The Conscience of a Movement:
American Conservatism, the Vietnam War, and the Politics of Natural Law

A Dissertation

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Abstract

The rise of a conservative ideology within a broader New Right Movement in the United States is well documented among scholars of domestic U.S. history. That said, historians so far largely have ignored how foreign policy in general—and the Vietnam War in particular—both elevated and shaped conservatism as a leading political tradition. Debates over foreign aid, war strategy and tactics, the draft and Antiwar Movement, and Vietnamization shattered the New Right into warring camps, even as these issues drew the attention of the American electorate to the New Right as a whole. By the mid-1960s, conservatives ranging from intellectuals to media figures won preeminence within the broader New Right, not simply because of their views on domestic policy, but also as a result of their persuasive articulation of an evolving ideological position on these foreign policy issues. This dissertation will present an intellectual history of conservatism to argue that domestic debates about the Vietnam War gradually redefined the emergent philosophy as a politics of natural law theory, one well situated within the broader context of American and Western political philosophy.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family: Jill, Ron, Mike, Jenny, Giselle, Leigh, and Chico.
Acknowledgments

This project has colored nearly every moment of the last two years of my life, and as such it has grown with me as I have grown as a historian. I wish to thank foremost my advisors, Peter Hahn, Robert McMahon, and Kevin Boyle, who provided many ideas, insights, and fresh perspectives when I needed them most. I am also in great debt to the archivists at the many collections I have examined, but wish to single out Susan Irwin and Linda A. Whitaker at the Arizona Historical Foundation for their invaluable guidance in the early stages of my research. Finally, without feedback from and conversations with my friends, Ryan Dawkins, Robyn Rodriguez, Mark Soderstrom, and Ryan McMahon, I would remain stuck in the research rooms.
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Introduction

“A dynamic law requires that two masses—nature and man—must go on, reacting upon each other, without stop, as the sun and a comet react on each other, and that any appearance of stoppage is illusive.”

The end of history is not nigh. History never has been, nor ever will it be, near its end, as long as human beings continue their distinctive searches for meaning. Yet equally indicative of the human experience is the need for one, true meaning, for absolute certainty, for a vision of history that provides a clear, fixed goal for human striving. To many individuals, history has meaning if and only if it approaches a morally good, comprehensible end, whether humanity or the divine defines that end. A visionary reformer, after all, requires a vision. A movement for change needs a conscience. A group employs a moral compass to direct its membership, to give its membership an objective, to avoid dangerous detours, to justify its very existence.

So Francis Fukuyama proclaimed “the end of history and the last man” with his fashionable 1992 book of the same name. Liberal democracy, in his view, had won the age-old contest over the human soul against its final challenger, Soviet communism, and stood ready to propel our species into a new millennium of peace and prosperity. By September 11, 2001, few people remembered Fukuyama’s bold work for anything other

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than his central claim to the finality of a American or Western-driven, liberal democratic
history.  Twenty-first century observers began to wonder if man and man, if nature and
man, had once again resumed their dynamic, perpetual reaction against one another.

Undeterred, individuals continue to seek the ends of history, particularly in the
realm of contemporary American politics. So Samuel Tanenhaus proclaimed the “death
of conservatism” in his fashionable 2009 book of the same name. “Today’s
conservatives,” Tanenhaus opined, “resemble the exhumed figures of Pompeii, trapped in
postures of frozen flight, clenched in the rigor mortis of a defunct ideology.” Within a
year, the Tea Party Movement freed conservatives from that “rigor mortis” when it
steeped the American Right in renewed enthusiasm over traditional issues like tax policy,
race relations, and the size and scope of federal government. But even as Tanenhaus’s
critique quickly faded into obscurity, Jill Lepore sought to continue his theme when she
proclaimed the Tea Party as dead on arrival. Its narrative of the American founding, she
argued, was a caricature of the true record. As a result, the Tea Party deserved moral
condemnation, not to mention political irrelevance. Tanenhaus and Lepore are simply
the most recent in a long line of liberal historians who have struggled to downplay the
influence of conservatism in modern America. Before the election of Barack Obama
infused a newfound sense of hope into the liberal movement and its scholarly defenders,
these historians dourly chronicled the “fall” of liberalism in the face of the reciprocal

Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America,

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4 Jill Lepore, The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party’s Evolution and the Battle over American History
synthesized this view for disheartened liberals in the Clinton Era, when even the liberal-in-chief conceded ground to his political opponents.\(^5\)

But if history does not have one, “true” end that we can know with certainty, then it is difficult to put much stock into any of these narratives. The problem with the idea of an “end of history” is not that such ends are always political. All human actions in society are inherently political. When an individual promulgates an “end of history,” rather, he or she demands action in pursuit of a goal that is both ineluctably subjective and intended to direct the behavior of others. It is an effort to make history as much as it is to write history.

Conservatism is not “dead,” nor is it “rising” or “falling” in any meaningful way. To make any of these claims is to impute a political judgment upon conservatism before the historical process even begins, not to mention beg the questions of what an idea’s “mortality” signifies, or “rising” and “falling” in what terms? Rather, I suggest that historians constantly reexamine intellectual, political, and social movements like conservatism by asking what “conservatism” means, or at least what it used to mean, in given contexts at certain periods in time. This is not an argument for historical semantics, but rather a plea for a more rational, feasible analysis of concepts that can be so complex, so wrapped up in the politics of the historical period in question as well as those of the present, that their causal use (and abuse) obfuscates more than it illuminates.

\(^5\) Geoffrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996). The “rise and fall” narrative trope, of course, is not limited to conservative and liberal histories of the postwar era. It has a long and storied life of its own in Western historiography, going back to at least Edward Gibbon’s classic Tory history, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776).
In the 1950s, it would have been difficult to assert that a coherent “conservative movement” existed, for in fact there were many “conservatisms.” Indeed, those conservatisms generally earned the distrust and disdain of most Americans. One prominent self-styled conservative, Peter Viereck, lamented the toxic connotations of the label at the time, much as liberals in the 1990s and 2000s decried the pejorative connotations that their identity acquired. In the 1949 edition of *Conservatism Revisited*, Viereck professed that “‘conservative’ (even Senator Taft prefers the word ‘liberal’) is among the most unpopular words in the American vocabulary.” As I will examine later in greater detail, his vision of conservatism, moreover, contrasted starkly with those of others, such as William F. Buckley and Robert Welch, who just as tenaciously asserted their “conservative” identity.

“Conservatism” may be as confusing a term to Americans in 2011 as it was in 1950, whether or not one considers its ideas “dead” or “ascendant.” This dissertation, therefore, is an investigation into how and why American conservatism, primarily as an intellectual movement with political and social ends, evolved as it has since the 1950s. It is an examination of how conservatism, to some the very opposite of modernity, in fact became modern. Given the ambition of such a project, I have limited my analysis considerably in theme and period. But before I discuss such limitations further, it would be prudent first to explore how other scholars have contributed to the burgeoning interest in this timeless, and timely, subject.

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Any cursory examination of the historical literatures that address American conservatism will convince readers of at least two things rather quickly. First, interest in the topic is indeed growing. Regardless of whether its varied politics are in ascendancy, scholars certainly dedicate more of their time and effort to investigating its role in American life. Second, despite this growth, few scholars use the term in any systematic or uniform way. Definitions of “conservatism” vary at least as widely as do meanings of “liberalism.” This chaos, I argue, is in part the result of the unwillingness of historical subfields, namely domestic, foreign relations, and intellectual history, to engage one another.

