> There are just too many people in this town who think this money belongs to the Government. Well, it doesn't. It's your money. It's your sons' and daughters' money that they're hoping to use for a new home. It's your parents' money that they need for a decent retirement. And if we do nothing else in this administration, we're going to convince this city that the power, the money, and the responsibility in this country begins and ends with the people and not with some cinder block building in Washington, D.C.[47]

High taxes did more than mire the country in stagnation and high inflation, they took money from ordinary citizens to pay for federal programming that competed with the personal, private goals of ordinary citizens, which hampered the future of budding families and foreclosed investment for parents entering retirement. In this sense, Reagan returned to the theme from his inaugural address: the ambition of liberal policy makers burdened the ordinary, forgotten American; money could stay with families, or it could

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[46] Reagan, "Televised Campaign Address 'A Vital Economy: Jobs, Growth, and Progress for Americans,'" October 24, 1980.

[47] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the National Conference of the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO," March 30, 1981, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on February 6, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43616.

fund "some cinder block building in Washington, D.C." Reagan's emphasis on family helped him bring into relief that tax cuts were not merely part of an ideological battle against liberalism, nor were they simply a way to increase the GDP. Tax cuts reflected a conservative principle that civil society and the family were more vibrant when they exercised their prerogatives of self-determination. In this way, Reagan tied together the material benefits of conservatism—prosperity and more money for American families—with the principled conception of limited government.

Social Issues and Economic Conservatives

Reagan's economic program reflected a clear attempt to structure and explain his economic policies in such a way as to draw in those social conservatives whose economic preferences pointed back to their traditional allegiance to the New Deal Democratic coalition. But Reagan also drew social and economic conservatives together by advocating non-economic social issues that both wings of the conservative coalition shared. In particular, I examine Reagan's educational policies to draw attention to Reagan's principled rhetoric: his explaining specific policies that appeal to the concrete interests of specific groups, but explaining those policies in principled terms in order to widen their appeal across a diverse coalition. Two examples in particular stand out. First, Reagan pushed very hard in his first term to end categorical federal grants to the states that provided money for local education in exchange for specific regulatory controls. Instead, he proposed that the federal government provide block grants to states that would reduce federal funding, but also provide local districts the flexibility to decide how to spend the money. Second, during Reagan's first and second terms, he proposed federally funded tuition tax credits and private school vouchers that were designed to reduce the

tax burden on families sending their children to private, and more often than not, religious and parochial schools. In both cases, Reagan presented his education proposals in ways that appealed to the shared principles of social and economic conservatives, thereby reinforcing their consensus on shared conservative principles.

These policies reflected an especially social focus in conservatism, and consequently were important to advance social conservatives' interests in an administration that was dominated by economic policies. Reagan himself acknowledged a tension between economic and social policies, noting, for instance, the perception of some critics that he has been "strong on rhetoric" but unwilling to do "any physical pushing" for the issues inherently important to social conservatives, choosing instead to expend his energy for favored economic policies.[48] In this vein, journalists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak argued that the Reagan team saw the New Christian Right, comprising southern Evangelical and Fundamentalist Protestants, as "providing strong emotional support for the Reagan candidacy but mainly buttressing voters already strongly trending against Carter. These pro-family voters would have backed Reagan with or without pulpit politics."[49] Critics accused Reagan of taking these votes for granted and neglected their policy preferences. The corollary argument, moreover, was that Reagan nominally supported social policies such as these as palliatives that were not "enough to satisfy" social conservatives, but were sufficient "at least to quiet political forces driving the social issues."[50]

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[48] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to Members of the National Catholic Educational Association ," April 7, 1983,*The American Presidency Project*, Last accessed on September 5, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41151.

[49] Evans and Novak, *The Reagan Revolution*, 215.

[50] Evans and Novak, 218.

In fact, however, Reagan did push strongly to advance these social policies. Not only did they inherently appeal to social conservatives; they also allowed Reagan to explain the economic benefits of certain social programs to economic conservatives. Thus, his education policies provide further evidence of what Reagan himself claimed to be doing—drawing social and economic conservatives together under a common principled consensus against big government, and in so doing cultivating a diverse, but coherent coalition. Doing so would help each portion of the coalition to see in the policies favored by the other a common cause to restore individual self-government and liberty, even if the policies themselves originated from the narrower preferences of a section of the conservative movement. Reagan explained to economic conservatives the value of certain social goals just as he explained to social conservatives the value of certain economic goals, both of which aimed at curtailing the overextension of the federal government.

Block Grants and Education Policy

In a key feature of his education policy, Reagan proposed to replace categorical grants with block grants to support local education. The policy proposal had social and economic dimensions. As a matter of economics, the block grants would replace categorical grants-in-aid, by which the federal government categorized aid according to specific goals and priorities set at the federal level. Reagan observed that the number of categorical grants in a range of different policy areas had exploded since the 1960s, creating extensive federal budget responsibilities for a number of programs that once were under the states' competence. "In 1960," Reagan noted in his second annual address to Congress, "the Federal Government had 132 categorical grant programs, costing $7

billion. When I took office, there were approximately 500, costing nearly a hundred billion dollars—13 programs for energy, 36 for pollution control, 66 for social services, 90 for education. And here in the Congress, it takes at least 166 committees just to try to keep track of them."[51] Reagan argued that categorical grants represented a huge financial burden on the tax payer, noting that in twenty years there had developed five times as many categorical grants and over ten times the amount of money was being spent for such grants.