Scholars of American domestic history, themselves a motley group, exhibit perponderant of interest in conservatism as a movement. This observation is unsurprising, if a bit misleading, as I maintain that conservatism did not evolve within a domestic vacuum but as a result of its interaction with issues of global significance. At any rate, the now nearly countless number of works on conservatism can be understood as comprising four different phases in the domestic historiography. The first phase, based largely on the Consensus School, includes scholarly work from the 1950s and 1960s that treated conservatism as the attempt of the business elite to adjust Americans’ political, economic, and social attitudes in favor of capitalism. Richard Hofstadter’s *The Paranoid Style of American Politics and Other Essays* largely set the tone for this first phase, as his work did for the Consensus School writ large. Hofstadter famously ascribed to conservatism a “paranoid style” and “relentless demand for conformity” that echoed

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7 Although I will discuss many scholarly works, I cannot provide an exhaustive list here, in the interests of time and scope. The works I do explicitly mention, however, are among the most influential within the wider historical discipline and beyond.
Theodore W. Adorno’s descriptions in The Authoritarian Personality. Likewise, Gabriel Kolko viewed the first two decades of the twentieth century not as a “Progressive Era” but a conservative one, in which business elites were the true “reformers” and “regulators” of the age. His The Triumph of Conservatism was among the first to indulge the “rise and fall” narrative in its criticism of the politics of the Kennedy Era.⁸

The second phase of domestic literature on conservatism, that of the 1980s, reflected historians’ attempts to explain the election of Ronald Reagan and the reciprocal “collapse” of New Deal Liberalism. Reflecting scholars’ deepening interest in social history, this phase included many probing works on subjects like women in the New Right and the Ku Klux Klan, although the overarching theme remained the shifts in political and economic structures since the Second World War. In The Republican Right since 1945, David W. Reinhard focused on the successes of conservatives within the GOP to proclaim Reagan as the “Roosevelt of the Right,” the summation of the primarily political drive since the Second World War to end the New Deal. The essays in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle’s The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order take this same theme in a less optimistic direction, as they lament not only the failure of liberalism to expand the rights of minorities but also to hold off Reagan. A sociologist, Jerome L. Himmelstein, infused the literature with social science approaches to produce an insightful and prophetic study of the grassroots foundations of the conservative movement with To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism. He

ultimately concluded that by 1990 conservatives had won the war of symbolic ideas, if not the war over policy, which boded for a period of asymmetry between electoral results and Americans’ policy desires.9

By the 1990s, historians increasingly viewed conservatism as not just a political construct but a sociopolitical movement, in a shift that echoed the infusion of the wider academy with social histories. *Chain Reaction*, the bestselling work by Thomas and Mary Edsall, examined Democrats’ rights-oriented liberalism, focus on racial inequality, and willingness to raise taxes that alienated American mainstream voters, whereas conservative Republicans won over the electoral center through emphasis on cultural and social issues. Mary Brennan’s *Turning Right in the Sixties* pioneered the now-consensus view that the conservative activists who failed to elect Barry Goldwater in 1964 had in fact built the social and political networks that successfully launched the electoral bids of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. First published in 1995, Dan T. Carter’s landmark text, *The Politics of Rage*, employed George Wallace as its lens to view conservatism as a populist social movement of disaffected, working-class, Southern whites. Another sociologist, Sara Diamond, broke the conservative movement down into four distinct groups—anticommunists, segregationists, Christian evangelicals, and foreign policy hawks—that jostled for control over the Republican Party. In *The Other Side of the Sixties*, a now standard history of the Young Americans for Freedom, John A. Andrew

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portrayed activist young Americans as the prime movers of a sociopolitical movement to halt the New Left and elect conservative candidates for president.\textsuperscript{10}

The fourth and current phase of the historiography portrays conservatism as foremost a grassroots movement of white Americans in the Sunbelt. In 2001, Lisa McGirr arguably set the tone for a decade in scholarship on conservatism with her influential book, \textit{Suburban Warriors}, through which she explicitly viewed “the Right as a social movement.” Despite their opposition to typically modern ideas like secularism and pluralism, conservatives formulated a distinctively modern way of life in their white, religious, suburban communities that, in many ways, still defines American politics. Kevin M. Kruse followed this vein with \textit{White Flight}, his study of how Atlanta suburbanites infused conservatism with overtly racial, pro-segregationist attitudes in their opposition to integration programs. In \textit{The Silent Majority}, Matthew Lassiter expanded this theme geographically to other Sunbelt suburbs like Charlotte and topically to school integration to highlight the racial dimensions of Southern conservatism.\textsuperscript{11}

The domestic literature on conservatism, then, exhibited two key shifts in emphasis from the 1950s through the 2010s. First, it transitioned from a focus on elites toward an interest in middle and lower-class Americans. Second, historians’ exclusive

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interest in the political and economic structures of conservatism has given way to social histories with themes like race, class, gender, religion, education, generation, and region. If a “consensus” about the nature of conservatism in American life exists today, it would not define conservatism so much as conditionalize where and when it may take hold politically and socially. As the above works suggest, conservatism increasingly flourishes among whites of all classes, but takes different forms for the wealthy (economic issues like low taxation and deregulation) than for the middle and working classes (social and cultural issues like opposition to abortion, gay rights, and racial integration). It has become far more popular in rural and suburban areas than urban ones. Although this pattern is national, conservatism thrives most in the rural and suburban areas of the South and Midwest. Western conservatives trend libertarian, whereas New England conservatives tend to deemphasize social and cultural issues altogether.

These critical insights all enliven historians’ understanding of the political, economic, and social conditions of modern America. That said, they fail to provide a clear narrative as to how conservatism remained coherent in the midst of remarkable postwar changes. The conservatism of the 1950s was vastly different, even unintelligible, in policy goals, racial attitudes, and regional affiliation to many conservatives of that decade. Yet the word retains its cache as a viable political label. In addition, the domestic literature is intentionally political, and often derisive, in its tone. Many scholars view conservatism as an aberration, a seemingly new and negative development in American life. Even though all histories are political, as all histories are human, too much dedication to ideological lenses, like a zeal for the “end of history,” can only make more difficult the historian’s effort to pursue what truths may exist. Finally, a
focus on conservatism within the boundaries of postwar America, and on issues of race, rights, taxes, education, and housing, seals it within a vacuum. Domestic-oriented scholars rarely infuse their works with analyses of foreign relations issues or intellectuals; when they do, these discussions are limited mostly to anticommunism, the Red Scare, and the influence of the Cold War on domestic life.

Two literatures that best provide the global and temporal contexts missing from the domestic literature—foreign relations and intellectual history, respectively—do not treat conservatism particularly well. Since at least 1959, when William Appleman Williams published his watershed critique, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, many scholars of American foreign relations have argued for the utility of analyses of the domestic sources of foreign policy, as opposed to the more traditional approach of policymaking aimed at other nations. The end of the Cold War and the introduction of social history into foreign relations history has at once renewed the field’s relevance in the wider academy and enriched it with a host of new and exciting topics. That being said, no historian of American foreign relations has yet to discuss the influence of foreign policy on the conservative movement. As Robert McMahon has argued, diplomatic historians “have not always presented their work in its widest context” and have “participated willingly in the fragmentation and specialization that have permeated so much of academic discourse in the recent past.” To be fair, domestic U.S. historians are as guilty of these transgressions as their colleagues in foreign relations. “Those who work primarily in an internalist mode,” McMahon admitted, “can find acceptance by and
common ground with fellow Americanists problematic as well.”

The turn in both domestic and foreign relations history toward more transnational or international perspectives is commendable. But more important, for the opening of new paths of study as well as the future of the discipline in general, is the need for scholars to discuss with one another their work, to respect and not simply tolerate new methods of history, and to erode the boundary between domestic and foreign policy—not just that between the United States and other nations.

American intellectual history has endured its own special challenges since the 1960s. As John Higham wrote in 1979, “the entire conceptual foundation on which it rested crumbled away,” that foundation being the “analytic construct of national character.” In the age of the Consensus School, intellectual historians had developed such concepts as the “American mind” and the “national myth” to provide coherence to the many phases of intellectual development. But postmodern critiques of this “consensus” shattered intellectual history and drastically weakened its credibility as an independent subfield. As intellectual history became synonymous with the history of intellectuals, and as postmodernists effectively critiqued the study of “elites” as itself elitist, intellectual histories lost favor in recent decades. Some of the more recent studies of conservatism, in fact, came from political scientists or intellectual historians in government or public policy positions. Brian R. Farmer’s American Conservatism: History, Theory, and Practice both breaks down the conservative movement thematically

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and implicates it in various periods throughout American history as far back as the colonial era. Like many domestic historians, however, issues of foreign relations rarely interested him. In his study of Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, Ted McAllister contextualized American conservatism at mid-century as a reactionary force set on recovering, not conserving, the past. His focus on two intellectuals and their academic work, however, limited McAllister’s ability to address the public policy influence that Strauss and Voegelin arguably had wielded.14

The boundaries that divide American domestic, foreign relations, and intellectual history stymie many scholars’ ability to conceive of topics that demand grander contextual conceptualization. In turn, however, something has to give. No historian can write global histories of any issue that take into account the entirety of the American experience from political, economic, social, and intellectual perspectives (or beyond). Yet a sharper analysis of the conservative movement, with reasonable limitations of scope, is possible. To begin such analysis, and to avoid the “babel of labels” and definitions that plagues the current literature, I will begin first by defining my own terms.15

In a general sense, the main goal of this dissertation is to provide a more nuanced conception of conservatism than can be provided by any single definition through a

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sustained examination of the movement’s evolution in the postwar era. Such an aim notwithstanding, the term itself does have genuine meaning as a tradition in Western philosophy with its own vast and vibrant genealogy. When I use the term “conservatism” or any derivation thereof, I speak explicitly of this long tradition that stretched back to the Reformation and Enlightenment, or any school of thought that in some fashion owes its existence to that tradition. The notion of “small-c” conservatism fits this usage well, and I will maintain such usage unless modified in the text.16

The label “New Right” earned popular usage in the domestic history literature, most often denoting that group of conservative Americans who stood in opposition to the liberal New Left of the 1960s. To give the term a clearer, if still relative, definition, I will use “New Right” to identify those conservatives who opposed the New Deal, New Deal Liberalism, and the “New Deal Order.” The word “liberalism,” as noted earlier, may be as tricky as “conservatism,” let alone jargon like the “New Deal” or its “Order.” These latter terms, however, have achieved a relatively standard currency in the literature. In short, they describe the progressive policies (domestic and foreign), culture, and ideas of the political coalition that Franklin D. Roosevelt amassed in response to the Great Depression and that held more or less continuous influence until the election of Richard Nixon.17 It is important to underscore here that the New Deal comprised a foreign policy

16 Chapter One will analyze at length different schools of American conservatism that emerged from this original, “Burkean” temperament. I will introduce a capital-C “Conservatism” in Chapter Three that denotes the specific ideology that emerged from the more general conservative movement.
agenda as much as one for domestic issues. Historians must not differentiate between the two, or unlink them intellectually, politically, or socially, simply because an international border divided the jurisdictions of each policy. Many key foreign relations histories have illuminated the interchangeability of not just the ideas, but even the very figures, at the heart of the New Deal between domestic and foreign policy.\(^{18}\)

If the New Right was effectively a movement in response to the New Deal, then it certainly had a longer lifespan than many historians yet have recognized. In fact, it may be fruitful to borrow Jacqueline Dowd Hall’s idea of a “long Civil Rights Movement” and posit the existence of a “long New Right Movement,” one that began at the very latest with those Americans in opposition to the New Deal and continues arguably to the present day.\(^{19}\) With this grander temporal framework in mind, the long New Right Movement can be conceived as having distinct and successive phases, to only some of which historians have dedicated substantial time, as well as many constituent parts. In other words, “conservatism” in some form has evolved at least from Edmund Burke to William F. Buckley, Jr., and from there to Michelle Bachmann.\(^{20}\)


\(^{20}\) I will use small-c “conservatism” and the “New Right” relatively interchangeably (such as the “conservative movement” or the “New Right Movement”), with differences in usage noted in the text or footnotes.
In a more specific sense, this dissertation seeks to examine how conservatism evolved within the context of the New Right Movement from an umbrella term that described anti-New Deal activists in the 1950s to a full-fledged, coherent ideology in the 1970s. Because the domestic, foreign relations, and intellectual history literatures fail to examine fully how conservatism produced a political ideology, this project will attempt to contribute a missing perspective, that of the role of the Vietnam War. In no way will I try to overhaul the grander literatures in their entirety, mostly because I agree largely with their insightful points. That said, I wish to note strongly that they neglect one of the most important events of the postwar era—the Vietnam War.

In a sense, I seek to fulfill the mission that remained implicit in the most prominent work that explored the intellectual history behind the Vietnam War, Robert R. Tomes’s *Apocalypse Then*. Tomes argued that “the Vietnam War transformed the way American intellectuals viewed the world” by shattering the “liberal consensus,” or the hegemony that New Deal Liberals held over American politics and culture.\(^2\) Tomes examined intellectuals of all political stripes, and as such conservatives only occupied an anemic slice of his work. Although his broader thesis is as insightful as it is accurate, historians require a fuller analysis of how the Vietnam War influenced the conservative movement.

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I argue that American foreign policies toward Vietnam were at least as integral as any other issue to the creation of a Conservative ideology. The Vietnam War provided conservatives with the clearest set of political opportunities either to voice their criticisms of the New Deal from the academy, the media, or the marketplace; or seek real power to change or destroy it. In choosing the latter option, conservatives crafted a modern ideology for mass political consumption out of a Reformation-era temperament that, more than anything else, opposed the very idea of ideology outright. That ideology, born in the early 1960s, not only comprised a variety of different conservative strains but also shifted dynamically as the United States escalated the war in Vietnam. In effect, conservatives blended new mixes of old wines and placed them in an old bottle. Their innovation was not in substance (the old wines), nor was it a modern political ideology (the bottle), but in the new combinations they formulated in response to issues that arose in the evolving discourse on Vietnam. I posit that four key issues—foreign aid, war strategy, campus dissent over the draft, and Vietnamization—served as opportunities for conservatives to reformulate their dynamic ideology to better fit their static goal of political relevance. The end result of these adaptations was an ideology dominated by one strain in particular: Traditionalism, or conservatism that sought to restore the classical Socratic and Judeo-Christian thought and its idea of natural law to the political realm. Traditionalism served as conscience of the conservative movement, the one essential, moral thread that tied the early New Right to its ideological iteration at the end

22 Note that my usage of capital-C “Conservatism” differs from small-c “conservatism.” The former denotes the specific ideology that Fusionists and Traditionalists would produce in the early 1960s, which I will describe in detail in Chapter Three. The latter retains its more general meaning of the right-wing intellectual tradition. I will also use this rule in reference to capital-L “New Deal Liberalism,” a distinct set of ideas more specific than the general small-l “liberal” tradition.
of the Vietnam War, and arguably to the present day. In short, the Vietnam War effectively provoked conservatives to revive in modern form a tradition as old as Western philosophy.

I should emphasize again that the robust literature more than adequately proves the essential roles that a variety of racial, social, and economic issues played on shaping conservatism. With this study, therefore, I wish to highlight an often-overlooked perspective: the influence of foreign policy on the political and intellectual dimensions of the conservative movement. In other words, I will not provide a complete and holistic narrative of the New Right’s evolution. Although I will examine Conservatives from a variety of backgrounds, such as intellectuals, journalists, businessmen, activists, politicians, and media personalities, I will focus on the common grounds on which these figures articulated their views, namely manuscripts, letters, journals, pamphlets, and published texts. I envision this history as a pluralistic one, a narrative that explores the conflict among various groups in their attempts to achieve dissonant ends, much in the vein of Barry Karl’s *The Uneasy State.*

Instead of comparing the “influence” of foreign and domestic policies on the New Right, I will provide a narrative analysis of the four Vietnam War-related issues that stimulated conservatism. In Chapter One I will explore in detail the five major schools within the New Right Movement of the early 1950s: Traditionalism, classical conservatism, libertarianism, Fusionism, and populism. Advocates of these five strains

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23 Barry D. Karl, *The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915 to 1945* (Chicago: Chicago, 1985). In his survey of early twentieth century American history, Karl asserted that American reformers engaged in an “adversary politics,” a pluralistic competition for power, as a result of their deeply rooted tendencies toward individualism and localized governance.
all considered themselves “conservatives” and members of the New Right Movement in that they all sought to challenge and provide alternatives to the New Deal. Yet each strain was unique in its intellectual provenance, theoretical foundations, and policy goals. This chapter will serve as a primer of sorts for the five strains of conservatism that I will weave throughout the remaining narrative.

Chapter Two focuses on economic assistance to Vietnam and East Asia, one of the first major foreign policy clashes of New Right groups. I will view this debate through the curious philosophical evolution of U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, who rose to prominence among New Right circles in the late 1950s (only to lose dramatically as the Republican nominee in the 1964 Presidential election). Goldwater, I argue, always was an eccentric conservative, one far more concerned with the economic independence of the individual and reform of federal government than with intellectual purity. His religious beliefs, in fact, tended more toward deism than Christianity. Goldwater’s private attitudes and public stances on foreign aid contrasted sharply with those of the Traditional strain of the New Right Movement. Radio host Clarence Manion and writer L. Brent Bozell, for example, both deserved more credit than Goldwater for the success of *Conscience of a Conservative*, the very book that promoted the Arizona senator to the national spotlight and helped define the theoretical foundations of conservatism for a generation. Similarly, Populist activist Robert Welch, founder of the powerful John Birch Society, often clashed with Goldwater’s positions on economic aid for Asia. Despite his idiosyncratic views, Goldwater ultimately overlooked his disagreements and allied himself with the Traditionalists. By the 1964 election, many
other New Rightists followed suit and embraced, or at least identified with, Traditionalism to achieve greater political voice on foreign issues.