But these economic arguments blended with structural arguments about the federal/state relationship which pointed to shared ground between the social preferences of social and economic conservatives. Reagan alluded to a larger principled argument about the expansion of the federal government by referring to the number of Congressional committees necessary to oversee the categorical grants; the proliferation of oversight committees reflected a loss in the capacity for self-rule over traditionally local matters. He made the connection more explicit when, in the same address, he referred to the categorical grants creating a "jungle" which "led to a distortion in the vital functions of the government." Categorical grants became so numerous that neither Congress nor the executive could adequately manage and oversee their administration. In this sense, Reagan also indicted the massive and complex federal bureaucracy, which to some degree was born out of these categorical grants, and which not only displaced local government responsibility but which also proved unwieldy itself. For economic conservatives, more control by local government meant fewer universal maxims from Washington, and therefore bespoke a greater degree of spontaneous order; consequently,

[51] Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Reporting on the State of the Union ," January 26, 1982.

ending categorical grants chipped away at bureaucratic centralization and conformed to the social attitudes of economic conservatives.

These social objections to categorical grants also overlapped in important ways with the specific goals of social conservatives, particularly among southern, Protestant Christian conservatives. Evans and Novak explained that "Reagan's pledge to get the federal government out of local education went a long way toward the goals of the Moral Majority." It would have the effect of "cut[ting] the lines of control between the Department of Education and local schools systems. No longer could the feds dictate policy through the complex regulations and directives." Such a move would, in the words of Reagan Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, restore the influence of "families and students—not the federal government" in local education.[52] Southern Protestants would likely have connected such a critique of federal controls over education policies with the efforts by the federal judiciary—another remote and morally elite federal institution—to remove prayer from local public schools. Reagan's argument about the distortion of local self-rule, therefore, spoke to piqued social conservatives, especially southern Protestants, for whom self-rule meant the freedom to instill socially conservative, family values through an educational system that could adequately reflect the wishes and input of local communities.

In public addresses, Reagan continually tied together the economic and social components of the argument for block grants to the states. In his first annual address to Congress, Reagan introduced the block grants by explaining their economic import, namely as part of reducing the federal deficit; thus, he said that block grants would

[52] Evan and Novak, *The Reagan Revolution*, 221.

"reduce wasteful administrative overhead" by giving "local governments and States more flexibility and control." Reducing overhead meant eliminating "a mass of Federal regulations and Federal paperwork" in an effort to shift "the resources and decision-making authority to local and State government." The budget would benefit by "$23.9 billion over the next 5 years."

Reagan followed this general argument for block grants with a specific argument about educational policy in particular. His argument focused on the importance of deregulation in education policy, and he stressed that the social benefits of deregulation outweighed losses in funding. In so doing, Reagan flipped a liberal criticism of bloc grants —that less federal money meant lower quality education—on its head. Reagan argued that federal budgetary support for local schools was minimal, while its regulatory effect was extensive: "let me point out that Federal aid to education amounts to only 8 percent of the total educational funding, and for this 8 percent, the Federal Government has insisted on a tremendously disproportionate share of control over our schools." Cutting bloc grants, therefore, would have a minimal economic effect on schools receiving the money, while it would have tremendous social benefits for those local governments and communities that had ceded significant control of their own education to the federal government. By 1980, Reagan argued, categorical grants were not about monetary support; they were a pretense for rule by federal bureaucracy instead of local community. Thus, while block grants comprised part of Reagan's economic program, their significance lay in their salutary social effect.

While Reagan devoted most of his first year to budget cuts and tax cuts, he continued to advocate for block grants after he pushed his economic policies through

Congress. Thus, in a September 1981 address on his Program for Economic Recovery, Reagan suggested eliminating the Department of Education, which would not only "reduce the budget but [also] ensure that local needs and preferences, rather than the wishes of Washington, determine the education of our children."[53] In the spring of 1982 Reagan visited three Southern state legislatures—Alabama, Tennessee, and Oklahoma—to deliver a similar message on block grants: to "restore accountability to government" by "transfer[ring] to our States" several federal programs, "such as education." In so doing, Reagan argued that the federal government would "send back to you the tax sources to pay for [these programs] as well."[54] In this example, Reagan blended both social and economic arguments. He began with the promise of restoring local self-government in education and like areas, while then turning to an economic argument about reducing the federal tax burden, and thereby reducing the double tax burden on individual citizens that hurt state revenues. Reagan's consistent support for education reform—achieved by restoring local control and influence—demonstrated a consistent attempt to blend socially and economically conservative arguments behind one program that either wing of the coalition could support.

This account differs from a prevailing view of Reagan's management of the economic/social divide. For instance, Evans and Novak claimed that the block grant scheme was principally about economics, implying that Stockman conceived this cost-cutting method, and that he "buried [it] inside the budget documents drafted for

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[53] Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on the Program for Economic Recovery," September 24, 1981,*The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on February 7, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44296.

[54] Ronald Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Tennessee State Legislature in Nashville ," March 15, 1982,*The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on February 7, 2014, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42270.

Congress;" or that block grants would "have been there with or without encouragement from the Moral Majority" since, unlike tangential social issues "like abortion and school prayer," block grants had always "been an integral part of the Reagan Revolution." But these explanations miss the significance of Reagan's principled rhetoric. Reagan explained that block grants would have important economic and social benefits. That means that, by choosing to advance block grants, Reagan advanced a policy with both economic and social impacts. In so doing, he highlighted the way in which economic and social conservatives shared an interest in limited government, even if they did so for different reasons. Moreover, by limiting his support for the most charged and divisive issues, Reagan chose instead to advance a more limited social policy, but one that could conceivably draw in economic conservatives in a way that would encourage them to consider their shared social goals with southern, biblical faith conservatives. Conversely, block grants showed those same social conservatives how economic policies come with certain social benefits that encouraged them to consider their shared goals with economic conservatives. Block grants, therefore, represented an important opportunity to explain how specific, conservative policies revealed the shared principles underlying diverse groups with different motivations and preferences.