In Chapter Three I will examine another polemical topic among conservatives: war strategy. Frank S. Meyer, a journalist at the *National Review*, figured prominently in this debate as the intellectual father of “Fusionism,” or libertarian anticommunism. Meyer and other Fusionists, such as William F. Buckley, Jr., decided in the early 1960s that the most effective means to preserve and control the New Right was to ally themselves with their Traditionalist brethren and manifest a new ideology with several key elements, such as unquestioning adherence to a strategy of total war in Vietnam. Such confessional politics resulted in the forced expulsion of many conservatives from the Movement, including the libertarian philosopher Ayn Rand. Despite her wide popularity with New Right grassroots and national voices alike—Goldwater himself claimed her book, *Atlas Shrugged*, deeply influenced his worldview—Fusionists felt her opposition to total war in Vietnam necessitated vehement condemnation and rebranding as patently non-conservative.

The fourth chapter will examine conservatives’ responses to dissent against the draft and the war in general. In the late 1960s, the conservatives who upheld the Fusionist-Traditionalist alliance took further measures to oust what libertarian and populist elements remained within the Movement. More than any other figure, Ronald Reagan embodied and benefited from this “Anti-Antiwar Movement,” or public opposition to dissent against the Vietnam War. As governor of California from 1967 to 1975, Reagan battled openly with students at Berkeley and other university campuses, drenching his rhetoric and justifying his actions with a moralistic stance that bespoke of
idealist foundations of Conservatism more than the materialistic libertarianism of Goldwater. Indeed, Reagan out-Goldwatered Goldwater, in the sense that the California governor more effectively fused New Right strains into Conservatism—and more clearly practiced what he preached—than the Arizona senator. Reagan’s rhetoric often played to libertarians as much as anticommunists fearful of Marxist elements on college campuses.

The fifth and final chapter will explore conservatives’ evolving attitudes toward Richard Nixon’s direction of the Vietnam War. Despite Nixon’s unimpeachable credentials as an anticommunist, conservatives hardly saw Nixon as a compatriot, even when he had served two terms as Vice President. On the central issue of Détente, and its corollary of Vietnamization in Southeast Asia, Nixon and conservatives gradually drew stark lines of division. In direct response to Détente, many conservative activists threw their effort and endorsement behind U.S. Representative John M. Ashbrook of Ohio in the 1972 Republican presidential nomination. In effect, conservatives had ousted the president and his politics from the New Right altogether, declaring their independence as a genuine political and intellectual movement.
Chapter 1

God and Man at War:
Divisions within the Early New Right

“[T]here is surely not a department at Yale that is uncontaminated with the absolute that there are no absolutes, no intrinsic rights, no ultimate truths. The acceptance of these notions, which emerge in courses in history and economics, in sociology and political science, in psychology and literature, makes impossible any intelligible conception of an omnipotent, purposeful, and benign Supreme Being who has laid down immutable laws, endowed his creatures with inalienable rights, and posited unchangeable rules of human conduct”.

William F. Buckley, Jr., was not happy with his undergraduate education. He had enrolled first at the National Autonomous University of New Mexico in 1943, but Army service in World War II interrupted his academic career. In 1945, he transferred to Yale University, where he finally graduated with honors five years later, a student of history, economics, and political science. His dismay with undergraduate education in America, though, resulted less from the frustrating dynamism of wartime than the intellectual stagnation of academia. In 1951, he vented his concerns with a book that gave voice to the malaise that plagued self-identified conservatives in America and, consequently, launched his career as a public intellectual.

On its merits, *God and Man at Yale* was a finely calibrated attack against the social sciences and humanities at an Ivy League institution. Yet its wider call to conservatives presaged the mission statement that Buckley wrote for his new journal, *National Review*, in 1955: to “stand athwart history, yelling Stop.”\(^{25}\) To Buckley, universities had caved to modernity and begun to force its guiding ideology, liberalism, upon their students in an effort to guide the historical process by human hand and institution. Such a presumption, Buckley argued, already led him to believe that “individualism [was] dying at Yale, and without a fight.”\(^{26}\) When fallen men displaced God and began to control other men, society forsook its moral center, and liberty was lost. Throughout his long career in journalism and political activism, Buckley would draw inspiration from this vision of human nature and demand that Americans recover their true calling as a nation under God, not man. Yet for all of his disdain for modern life, Buckley knew that the war between God and man would not be won through spiritual means alone. Ideology had fundamentally changed how humans thought and behaved. Liberalism, in other words, could only be answered by another “ism.”

Conservatives, by the most literal definition, are deeply interested in the past, in *conserving* what came before. No matter their differences in education, institutional affiliation, or policy stance, nearly all conservatives in the postwar era shared an interest in history, and particularly that of Western philosophy. To some, this interest was relatively subconscious, or it revealed itself through spirituality and engagement with Western theology. To the drivers of the New Right Movement, however, to intellectuals, media figures, and even businessmen and politicians, few elements were as central to the

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\(^{26}\) Buckley, *God and Man at Yale*, 113.
conservative cause as its historical pedigree. And few events in the postwar era prompted conservatives to introspect more upon their history than the Vietnam War. As of the early 1950s, five major schools of conservatism fought for the conscience of the New Right Movement, which I term Traditionalism, classical conservatism, libertarianism, Fusionism, and populism. These strains were hardly unified philosophically, politically, socially, or even regionally within the United States. Yet by the early 1970s, one school had asserted intellectual hegemony over the Movement as a direct result of conservatives’ evolving debates over the War.

This chapter will discuss these five schools in detail, highlight key advocates of each tradition, and analyze their visions of history. Such a survey will clarify the complex interrelationships among conservatives that shaped their subsequent responses to the Vietnam War. I am not the first by any means to attempt a typology of American conservatism. The most influential study in this vein is George H. Nash’s The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945. A conservative himself, Nash compiled a veritable encyclopedia, or perhaps hagiography, of conservatisms. His apologetic was curious, though, in that it framed conservatism negatively, as a response to other prevailing intellectual and political trends throughout Western history, such as the state (libertarians), the secular masses (Traditionalism), and communism (anticommunists). My five schools represent an attempt to frame each school of

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27 George H. Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945 (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998). See also Farmer, American Conservatism, which proposes five schools of conservatism: classic liberalism, traditional conservatism, libertarianism, conservative extremism, and colonial conservatism.
conservatism positively, not against any given trend but as traditions that deserve serious
consideration from scholars across the political spectrum.  

The Traditionalists

As stated in the introduction, Traditionalist conservatives possessed a very clear,
teleological vision of human history. They espoused that modernity—the phase of
Western culture born out of the Reformation and Enlightenment—is an aberration, a
result of humanity’s Faustian desire to know everything despite the limitations that God
placed upon human reason as a result of Original Sin. Traditionalists argued that fallen
humanity could resume its path toward God if only it recovered the true philosophy,
known by shorthand as the “Grand Tradition” (and hence their chosen name of
“Traditionalists”). The Grand Tradition comprised an unbroken line of Western thought
and spirituality that began with Plato’s account of the death of Socrates; included
Aristotle, Jesus, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, and Saint Thomas Aquinas; and continued
on today chiefly in the form of Judeo-Christian theology. Scholars of conservatism, from
the sympathetic Nash to the critical Farmer, have generally agreed on this account.  

Studies of Traditionalism, however, have not articulated as clearly that the school
rested squarely upon one key idea: natural law. These conservatives argued
fundamentally that God revealed an absolute, immutable truth about humanity and the
universe, and that only through the Judeo-Christian tradition could individuals understand

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28 As with any modernist attempt at categorization, reductionism is a necessary evil. I use these terms
relatively broadly and do not claim that they are monolithic nor as discrete as their titles may otherwise
suggest.
29 Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945, 30-73; Farmer, American
Conservatism, 47-69.
and act upon that truth. For Traditionalists, “natural law” simply denoted a modern, Enlightenment-era description of an ancient truth—the Logos of the classical Greek philosophers and the Word of God to Jews and Christians.\textsuperscript{30} The past they sought to recover, to “conserve,” was this conception of the rightful history of Western thought, which they believe modernity had wrongfully dismissed.