Tuition Tax Credits

Reagan featured a second, prominent aspect of his education policy: tuition tax credits and school vouchers for parents sending their children to private or religious schools. The administration tried twice in its first term to advance such programs, once in 1982 and again in 1983. The first bill made it out of a Senate committee in September, but Speaker Tip O'Neil squelched the bill by saying that the House would not vote on it

before the October recess. Congress did vote on a 1983 bill, though it went down in the Senate by wide margins. Support and opposition to the bill cut across partisan boundaries. Traditional Democratic interest groups like the public school lobby placed heavy pressure on Democrats to oppose the bill, arguing that vouchers decreased the quality of public education and, in some cases, encouraged school segregation. Some voiced civil rights concerns that the vouchers would go to segregated private schools, or that vouchers encourage wealthier, white children to congregate in private schools, encouraging a kind of *de facto* segregation. Others claimed vouchers violated the establishment clause by providing tax money for religious education. Republicans and Democrats alike made a fiscal complaint too. The proposal would have cost $800 million by 1984, and as Senator John Chafee, a liberal Republican from Rhode Island, said, "'I find it astonishing that when the federal deficit is up to $150 billion . . . that at this time we race forward to embrace a new program. Plainly we can't afford it.'"[55] Finally, the 1982 and 1983 efforts faced memories of Congress's last attempt to enact tuition tax credits in a 1978 bill, which provoked a "bruising lobbying battle between public and private school interests"; in 1978, both houses passed their own versions of a bill that included some provision for the credits, but in the face of a promised veto, the House-Senate conference that met to reconcile the two bills dropped the credits from the final version.

Like the block grant issue, the school voucher program had unique appeals for social conservatives, though a different sub-group within the socially conservative wing. Support concentrated in northern, ethnic and Catholic voters, and the lower-to-mid

[55] "Tuition tax credits bill to Senate floor," *The Telegraph-Hearld* (Dubuque, Iowa), September 17, 1982.

income bloc, rather than among the southern, biblical-faith conservatives. For instance, "New York parochial school supporters delivered 750,000 letters" urging Reagan to put his weight behind the program. Since the Northeast and industrialized Midwest contained those Catholics or lower-income, urban dwellers who both were most likely to materially benefit from the program, those regions drove the coalition toward the proposal. But despite the additional costs associated with the program—which Chafee, among others in the coalition, called attention to—Reagan used the voucher program as an opportunity to emphasize the shared principles of economic and social conservatives.

Reagan's Economic Argument. From an economic perspective, vouchers should have aroused the ire of budget hawks and libertarian economic conservatives. But Reagan saw an opportunity in the vouchers program to affirm conservative economics, rather than abandon it. For instance, in one radio address in 1982, Reagan wove vouchers into larger economic themes in an address with a title that indicated its economic focus: "Taxes, the Tuition Tax Credits, and Interest Rates." Reagan explained vouchers as a tax cut working at two levels. At one level, since vouchers were available only to low-income earners, they effectively cut the taxes of citizens coming from urban areas where "40 percent of the parochial school students are from minority neighborhoods." These families, Reagan argued, paid "their full share of taxes to fund the public schools. . . .I think they're entitled to some relief since they're supporting two school systems and only using one."

But Reagan moved from this immediate tax relief for a very specific group to the indirect form of tax relief: "How high would [public school] taxes go for everyone if

those parents decided to send their children to public schools?"[56] Here Reagan suggested that encouraging families to attend private, independent institutions would reduce the fiscal burden on public schools by reducing their teaching load—schools would not lose money through a federal voucher program, but they would have more freedom to use their money with fewer students to accommodate. In a Question-and-Answer session with editors of religious publications, Reagan reiterated this point by asking his audience to "do a little arithmetic" to figure out who would "pick up the burden" if "all these independent schools disappeared tomorrow."[57] By strengthening independent, civic institutions, vouchers prevented a broader tax burden that citizens would surely face if those independent institutions closed and their patrons flooded the public school system.

Reagan elaborated on the benefit of vouchers for low-income families. First, Reagan insisted that lower-income earners should especially receive tax relief. Reagan argued that it was unfair that those families sending their children to private school who in effect paid tuition twice—once through their taxes and again in their tuition payments. As was the case with budget and tax cuts, Reagan insisted that civil society would flourish when granted a degree of independence from an overbearing government, which would lead to prosperity that would ultimately reinforce the resilience of independent institutions. Vouchers and tuition tax credits extended this freedom to citizens whose lesser means made it more difficult for them to access independent, civic institutions; vouchers extended the kind of free choice and free association that made an independent

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[56] Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Taxes, the Tuition Tax Credit, and Interest Rates," April 24, 1982, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on September 18, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42445.