The twentieth-century inspiration, if not the best representative, for Traditional conservatism—and specifically the idea that modernity displaced the Grand Tradition—was Leo Strauss. Strauss was a German émigré to the United States who contributed widely to intellectual history, classics, and political philosophy in the mid-twentieth century. Scholars and journalists have spilled more ink in anger about or in praise of Strauss than perhaps any other single American intellectual linked, however tangentially, to the conservative movement. Despite this association, his political views trended moderate, and his religious identity was greatly in flux throughout his life.\textsuperscript{31} His narrative of Western thought, though, is relatively clear, as articulated in his prolific body of work. Modernity began, in short, with the Renaissance Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli. His thought considered “how men live as distinguished from how they ought to live,” or the empirical patterns of human life rather than the possible ideals to which humans could aspire. Machiavelli’s work lowered the sights of philosophy to “the

\textsuperscript{30} Students of John Locke may recall his endorsement of “natural law.” Whereas Locke conceived of natural law as knowable by human reason, however, Traditional conservatives would reject such a notion as “modern,” i.e., presumptuous of limitless human ability. See Locke’s \textit{Letters Concerning Toleration} (1689, 1960, 1692), \textit{Two Treatises of Government} (1689), and \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding} (1690) for more on his views regarding natural law.

\textsuperscript{31} Strauss rightly spawned an entire cottage industry of interpreters, given his difficult prose and love of the abstract. Despite its unpromising title, the best work in “decoding” Strauss, in my mind, is Catherine and Michael Zuckert, \textit{The Truth about Leo Strauss: Political Philosophy and American Democracy} (Chicago: Chicago, 2006). Both students of Strauss, the Zuckerts developed a relatively even-handed look at Strauss and rebutted his detractors both right and left.
Beast Man as opposed to the God Man: it understands man in the light of the sub-human rather than that of the super-human.”

The result of such a shift was what Strauss called the “crisis of modern natural right.” When eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-century political thinkers in the pattern of Robespierre, Hitler, and Stalin tried to ground truth in the vicissitudes of human action, instead of a static, exterior ideal like natural law, they inevitably constructed utopian ideologies inimical to human freedom. The only recourse available to humanity, Strauss insisted, was to seek wisdom in the Grand Tradition, to emulate the philosophers who asserted an absolute truth external to human affairs.

A second German-born American thinker, Eric Voegelin, held notable influence over the Traditional conservatives for his original, critical view of modernity. In his 1952 book, *The New Science of Politics*, Voegelin distilled ideas from his enormous body of work on “Gnosticism,” or his conception that modern thinkers, and especially Karl Marx, developed totalizing worldviews knowable only to special elites. These elites, in turn, sought to “immanentize,” or realize, their ideologies, which Voegelin considered “eschatons.” But Voegelin insisted that “such an immanentist hypostasis of the eschaton…is a theoretical fallacy” because Christianity illustrated that humanity can only strive, not reach, perfection. “The pilgrim’s progress, the sanctification of life, is a movement toward a telos, a goal,” not the actual achievement of that end in earthly reality. More apt to comment on contemporary politics than Strauss, Voegelin asserted that “the Gnostic politicians” of postwar America, or New Deal Liberals, “have put the

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33 Idem., *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: Chicago, 1953).
Soviet army on the Elbe, surrendered China to the Communists, at the same time
demilitarized Germany and Japan, and in addition demobilized our own army.”34

Strauss and Voegelin, then, developed alternative visions of Western history that
nonetheless singled out ideology as the corrupting spawn of modernity. They feared that
modern ideologies threatened the appeal of natural law, as the truth, to Americans, who
stood intellectually vulnerable amidst the temptations of mass society. To employ the
thought of a different historian of ideas, Isaiah Berlin, ideologies were “monistic”
reductions of the irreducible complexity of reality. As simple yet holistic worldviews,
ideologies demanded “faith in a single criterion” and provided “a deep source of
satisfaction both to the intellect and to the emotions” in the same manner as the Grand
Tradition.35 The difference, of course, was that only the Grand Tradition was true, as it
alone was exterior to human control. God, not humanity, crafted natural law, and as such
it cannot sink to the level of ideology.

These conceptions of modernity and natural law inhered in the thought of the two
leading New Right activists of the Traditional conservatism school: L. Brent Bozell and
Clarence Manion. A writer and editor of National Review, Bozell was a fiercely
conservative, traditional Catholic, much like his brother-in-law, William F. Buckley, Jr.
But although Buckley integrated some libertarian ideas into his worldview, Bozell
resolutely sought to maintain the purity and primacy of the Grand Tradition. Although
not a Straussian, Bozell did reference explicitly Voegelin’s influence upon his thought,

35 Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” 1958, in The Proper Study of Mankind, Hardy and Hausheer,
eds., 241. A liberal theorist, Berlin offered the alternative of “pluralism” as the genuine “anti-ideology,” as
it espoused tolerance of many different views. Unlike cultural relativism, though, Berlin’s pluralism
denounced views that threatened the security of the open society. For more on this interpretation of Berlin,
concurring that New Deal Liberals desired foremost “the salvation of man and of society…on this earth,” a “utopia.” Liberalism performed “transmutative surgery on [man’s] soul,” the inevitable outcome of which would be a soulless communism.\textsuperscript{36}

Bozell further developed his Traditionalist views in a speech, “To Magnify the West,” that he delivered at Madison Square Garden in March 1962. Whereas liberals and communists sought to “immanentize the eschaton,” Christians desired a “post-human” eschaton. “Our commission,” by which he intentionally drew allusion to the Great Commission in the Gospel of Matthew, “is to plant in history the ideals and standards contained in Christian truth—and to build institutions and foster mores that will help sustain those ideals.” Bozell’s attitude toward Traditional conservatism was overtly political. He did not disdain social change, revolutionary or otherwise, as long as that change “buil[t] a Christian civilization.” The mission for these Christians, these conservatives, was to conserve Western Civilization, “to guard it, to cleanse it, to magnify it,” for it was “the hopeful, human analogue of the divine order.” The genuine conservative, in Bozell’s view, conserved natural law by spreading it to all nations. “We have no desire for conquest,” he reassured his audience. “To rule others, to bend them to our will, holds no attraction for us, no glory, no satisfying reward. But to let others see our truth, and help them understand it—that is something very different.”\textsuperscript{37}

Bozell’s Traditionalist conservatism, therefore, intentionally conceived of natural law itself as a monistic ideology to rival—in effect, to destroy—the monisms that were liberalism and its associate, communism. New Deal Liberals, he wrote in the \textit{National

Review Bulletin in 1959, had developed the really dangerous ideology. They “tell us that the supreme law of the open society is that all questions are open questions, open to constant re-examination and re-evaluation according to the empirical data on hand at any moment. In such a society, there is no place for immutable principles and made-up minds.” In fact, their doctrine of pluralism was not “plural” at all. Bozell considered it monistic, anti-religious, and ultimately powerless in the face of such an indomitable foe as communism.\(^{38}\) His take on liberalism is not without irony. To destroy ideology, conservatives must develop one based on the “immutable principles” of natural law. Indeed, Bozell espoused the same reductionist attitudes that Strauss and Voegelin had imputed to the doctrinaire communist, let alone the New Deal Liberal.

Whereas Bozell wrote for the small but growing readership of National Review in the 1950s and early 1960s, his Traditional conservative colleague, Clarence Manion, reached a larger audience through his popular radio talk program, the Manion Forum. A Catholic lawyer, Manion rose from humble beginnings in Kentucky to become professor and dean of the law school at the University of Notre Dame. In 1954, he founded the Manion Forum, a nationally syndicated radio program based in South Bend. Over the ensuing decade, many of the most prominent New Right figures, like Barry Goldwater and William F. Buckley, made appearances on the Forum, sometimes even as guest hosts. As a result of his tendency to straddle the Traditional and populist schools of conservatism, Manion drew as much upon American nationalism as the Grand Tradition. Whereas Bozell spent much of his time in Spain and admired the former Catholic monarchy, Manion firmly planted his roots in what he perceived as the conservative

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Christianity of the Founding Fathers, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution.

Manion published several works on the legal profession, Constitutional history, and American identity, most of which he premised consciously on a divine order and America’s central role within it.39 Geared toward a general audience, his bestselling book *The Key to Peace* combined a variety of philosophical elements: patriotism, Catholicism, free market capitalism, and a vision of the Founding Fathers as natural law theorists. Central to his thesis—that liberty is the “Key to Peace”—is his dichotomy of government into spiritual (free and traditional) and material (authoritarian and modern) categories, a conception that situated him comfortably within the natural law tradition. America was born, he argued, “from the satanic bondage of political materialism” to which France in its Revolution and, later, the socialist nations in the Cold War were shackled.40 To Manion, then, the American Revolution was less a modern Enlightenment event than the birth of a spiritual, Christian nation, a watershed moment in the history of the Grand Tradition.