[57] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session on Proposed Tuition Tax Credit Legislation With Editors of Religious Publications," September 14, 1982, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on September 26, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42970.

civic society fundamentally different from the overbearing state. In an address to the National Catholic Educational Association, Reagan described the tuition tax credit as "a matter of tax equity for working, taxpaying citizens . . . [or] those . . . who are most strapped by inflation, oppressive taxation, and the recession that grips us all."[58] Vouchers were one way to assure that the principles underlying the tax and budget cuts—liberty, choice, and self-rule—applied to those who might be in lower-income groups affected disproportionately by the failures of liberal economics. Reagan reiterated this point in a letter he wrote to Congressional leaders accompanying the administration's proposed legislation, in which he pointed out that in addition to paying "state and local taxation," the cost of private school tuition "severely limited the ability of lower-income families to choose the nonpublic educational alternative for their children."[59] In effect, taxation foreclosed the full enjoyment of civil society to many families, and the voucher was a kind of tax cut that applied the principles of his economic program to those most deserving of economic relief.

Reagan's Social Argument. Reagan made two kinds of social arguments for school vouchers—those addressing the social proclivities of economic libertarians on the one hand, and those of social or religious conservatives on the other. Libertarianism entailed a social philosophy complementing its economic philosophy—the free market not only led to economic productivity, but it also represented a way to organize human

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[58] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks to the National Catholic Education Association in Chicago, Illinois," April 15, 1982, *The American Presidency Project*, last accessed on September 26, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42399.

[59] Ronald Reagan, "Letter to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate Transmitting Proposed Legislation on Federal Income Tax Credit for Nonpublic School Tuition," June 22, 1982, *The American Presidency Project,* last accessed on September 26, 2013, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42662.

associations that maximized individual liberty. Reagan acknowledged these philosophic proclivities in his school voucher advocacy by emphasizing how libertarian principles like competitiveness and decentralization would help education flourish.

Reagan asserted that vouchers would actually strengthen public schools, despite the fact that public schools fiercely opposed them. School vouchers would introduce competitive, free-market principles into education, and in so doing would incentivize public schools to provide the highest quality education possible. Thus, Reagan argued in his address to the National Catholic Educational Association that "alternatives to public education tend to strengthen public education." He went on to elaborate by saying that "[e]xcellence demands competition among students and among schools," and that the "freedom to choose what type of education is best for each child" has long been part of the American tradition, as well as a basis a contributing factor to the quality of American education. He concluded this line of thought by contrasting the expanded opportunities that competition affords with the stifling effect of settling for monopoly, and "the evils that go with a monopoly."[60] Although vouchers represented another government expenditure, it was an expense in the service of fostering free market principles, and this purpose should distinguish it from other government expenses.

Reagan also tied vouchers into his larger themes of contrasting decentralization and freedom with centralization and bureaucratic elitism. Like competition, economic libertarians understood decentralization as a structural feature which afforded greater degrees of liberty and diminished the stifling effects of centralized, remote government. For instance, a 1985 article appearing in a Cato Institute journal praised tuition tax credits

[60] Reagan, "Remarks to Members of the National Catholic Educational Association ," April 7, 1983.

and vouchers as decentralized, "neopluralist" reform proposals that enabled "parents, teachers, and principals" that were "in daily contact with real children" to set educational policy. The alternative, the author argued, reinforced the status quo, involving more and more money going to the Department of Education. This alternative enjoyed support from those groups self-interested in preserving the status quo, like the American Federation of Teachers or the National Education Association.[61]

Reagan recognized these social components of libertarianism, and explained how vouchers were a way to counter act the prevailing liberal statism, on account of which "taxes and inflation have ballooned," with the effect of diminishing Americans' opportunity to opt for private social institutions. In other words, by creating inflation, liberal economics so burdened American citizens as to effectively compel them to avail themselves of public programs—public education being one example. With more people becoming dependent on public programs, however, those programs became more expensive, and encouraged the very government spending and taxation that created the economic conditions that pushed citizens into public programs in the first place. Although vouchers represented another public expense, they would help break that cycle by enriching citizens' capacity to choose private institutions instead of public ones, which, as Reagan said, would "restore the pluralism that has always been the strength of our society." Reagan drove this point home by contrasting liberal education policy, which elevated "some isolated bureaucrat in Washington" with "the home," where education is

[61] Lawrence A. Uzzell, "Contradictions of Centralized Education," *Cato Policy Analysis* 53 (1985), 1-2.

a "parental right and responsibility."[62] Vouchers, therefore, not only instituted competitive principles that enriched private and public education, but they also represented a way to restore a kind of choice to individual American families that ebbed away as the federal government subsidized public education, and thereby made the local community dependent on federal bureaucrats.

Vouchers and tuition tax credits were measures that inherently appealed to social conservatives for social reasons. Reagan attempted to make them attractive to economic conservatives as well by explaining how they comported with economic and social principles of economic conservatives. Thus, he simultaneously lauded vouchers ability to complement the familial goal of "fill[ing] young minds with the knowledge and young hearts with the morality, the understanding and compassion that they will need to live in happiness and fulfillment," while also praising vouchers' potential to significantly reduce the tax burden of every citizen in local communities, even those not sending their children to public schools.[63] Vouchers highlighted the principled consensus that Reagan strove for because it was a policy that diverse groups could support for different reasons, and in so doing come to see the ways in which they shared complementary interests and overarching principles.

Limited government and free civil society meant different things to social and economic conservatives, but policies like vouchers or block grants provided evidence that conservatism comprised coherent political principles that united groups whose interests and preferences often conflicted. Political commentary throughout the 1980s and 1990s

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[62] Reagan, "Remarks to the National Catholic Education Association in Chicago, Illinois," April 15, 1982.

[63] Ibid.

noted the uneasy place of social conservatives in the Reagan coalition. Indeed, Pat Robertson's run for the party nomination in 1988 and Patrick Buchanan's run in 1992 indicate frustration at with how their favored policies fared with Reagan, as well as their dissatisfaction with the socially moderate George H.W. Bush. But the presence of intra-party conflict does not itself indicate that social conservatives were not a stable part of a -conservative principled consensus. To the contrary, in 1984 the religious right aimed "to register two million new voters" who were "sure to favor Mr. Reagan."[64] Reagan drew this support in spite of the already vocal criticism that his support for religious right preferences was merely symbolic. Moreover, George H.W. Bush's support among Protestants dropped only three percentage points—to 58% from 61%--when compared to Reagan's 1984 election; Bush still had a safe majority. Bush did lose significantly more Catholics—to 49% from 61%--though Catholics' social preferences were far less homogeneous than Protestants.[65] The strength of the conservative consensus, moreover, was reflected in Bill Clinton's presidency. Not only did he proclaim the era of big government to be over, but he also to some extent donned the mantle of social conservatism (support for abortion being an obvious exception). He advocated and signed the Defense of Marriage Act, and supported telecommunications regulations that would give parents greater power to restrict their children's access to pornography on television and the internet. Reagan's limited advocacy of key social issues like abortion and school prayer illustrates his awareness that these issues, though highly motivating for social conservatives, were potentially explosive for his larger coalition. Reagan's explanation of

[64] Rich Jaroslovsky, "Politics '84—Bible is the Battle Cry: Religious Right Counts on Reagan," *Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 1984.

[65] U.S. Presidential Election Center, last accessed on February 17, 2014. http://www.gallup.com/poll/154559/us-presidential-election-center.aspx

these educational policies demonstrates his attempt to heed the larger policy concerns of social conservatives, but to do so in a way that would encourage them to see themselves as part of a larger whole. And while journalists and scholars highlight the unrest of social conservatives in the coalition, much of the Republican legacy owes to their place in the coalition: Republican's position as the pro-life party, strong support among church goers, the place of federalism within the party's larger narrative, and the political activism of evangelicals in the South and Midwest.

Conclusion: Creating a Politically Effective Whole

Reagan positioned himself within the Republican Party as a leader who saw, and could articulate, a basis for a Republican, conservative majority. Doing so required Reagan to draw together distinct conservative groups. First, he needed to appeal to socially minded former New Deal conservatives who resisted liberal social policy more than liberal economic policy. On the other hand, traditional Republicans as well as libertarian Republicans were far less concerned with liberal social issues like abortion or school prayer, but did see in the Carter administration—and all its economic turmoil—the urgent need to scale back the liberal welfare state and reinstitute free market principles. In reconciling these two groups, Reagan managed to unite Goldwater's early but fervid conservative insurgency with Nixon's far more diffuse but temporary and pragmatic silent majority into a durable coalition united by a shared conviction in conservative principles of limited government and an independent and vibrant civil society. By establishing this conservative majority, Reagan structured inter-party competition for years to come, and established a rhetorical framework in a similar way as FDR had placed Democrats at the center of the political solar system.

Reagan created this principled consensus through his principled rhetoric. He appealed to the principles of conservatism to unite the two movements he identified in his New Republican Party speech—the diverse groups associated with both social and economic conservatives. But since these movements cut across traditional party boundaries, Reagan did not castigate Democrats in order to polarize the electorate. Instead, he distinguished groups and policies of the old Democratic coalition he sought to preserve—welfare for the truly needy, for instance—while rejecting what in Democratic policies undercut those very things worth preserving—bureaucratic overgrowth and the inflation associated with a bloated welfare state. In this sense, Reagan sought to encourage diversity within his coalition, while articulating political principles that could unite this diversity. Thus, he explained how social welfare could comport with conservative principles, while also explaining how budget cuts and tax cuts comport with social solidarity as well—thereby showing how conservative principles could comprehend a range of different policy preferences. Furthermore, in preserving major social welfare programs, cutting the budget and taxes, and seeking bloc grants and school vouchers, Reagan advocated specific and concrete public policies that related to the tangible preferences of his coalition.

And while many would focus on the uneasy position social conservatives sometimes occupied in the coalition, Reagan gave them more than erstwhile support. Indeed, Reagan endured much conservative criticism for moderating his economic policies in ways that comported with the preferences of those groups otherwise associated with social conservatism. Moreover, many focus on the inadequacy of his symbolic support for social conservatism. For instance, *New York Times* journalist Charles Austin

opens a 1982 article by stating that "[l]eaders of the religious right, frustrated by their inability to translate many of the issues on their agenda into law, say they are growing increasingly impatient with President Reagan."[66] But Reagan's symbolic support over issues like abortion and school prayer helped codify social conservatives' place in the Republican coalition, he galvanized the movement at the state and local level—thereby reaffirming a structural conservative argument that such social issues should be resolved by states, while also showing how principled leadership at the national level can help bring attention and energy to such issues. But he refrained from expending too much political capital on those divisive issues because doing so would likely divide his coalition. Consequently, he advanced their preferences on lesser issues, and explained those issues in terms that economic conservatives could understand, to instantiate his larger point that the goals of social and economic conservatives overlapped in many policy areas. In this way, he stressed that what was good for the whole was also good for the parts in a way that at least created the possibility that divisive issues like abortion or prayer would enjoy more integrated support as the party grew.