Manion’s repeated demands for limited government had less to do with any deep commitment to libertarian ideas than to what he considered “Americanism,” a nationalist nostalgia for his perception of early American civic ideals. Whereas his foreign policy views shifted from isolationist sympathies to conservative interventionism, his perception

of a singular American national identity never wavered. He defined the primary elements of “Americanism” in a 1962 speech:

The affirmations of Americanism include: (1) the existence and providence of God; (2) the eternal personality of each human being and the inalienable personal liberty to develop that personality according to the moral law for time and eternity; (3) the right to acquire and hold private property as insulation against the intrusions and coercions of others including the civil government; (4) the continuing necessity for Constitutional limitations upon the power of government to prevent the development of tyranny.\footnote{Idem., “Americanism vs. Communism,” speech to the Lubbock-Crosby County Medical Society, Lubbock, TX, 14 September 1962, the Clarence E. Manion Papers (hereafter Manion Papers), Box 110, Folder 110-4, the Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.}

As his enumeration illustrates, he considered the Founders’ faith in God the most important of these ideals.\footnote{See also Idem., “Definition of Liberty,” \textit{Manion Forum} Broadcast No. 4, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 24 October 1954, Manion Papers, Box 81, Folder 81-11, where Manion defends the Christian identity of the Founding Fathers.} Manion’s America was an undeniably Christian nation, and as such it formed the political embodiment of the natural law tradition. Manion situated his fervent anti-communist attitudes in defense of natural law. “Our war with Communists and Communism is a war between good and bad; between up and down; between the forces of Heaven and the minions of Hell,” he said to students at Xavier University. “In this contest between coal black and pure white there is no ‘in-between’ area of gray compromise or respectful co-existence.”\footnote{Idem., “America’s Answer,” speech to Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH, 18 November 1961, Manion Papers, Box 110, Folder 110-3.} Manion’s rejection of “gray compromise” echoed Bozell’s vision of Traditional conservatism and its foundation in natural law, as evidenced by their common defense of such tactics in fighting communism as McCarthyism and the Red Scare.\footnote{Idem., “The Next President Can Win The Cold War By Permitting Congress To Expose Communist Subversives,” \textit{Manion Forum} Broadcast No. 519, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 13 September 1964, Manion Papers, Box 83, Folder 83-6.}
Although Traditional conservatism enjoyed many passionate acolytes, Bozell and Manion arguably would wield more power in shaping the New Right during the Vietnam era than most of their kin. Their mutual enthusiasm for a conservative fire to fight the liberal/communist fire motivated them to forgo dispassionate journalism for genuine political activism. But their zeal to produce an alternative to New Deal Liberalism also exposed a possible logical inconsistency within the thought of philosophers like Strauss and Voegelin. Perhaps the Grand Tradition of natural law was itself an eschaton. In their zeal to conserve its truths for others, some Traditional conservatives risked the temptation to immanentize natural law, becoming the Beast Men of which Strauss warned.

The Classical Conservatives

New Right activists who leveled this latter charge of hypocrisy against Traditional conservatives identified sporadically as “classical” or, although perhaps misleadingly, “Anglo-American” conservatives. These thinkers developed a very different narrative for the history of conservatism. Whereas they agreed with Strauss that ideologies were reductionist and gateways to totalitarianism, they denied that the Grand Tradition, or any single source of wisdom, should serve as an absolute guide to morality and political behavior. If any such source existed, and if conservatism upheld it as supreme, then conservatism would become monistic, and by extension, an ideology. “True” conservatism, they insisted, was resolutely anti-ideological.

For historical inspiration, classical conservatives first looked not to ancient Greece and Biblical Jerusalem but to the late Enlightenment. Edmund Burke, the Irish-born British parliamentarian and Whig theorist, articulated in their minds the standard
text in anti-ideological thought with his famed *Reflections on the Revolution in France* of 1790. To Burke, conservatism was a temperament, not an ideology, that respected tradition but also encouraged gradual reform and accounted for differences of cultural context. With this mindset, he advocated a peace with the American colonists during their War for Independence, as he commended their efforts to conserve individual liberty in light of royal and Parliamentary overreach, Christianity against the Church of England, and free commerce against the British navy’s tactic of impressment. But when the French radicals proposed a wholesale reconstruction of France with the elimination of the king, church, and traditional society, Burke strongly protested. “I am seriously to felicitate a madman,” he asked, illustrating his disdain for both the masses and the French, “who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty?” Those contemporary conservatives who identify as “Burkean,” therefore, claim a general trust in the status quo over reform, but are not averse to change in principle as much as specific “radical” or “impulsive” changes.

In its heyday of the late Enlightenment, classical conservatism enjoyed at least two other prominent thinkers, John Adams and Immanuel Kant. Adams, too, flatly rejected the violence of the French Revolution in a way his more radical compatriots, Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine, did not. His defense of American independence and the U.S. Constitution from classical republicanism likewise portrayed Adams as pragmatic and cautious of rapid change for ideological ends. Although neither British nor American (and, therefore, not an “Anglo-American” conservative), Immanuel Kant grounded his classical conservatism in a similarly Protestant (Pietist) faith and skepticism.
to the Enlightenment apotheosis of reason. As much as Burke, Adams, and Kant advocated for select Enlightenment principles like individual liberty, their classical conservatism foremost represented a trenchant critique of the Enlightenment’s excesses. To draw on Berlin once more, classical conservatism effectively initiated the “Counterenlightenment,” or the Western intellectual movement that fundamentally opposed the Enlightenment and its totalizing ideology of secular, democratic liberalism. Classical conservatives felt at home on the political Right because they conceived of New Deal Liberalism as the postwar iteration of this ideologically driven, Enlightenment tradition.45

In the wake of other Enlightenment critiques, such as Romanticism and postmodernism, postwar American conservatives generally lost interest in the classical school, with at least one major exception: Peter Viereck. In some ways, the conservative movement owed its name to Viereck. A professor of history at Mount Holyoke College, Viereck published more of his poetry (for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1949) than his views on political philosophy. That said, he sealed his influence upon the movement with the publication in 1949 of Conservatism Revisited: The Revolt Against Ideology, which helped transform the “unpopular epithet” of conservatism into a respectable term of identity in the postwar era. As the subtitle suggests, Viereck’s work cast the conservatism not as an ideology that individuals must obey but a set of principles or values that guide a Western conception of the good life. “The conservative principles par

excellence,” he wrote, “are proportion and measure; self-expression through self-restraint; preservation through reform; humanism and classical balance; a fruitful nostalgia for the permanent beneath the flux; and a fruitful obsession for unbroken historic continuity.”

Classical Western and Renaissance thought share these values, as they are strikingly similar to those of *quattrocento* Italians like Leon Batista Alberti. But Viereck’s conservatism was not one that sought conformity to ancient truths—merely guidance for present and future action. “If humane social reforms seem ‘socialistic’ or are against the fetish of laissez-faire economics, that is not a substantial moral objection,” he claimed. “When did we ever have laissez faire, and why is any merely material and economic system more sacred than the moral duty of compassion for want?” To him, conservatism, after all, was not an ideology in the mold of laissez-faire capitalism. It made no demands upon the individual other than to live as the best individuals have lived throughout Western history. The conservative, “moderate in all things,” was to be open to new ideas that preserved tradition but spurred useful, organic change. His heroes, therefore, were antirevolutionary figures like Edmund Burke, John Adams, Klemens von Metternich, and Winston Churchill. His enemies included Thomas Paine, the Jacobins, Communists, Nazis, and other ideologically driven radicals.

In a short primer on the history of conservatism published in 1956, Viereck profiled these men of restraint and aristocratic heritage, in part to argue how the United States, far from democratic, was fundamentally a conservative nation, a creature of the

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46 Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 133, 70. Viereck originally published the book with Charles Scribner’s Sons in 1949, although he added a notable addendum in 1962.

47 Ibid., 75.
Renaissance. All of the most influential American figures, from John Adams through Henry Adams, were activists in a long conservative movement, one that spanned the entire modern period. After the Progressive and New Deal Eras put that movement on hiatus, Viereck claimed that “new conservatives,” including himself, reemerged in the 1940s with the belief that “liberty depends on concrete traditions and is menaced by ‘excessive reliance on human reason.’” Despite their vastly different views, all “new conservatives” were “generally Burkean in approach.”48 In his mind, the fatal flaw of the New Deal was the same that plagued the French Revolution—their shared Enlightenment vision that rational social action or planning alone could solve all of humanity’s problems.

As a result of their antipathy toward ideology, Viereck and other classical conservatives felt uncomfortable with ideological bedfellows like the Traditionalists. Yet their common cause against perceived excesses of New Deal Liberalism led them to reengage that long conservative movement in the form of the New Right. In fact, classical conservatives stood alone among their conservative brethren in their Straussian claim that ideologies are inherently monist and modern.