Reagan's rhetoric as it pertained to inter-party appeal, intra-party appeal, and policy advocacy highlights the unique character of his principled rhetoric, and demonstrates the importance of evaluating coalitional dynamics through a rhetorical framework. Reagan's reconstructive politics clearly involved restricting partisan loyalties and defining a new partisan policy vision for years to come. But how did Reagan accomplish this feat, which required him to persuade groups with a history of conflict, and even different partisan loyalties, to cooperate, and to continue to cooperate after

[66] Charles Austin, "Religious Right Growing Impatient with Reagan," *New York Times*, August 16, 1982.

Reagan left office? Examining Reagan's rhetoric offers an answer to this question: a specific rhetorical style that appealed to political principles in order to cultivate a diverse but coherent political coalition. Thus, budget cuts were not simply a way to handicap liberals, but part of a conservative political philosophy that would produce prosperity and decrease bureaucratic centralization. Educational block grants or vouchers, moreover, were specific instances that demonstrated conservative principles: namely individual choice and self-rule benefitted the family and society alike. In sum, Reagan used principles to bring together different interests, while he used distinct interests to broaden the appeal of conservative principles. In this way, Reagan managed to draw support from across party boundaries and in so doing foster a diverse partisan coalition, while simultaneously maintaining a degree of partisan coherence that provided Republicans a governing agenda for years to come. Reagan's reconstruction could not have been accomplished without both—for the diversity of the partisan coalition ensured its electoral competiveness, while its principled unity fused social and economic conservatives together into a coalition that would define conservative politics throughout Bush's election, the Congressional take-over of 1994, Clinton's own embrace of welfare reform and elements of social conservatism, and George W. Bush's version of "compassionate conservatism." Just as FDR defined the political orbit for both parties during and following the New Deal, Ronald Reagan helped define the lines of inter-party competition for conclusion of the 20th century and the start of the 21st, which were defined by debates about fiscal responsibility, economic growth, and social conservatism.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

Presidential Rhetoric and American Statesmanship

The concept of reconstructive politics captures an intuitive idea that certain presidents have a more profound impact on American politics than others. It distinguishes those presidents from others by developing a theory of the partisan regime, which holds that American party politics operates in patterns wherein the major issues, ideas, and attitudes of a given period are defined by a dominant political party, while the second party largely mimics that dominant party. It is, therefore, a more developed articulation of partisan politics than the journalist and elections expert Samuel Lubell first observed in the wake of the New Deal, as the Republican Party seemed to follow the orbit of the Democratic Party as a satellite follows the orbit of a planet. Reconstructive presidents stand out in the partisan regime theory because they, more than any other, are the order-creating presidents that articulate the ideas and policies that profoundly reshuffle partisan coalitions to form a new partisan regime.

This dissertation endeavors, principally, to explain the rhetorical qualities necessary to presidential reconstruction. In my first chapter, I explained that partisan regime theory synthesizes two different accounts of the political party: the pluralist model which emphasizes party diversity and the choice model which emphasizes party unity. Partisan regime theory is valuable because it elucidates a tension between contending incentives toward unity and diversity within the partisan coalition. Reconstructing a partisan coalition requires defining principles and policies which unite different groups,

while the destabilization of the partisan coalition indicates the waning of those unifying principles, and the increasing factionalism of those same coalitional groups.

My dissertation illustrates that presidents adjudicate the intrinsic party tension between unity and diversity through the use of public rhetoric. That is to say that unity and diversity represent equally compelling but competing incentives, which presidents must reconcile to lead an effective partisan coalition. On one hand, Presidents must develop a geographically and ideologically heterogeneous coalition to secure an electoral majority. On the other hand, they also face a need to articulate unity of purpose to maintain broad coalitional support through the vicissitudes of governance. That is, the president operates with limited political capital, and inevitably any actions he takes as president will affect different members of his coalition differently; his actions provide greater benefits for some than for others. If the party were merely an aggregation of diverse and peculiar interests, then the scarcity of political capital would prove an intractable problem: the president could never equally satisfy as many diverse interests as are necessary to create a national majority. But the president is in an institutionally unique position to impart coherent unity for diverse parts. Presidents can articulate a common purpose shared by varied groups and thereby advance the good of the parts by reference to that which is good for the whole. Only by finding a way to unite the whole can the president achieve a degree of salutary independence within his own coalition. That is, unity mitigates intra-party conflict in a way that allows the president to govern without constant reference to how his actions will affect a delicate balance of power among diverse interests. By articulating some persuasive principle of unity, the president

is then free to act with reference to that principle, and not to those peculiar preferences within his coalition.

That the tension between unity and diversity inheres in the presidency does not mean, however, that all presidents or presidential aspirants have managed that tension in the same way. Those who stress unity to the exclusion of diversity fail to garner an electoral majority because, ultimately, they speak for the aspirations of a narrow set of interests or ideas. Meanwhile, the virtues of a diverse presidential coalition are the same as those described by Madison in his argument for an extended republic: to ensure that presidential actions reflect a consensus among diverse parts, both to represent a wide group of interests, but also to ensure no one interest can injure another. But those who stress diversity to the exclusion of unity face difficulties with respect to stable governance. Presidents lacking the capacity to satisfy all interests equally will suffer at the hands of those interests that believe themselves neglected. In other words, support for the president, whether in Congress or public opinion, wanes when he promises more than he can deliver—and the more he makes promises, the harder it becomes to make good on those promises. This too is more than a matter of electoral politics, it also has normative implications. If presidents become beholden to serving special interests, the national interest suffers.

This dissertation shows that principled presidential rhetoric strikes a balance between the impetus toward diversity and that toward unity. Principled presidential leadership articulates political principles that unite a coalition with a common purpose, but tempers and moderates those principles in order to widen their application to diverse groups. It is more than the pragmatic, interest-group politics in which presidents err on

the side of diversity, but it is less strident than ideological purists. The presence of multiple, varied interests encourages the president to explain his political principles in such a way as to make them applicable to those interests. At the same time, the diversity of the coalition itself is limited by virtue of the fact that the president makes principled arguments, which themselves limit the size and inclusivity of the coalition by applying only to those that subscribe to those principles. Principled rhetoric, therefore, achieves a unity of purpose necessary to govern, while also using those principles to establish a varied consensus by which the principles themselves come to reflect the values and attitudes of coalition members.

Although this dissertation shows the power of presidential rhetoric to bring unity of purpose to American governance, my thesis stands at odds with the observations of many prominent public intellectuals and political scientists who are becoming increasingly alarmed at the seeming dysfunction of partisan politics and presidential rhetoric. At the broadest level, these intellectuals look upon the separated powers as utterly gridlocked by partisan polarization. In the first sentence of a 2012 *New York Times* op-ed article, Georgetown Law professor Louis Michael Seidman observes: "As the nation teeters at the edge of fiscal chaos, observers are reaching the conclusion that the American system of government is broken."[1] In the same vein, Thomas Mann and Norm Ornstein offer an extended commentary on the same sense of crisis in American governance. The authors assert that contemporary politics exhibit a "serious mismatch between the political parties, which have become as vehemently adversarial as

[1] Louis Michael Seidman, "Let's Give Up on the Constitution," *New York Times*, December 30, 2012.

parliamentary parties, and a governing system that, unlike a parliamentary democracy, makes it extremely difficult for majorities to act."[2] Similar frustrations brought Thomas Friedman to muse admiringly over the functionally efficient Chinese "[o]ne-party autocracy." The Chinese tender the hope that, when "led by a reasonably enlightened group of people," one-party autocracy can "impose the politically difficult but critically important policies needed to move a society forward in the 21st century." Meanwhile, American institutions, Friedman avers, actually stand in the way of achieving our national interest by according far too much influence to the minority party, which, with respect to President Obama's then stymied climate and health care legislation, involved the Republican Party obstinately "standing, arms folded and saying 'no'" simply because they "want President Obama to fail."[3] Alan Abramowitz observes that "it is clear that Americans have become increasingly frustrated with the policy-making process in Washington in recent years. But that frustration is itself a direct result of the deep partisan divide within the American public."[4] These are a few representative examples of public elites who attempt to call attention to the ways in which American institutions work against America's national interests.

The warnings of a crisis in constitutional governance are not limited to the separation of powers generally. There has been growing skepticism regarding the adequacy of the presidency in particular. In November 2010, *Newsweek* featured an essay

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[2] Thomas Mann and Norm Ornstein, *It's Even Worse than it Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), xiii.

[3] Thomas L. Friedman, "Our One-Party Democracy," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/09/opinion/09friedman.html?partner=rss&emc=rss, last accessed on February 10, 2014.

[4] Alan I. Abramowitz, "America's Polarized Public: A Reply to Fiorina," *The American Interest*, March 11, 2013, last accessed on February 10, 2014 http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2013/03/11/polarized-or-sorted-just-whats-wrong-with-our-politics-anyway/.

by Daniel Stone entitled: "Is the Presidency Too Big a Job?" The author describes the maze of duties that contemporary presidents face, explaining that those responsibilities have increased even when compared with the presidents at the end of the 20th century. He also brings into focus the waning influence of presidential rhetoric in today's political environment: "the number of speeches presidents now give . . . can dilute the power of each one."[5] Thomas Friedman notes how the growing complexity and inefficacy of government renders presidential speech more and more obsolete: "[i]t was hard to read President Obama's eloquent [2010] State of the Union address and not feel torn between his vision for the coming years and the awareness that the forces of inertia and special interests blocking him . . . make the chances of his implementing that vision highly unlikely. That is the definition of 'stuck.' And right now we are stuck."[6] The disjunction between popular presidential rhetoric, which raises expectations for efficient action, and the political reality of partisan gridlock in Washington, fuels the despair in American governance.

Journalist Ezra Klein, writing in the *New Yorker*, draws from relevant political science literature to connect the failure of presidential rhetoric to growing skepticism about the constitutional system of governance. Klein highlights that both George C. Edwards' book O*n Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit* and Frances Lee's book

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[5] Daniel Stone, "Is the Presidency Too Big a Job?" *Newsweek*, November 13, 2010, last accessed on February 11, 2014, http://www.newsweek.com/presidency-too-big-job-70121.

[6] Thomas Friedman, "Never Heard that Before," *The New York Times*, January 30, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/opinion/31friedman.html?ref=opinion, last accessed on February 11, 2014.

Beyond Ideology[7] lead us to believe that presidential rhetoric is not ineffective, but rather that it is detrimental. By showing that presidents use rhetoric to speak to their own party, it only serves to increase the sense of partisan polarization in Washington; "because our system of government usually requires at least some members of the opposition to work with the President, that suggests that the President's attempts at persuasion might have the perverse effect of making it harder for him to govern."[8] In the estimation of America's public intellectuals, presidential rhetoric, in the best case, merely manifests the gulf between the national government's ability to articulate its national interests and its ability to achieve those interests. In the worst case, it contributes to America's dysfunctional politics.