The Libertarians

In sharp contrast to Viereck’s classical conservatism stood one of the most monistic philosophies of the postwar era: libertarianism. Unlike Traditional and classical conservatives, libertarians embraced modernity and reason wholeheartedly. Many libertarians even found their political home on the political Left. Left-libertarians

generally endorsed the Rousseauian or late Enlightenment primacy on universal equal rights, even at the risk of some state intervention. Right-libertarians in the New Right Movement looked alternatively to the Renaissance, Reformation, or early Enlightenment for philosophical inspiration. Nearly all libertarians, left and right, honored John Locke for the original articulation of their favored rights to life, liberty, and property in his *Second Treatise on Government*. To right-libertarians, however, equality was not a necessary condition for liberty. Indeed, equality often required state or social coercion, which libertarians found destructive of individual liberty. As Lockeans, libertarians gladly considered their philosophy a modern ideology and asserted belief in natural law. Their conception of the latter, though, differed strongly with that of Traditionalists in that libertarians typically invested confidence in the human ability to reason and comprehend natural law without the aid of Judeo-Christian theology.

Two key influences on American right-libertarianism were Austrian economists Ludwig von Mises and his protégé, Friedrich Hayek. Both Mises and Hayek helped found the Austrian School of economics, which emphasized among other ideas the study of economics from the exclusive perspective of the individual; and the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947, a group of liberal economists that also included Milton Friedman. For his part, Mises pioneered the use of “praxeology”—the assertion that human action can be reduced to a particular and knowable set of theories—as a novel method of the social

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sciences to achieve this libertarian point of view. Friedrich Hayek in turn applied many of Mises’s principles to political economy. He gained fame with the publication of his 1944 work, *The Road to Serfdom*, a scathing critique of socialism and the Keynesian economics that defined the British Left and New Deal Liberalism. Superfluous government intervention in free markets, he argued, inevitably led to totalitarian regimes on par with Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany. Hayek had helped stamp libertarianism with its characteristic antipathy for all forms of state-sponsored “collectivism.”

Despite the wide influence of the Austrian School in America, perhaps the single most popular libertarian of the New Right characteristically forged her own path. A Russian émigrée, Hollywood screenwriter, and novelist, Ayn Rand was best known for her bestselling novels *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, published in 1943 and 1957, respectively. These works promulgated her philosophy of rational, atheistic egoism known as Objectivism, whose origins go back to her days as a student in Leningrad under the early Soviet Union. The Communist regime left a deep impression on her politics and philosophy, causing her to rebel not only against the regime but also her very identity. She fled the Soviet Union in 1926 and changed her name from Alisa Rosenbaum to Ayn Rand, defining herself as a self-made individual.

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51 As early as 1940 (in German language edition), Mises argued his case for praxeology and “methodological individualism” in *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics*, Bettina Bien Greaves, ed. (Auburn, AL: The Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2010).
Although she had only limited formal study in philosophy, Rand avidly read the literature from the Greco-Roman classics to Nietzsche, striving to frame her personal philosophy in the long scope of Western intellectual history. In *For the New Intellectual*, first published in 1961, she reduced Western history to a cast of caricatures—“Attila, the Witch Doctor and the Producer—or the man of force, the man of feelings, the man of reason—or the brute, the mystic, the thinker.” Attila and the Witch Doctor, she maintained, held sway over most of the ancient West, with kings and conquerors battling to control the ideas of Plato, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. The Renaissance, she claimed, “blasted the rule of the Witch Doctor sky-high, setting the earth free of his power…. Men could no longer be told to reject their mind as an impotent tool.” For its part, the Industrial Revolution “completed the task of the Renaissance: it blasted Attila off his throne” and allowed the “Producers” to create the first society free of both tyrants: the United States. In her mind, this development led inexorably to the formulation of capitalism, the free market, and free individuals.54

After that moment of free thought, the West fell into its great decline. Rene Descartes, David Hume, and especially Immanuel Kant “closed the door of philosophy to reason.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, and Friedrich Nietzsche would develop their moralities of selflessness (altruism being the gravest sin to Rand) to totalitarian extremes. The modern liberal state, she argued, was a monstrosity of collectivist attitudes that blended the worst of the Witch Doctor with that of Attila. In midst of New Frontier reforms, she claimed, “We are moving toward full, totalitarian

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socialism with worn, cynical voices telling us that such is the irresistible trend of history.”

With her admiration of Renaissance thought and criticism of the Enlightenment, Rand shared her philosophical roots with conservatives like Viereck. Yet her admiration of the transformative, material potential of the Industrial Revolution led her toward laissez-faire capitalism in a manner that Anglo-American conservatives like Viereck simply refused to follow. These two elements—Renaissance individualism and industrial capitalism—account for her nearly singular obsession with rooting out collectivism, which she invariably associated with the left. Despite this association, she was quite uncomfortable in the conservative movement, as well, for she frequently denounced conservatism as a “me-too-ism” beholden to the likes of Attila and the Witch Doctor. Although fervently supportive of Barry Goldwater’s presidential campaign in 1964, she was not surprised by his loss. Conservatives, after all, were too intellectually weak. “It is only on a [philosophical] base that one can formulate a consistently political theory and achieve it in practice,” she wrote after Goldwater’s defeat. “When, however, men attempt to rush into politics without such a base, the result is that embarrassing conglomeration of impotence, futility, inconsistency and superficiality which is loosely designated today as ‘conservatism.’” In other words, as of 1964, conservatism was not enough of a monism, let alone an attractive one, to enact necessary political change.

Despite her self-identification with the New Right, Rand’s repeated denunciation of conservatism had much to do with most conservatives’ equal dislike for her. Few Americans garnered as much criticism from their ostensible bedfellows than Rand.

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55 Ibid., 27, 45.
Nonetheless, she was a force of great influence for anti-communist, right-wing causes, attracting the likes of Alan Greenspan, Ludwig von Mises, and Barry Goldwater to her side. The first two conservative economists frequently contributed to her *The Objectivist Newsletter*, founded in 1962 and officially renamed *The Objectivist* in 1966. Goldwater wrote Rand to say he “enjoyed very few books in [his] life as much as *Atlas Shrugged*” and deeply appreciated her defense of his conservative positions on her television appearances.\(^{57}\)

To compensate for the intellectual vacuum that was conservatism, Rand styled her Objectivist philosophy as a thorough, absolute ideology to compete with those of the modern Attilas and Witch Doctors. According to her close colleague and heir, Leonard Peikoff, she specifically chose the title of her famous 1938 novela, *Anthem*, as “blasphemy to the pious,” effectively clothing her ideology in the trappings of religion in order to deride and replace it. Moreover, her control over Objectivism was total and autocratic. In 1968, after she learned of the affair of her lover and protégé, Nathaniel Branden, she excommunicated him from Objectivist circles in a highly public and dramatic article for *The Objectivist*. “For the past three years,” she argued to her readers, “I have observed a disturbing change in Nathaniel Branden’s intellectual attitude. It seemed to indicate his gradual departure from the principles of Objectivism, a tendency toward non-intellectual concerns, a lessening of interest in philosophical issues and in the

\(^{57}\) Barry M. Goldwater, letter to Ayn Rand, 11 May 1960, the Barry M. Goldwater Papers (hereafter Goldwater Papers), Alpha Files, Box 18, Folder 3: Ayn Rand, the Arizona Historical Foundation, Phoenix, Arizona.
Objectivist movement as such.” Rand and her Objectivists notwithstanding, most libertarian conservatives shied away from such strict monism as a guiding construct for their beliefs, even as critics like Viereck claimed that their laissez-faire doctrine bound them to certain ways of thinking. That said, mainstream libertarian conservatives drew upon a similar intellectual heritage as the Objectivists, applauding the Renaissance and Industrial Revolution for their vindication of individual freedom and market capitalism. As a result, the average libertarian conservative’s policy positions echoed those of the Objectivist much more so than those of the classical conservative. Libertarian conservatives heartily embraced the transformative economic potential of the Industrial Revolution—and some even followed Thomas Paine to endorse the extirpating political might of the French Revolution. Although generally not as monist as Objectivists, they harbored clear visions of what a good, just society would look like and sought political change to achieve that society, abrogating tradition if necessary. In some ways, this tendency toward change provoked criticism from other conservatives within the broader movement, much as Rand garnered criticism for her beliefs. Nevertheless, the vast majority of libertarian conservatives embraced the right-wing for the same rationale as Rand—their fierce opposition to collectivism.