If presidential rhetoric can be employed to create a principled consensus, as I demonstrate in this dissertation, then why is there a sense of crisis among public intellectuals regarding American government generally, and the efficacy of presidential rhetoric particularly? The first answer has to do with timing and opportunity: there are times when there are fewer opportunities for principled rhetoric. That means certain periods of time will be characterized by greater coalitional instability and factionalism associated with pragmatic and ideological rhetoric. The opportunities for principled rhetoric are limited because the very qualities of principled rhetoric that make it successful also make it difficult to replicate. The success of principled rhetoric at a given point of time enshrines those principles as the basis of the party. Presidents following

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[7] George C. Edwards, *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Frances E. Lee, *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[8] Ezra Klein, "George Edwards and the Powerless Bully Pulpit," *The New Yorker*, March 19, 2012, last accessed February 13, 2014, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/19/120319fa_fact_klein?currentPage=all,.

upon a newly established principled consensus operate to a great extent in the shadow of the previous leader. Harry Truman and George H.W. Bush, for instance, exercised less principled rhetoric in their own right, and instead adopted but modified the received principles, proclaiming the "Square Deal" and the "kinder, gentler conservatism," respectively. Over time, a disjunction grows between enshrined principles, and the interests and ideas motivating individual coalitional groups, which are more fluid with respect to changing circumstances and attitudes. As that divide between principles and interests grows more pronounced, presidents within the regime become more inclined to pragmatic leadership, which does not challenge the existing principled consensus but seeks in particular to address the growing divergence of coalition interests. Eventually, as this dissertation shows, pragmatic rhetoric undermines the principles entirely, destabilizing the regime, and creating opportunities for a new principled consensus. Thus, while principled rhetoric is the most effective—in the sense of unifying a heterogeneous party to the greatest degree—the very principles of that rhetoric ossify, and ultimately undermine the unity they fostered.

Furthermore, even during periods that are conducive to principled rhetoric, that rhetoric can be exercised more or less effectively, reflecting the variability inherent in human choice and the contingency of circumstances. The attempt at a principled reordering does not make a new principled consensus a *fait accompli.* Even Presidents Roosevelt and Reagan, both of whom did establish a new consensus, sometimes exercised rhetoric and policy leadership that undermined the consensus they sought. That variability in the effectiveness of principled rhetoric may give the appearance that rhetoric as such has lost its efficacy. Thus, to address contemporary circumstances,

Barack Obama's presidency illustrates an attempt at principled rhetoric with an as yet uncertain effect. Since the turn of the century, we have witnessed the declining salience of the Reagan conservative consensus, which remains deeply ingrained in the Republican base but is increasingly remote among the general electorate. Since 2008, moreover, President Barack Obama has challenged that conservative consensus in a way that his Democratic predecessor, Bill Clinton, never did. President Obama has assembled a coalition that is much more explicitly liberal than was President Clinton's, and for that reason more geographically and ideologically narrow than was Clinton's coalition, which was far more pragmatic and thus more widespread. Clinton managed to win more southern states and rural areas, whereas Obama's coalition is much more clearly delineated in the nation's urban centers in the East, upper Midwest, and West.

Much of Obama's administration appears to challenge the status quo conservatism that held over from the Reagan administration—most evidently by the revival of ambitious and new social welfare programs like the Affordable Care Act, but also in a newly assertive social liberalism based around the individualistic lifestyle preferences of younger, urban, single liberals. Abortion rhetoric and attitudes, a bellwether of coalitional politics, have become far more permissive, as the Clinton mantra of "safe, legal, and rare" has become replaced by "safe, legal, and accessible;" the politics producing the Defense of Marriage Act have been replaced by new politics wherein the Justice Department works to extend legal protections to same-sex married couples at the federal level. What remains to be seen, however, is whether President Obama has adequately articulated a principled basis for the young, wealthy, urban gentry—for whom social liberalism is paramount—to cooperate with the economic liberals that represent the

heritage of New Deal and Great Society liberalism. These liberals are primarily committed to economic policies which secure the basic material subsistence of poor, at-risk, and also largely urban Democrats.

Just as social and economic conservatives had ample reason to suspect one another, so too do social and economic liberals: do the socially libertine policies of the urban gentry significantly diminish the party's focus on economic assistance, especially when that assistance cuts against the economic interests of social liberals in the upper-economic strata? Conversely, do the social goals of liberals—e.g. urban gentrification, environmentalism, etc.—threaten the economic interests of economic liberals, who have less disposable income to pay the higher prices associated with "green" products or with gentrified urban areas? Will they accept the environmental regulations, despite the threat they pose to manufacturing industries? President Obama has assembled these diverse groups into an ambitious liberal coalition that is not beholden to the old Reagan consensus in the same way that Bill Clinton's coalition was, and he can openly express their liberal goals. But despite the opportunity for a principled reordering, achieving such a consensus depends upon the adequacy of Obama's principled rhetoric to temper the diverse interests of these groups, and it also depends upon there being some underlying coherence among these groups which Obama can draw out. Principled rhetoric combines top-down leadership with sensitivity toward the bottom-up influence of coalitional groups. That means the unity belonging to any principled consensus depends upon an underlying potential for coherence among coalition groups. Uncertainty as to whether President Obama will establish a new principled consensus, however, does not imply uncertainty over the continued role of presidential rhetoric in America's institutional

politics. It is this variability which makes politics more than mere determination. Understanding the possibilities of human choice can temper the temptation to see in the moment the obsolescence of our constitutional institutions, or of presidential rhetoric.

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