Economist Murray N. Rothbard typified this more mainstream libertarian conservatism as of the late 1950s. For most of his life, Rothbard claimed the labels “conservative” and “classical liberal,” arguing rightfully that Burke had little problem

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identifying as such. He inherited the intellectual pedigree of prominent economists who
had laid the foundation of libertarian conservatism, having studied with Ludwig von
Mises in the 1950s. After earning his doctorate in economics in 1956, Rothbard began
research into his most famous work, *Man, Economy, and State*, which he published in
1962 (and dedicated to von Mises). A dedicated follower of Mises’ praxeology,
Rothbard argued that his book “deduces the entire corpus of economics from a few
simple and apodictically true axioms.” Rothbard thus departed from the intellectual
history of Rand with his grounding in the rational tradition of Descartes; he even
condemned empiricism for having “disintegrated economics to such an extent that no one
thinks to look for a complete edifice.”59 Nevertheless, both he and Rand, like many
descendants of Locke, had faith that human nature rested upon an absolute, knowable
truth.

At any rate, Rothbard ended up in much the same place as Rand on policy,
specifically anti-collectivism. Like Rand, he too reluctantly associated with some
conservatives, whose philosophy he considered “the embodiment of the creed of the
ancient Statist enemy.” Yet his right-wing politics were unmistakable. “I was an ardent
‘extreme right-wing Republican,’” he wrote in 1967, “in the days of course when this
meant isolationist and at least partial devotion to the liberty of the individual” (which he
considered to be prior to the mid-1950s).60 The primary motivation for his self-
identification was the negative influence he felt that Keynesian economics possessed over
not just the policy of New Deal Liberals but also their tepid “critics” in the Republican
Party. Keynesians “hail mercantilists as prefiguring their own insights,” despite the fact

that, in Rothbard’s mind, mercantilism was “a system of statism which employed economic fallacy to bulk up a structure of imperial state power.”61 Keynesians, Marxists, and other left-leaning economists caved to the state rather than uplifting the individual, thereby wittingly or unwittingly supporting imperialism and the immoral use of force.

Rothbard frequently contributed reviews of economic treatises to various conservative periodicals, including the National Review, in which he invariably lambasted Keynesians and praised laissez-faire advocates. By August 1961, however, Rothbard ceased collaboration with the prominent journal. Although he maintained his identification with the right-wing, he thought the conservative movement began to reflect inordinately the “collectivist” influence of the National Review and its editors, particularly Frank S. Meyer. Rothbard believed that Meyer’s own conservative school, Fusionism, betrayed reason and the individual in its support of an ideology of foreign interventionism and soft white supremacy.62

By 1965, Rothbard teamed up with his friend and “classical liberal” colleague, Leonard P. Liggio, to form Left and Right: A Journal of Libertarian Thought as a counterweight to such creeping absolutism on the right. His effort was not an abandonment of the right-wing as much as an attempt to reframe some of its basic views. “The present day categories of ‘left’ and ‘right,’” he and Liggio argued in the opening editorial, “have become misleading and obsolete,” for the “doctrine of liberty contains elements corresponding with both contemporary left and right.” The intellectual collectivism of Fusionist ideology on the right threatened the free evolution of his views,

even if they incorporated some leftist ideas. “Liberty,” he stated simply, “is our thesis; reason shall be our method.” Whereas many conservatives in the movement regarded Rothbard’s journal as his retirement notice from the right, it is important to note that Rothbard’s views remained consistently anti-collectivist and pro-laissez-faire. What is more significant is that his journal tested the boundaries of the movement, and the place of libertarianism within it, which shifted considerably in the winds of intellectual storm that Vietnam helped create.

The Fusionists

Of the many wellsprings of conservative thought, from the German theorists to the Burkean tradition to the Austrian School, none became as powerful in their control over the New Right Movement as the weekly journal of William F. Buckley, Jr., National Review. Buckley founded National Review in 1955 and toiled to keep his brainchild financially afloat for the first several years of its life. That said, National Review was far from a one-man show. In fact, Buckley’s colleagues, Frank S. Meyer and James Burnham, exerted arguably as much influence over the conservative movement in its attitudes toward the Vietnam War as did Buckley. Meyer, in particular, founded his own school of conservatism, known as Fusionism, that Buckley and Burnham more or less defended as the standard ideological line of the weekly.

Meyer had a unique perspective on conservatism. Before the Second World War, the New Jersey native had dedicated himself to Marxism and served as the director of a local Communist Party. In the 1940s, Meyer began to trade in his Marxism for

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libertarianism, and by the next decade he had self-identified as a committed conservative. A frequent contributor to the *National Review* on topics regarding “ideas and men,” Meyer began to see the need for greater intellectual coherence within the conservative movement around 1958. The first problem was that few observers of American foreign policy—liberal or conservative, “in the thoughtful studies of a Kennan or a Kissinger”—fully understood the gravity of the Cold War. To Meyer, the severity of the Cold War left only two choices: “aggressive attack or Fortress America.”  

Although he was by all accounts a complex thinker, Meyer frequently reduced complex issues to binary choices, a Manichean tendency that he likely imported into his thought from his communist past. Another facet of Meyer’s erstwhile communism that remained after his conversion was a revolutionary mentality, one that Rothbard and other individualists interpreted as his libertarian edge. Writing of the bland similarity between Kennedy and “Nixonfeller,” for example, Meyer argued that these “New Men” represented a society premised on the “nihilistic denial of man’s nature.” The goal of a genuine conservative, therefore, must be to “destroy it, to overturn its assumptions and return society to a proper understanding of the relations of power to principle, of man’s true ends.”

He also exhibited a protective ownership of what he considered his and his fellow editors’ intellectual leadership of the movement through the *National Review*. A year prior to Goldwater’s presidential defeat, Meyer cautioned readers that the conservative movement was bigger than any single politician. “The task of such a man [as Goldwater],” he warned, “is to change the direction of political events by leading a consensus united by instinct and broad belief, not to be the intellectual leader of the conservative movement which is the

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spearhead of that consensus.” Like Rand, he would not tolerate competitors delineating the elements of a conservative ideology.

Given these proclivities toward monism (even as he disclaimed “ideology” as machination of the left), Meyer viewed incoherence as the greatest problem facing the conservative movement. Once again employing a binary analysis, he saw only two opposing camps: “those who place the defeat of Communism as the first necessity of action [the Traditionalists, for the most part] and those who minimize the danger of Communism as against the danger of the relentless advance of collectivist Liberalism [the libertarians].” A second dilemma cut across the movement in a different vein: whether “to subordinate the principles and the organic growth of the conservative movement to the electoral victory of the Republican Party” or “to insist upon a doctrinal purity.” To these problems Meyer proposed a “fine balance” and “flexibility,” the keystones of the compromise package he ultimately called “Fusionism.” His new ideology would thus blend both the individualism of the libertarian and the anti-communism of the Traditionalist. To cement their bond, Meyer went back to the moment in Western intellectual history when the antecedents of these two strains diverged—the same time, not coincidentally, that attracted most conservatives: the Renaissance. It was here that Meyer drew upon the work of Strauss and Voegelin. The Machiavellian turn represented a divergence from the wholesome spiritual truth of Western thought toward the “nihilistic denial of man’s nature” that Meyer was so willing to overthrow.

As such, Meyer could not accept such modern ideas as New Deal Liberalism. In fact, he directly addressed the notion in an effort to forestall liberal criticism. Meyer denied the “false antithesis” that modernity presented. Instead, conservatives found a way to strike “in shimmering balance the authority of truth and the freedom of men,” allowing “men who agree upon essential truths” to “differ with good will.” Meyer went on to apply this logic to containment theorist George Kennan and Hungarian philosopher of science Michael Polanyi, both of whom he generally admired for their criticisms of liberalism. Nevertheless, both figures argued for a “moral coexistence” between the West and the Communist East that ran contrary to the “essential truths” of his Fusionism. Kennan bowed to modernity when he applauded American “maturity” in recognizing its “childish arrogance about the virtues of our own society”; Polanyi recommended dealing with the threat of communism much like Europeans dealt with the post-Reformation Wars of Religion, the construction of “a civic partnership united in its resolve on continuous reform.” Both of these solutions, Meyer felt, amounted to “suicide.” Compromise was impossible on the core truths of the West. Indeed, it was incumbent upon Fusionists to do the opposite—to discourage, frustrate, or even destroy any and all competing claims against those truths.

The very reason the West was losing the Cold War, Meyer argued, was liberals’ acceptance of pluralism. Either liberal Cold Warriors sought to bear unilaterally the burden of protecting the Free World and support socialist nations through foreign aid, or liberal isolationists demanded the renunciation of global responsibility in the fight against

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communism. Both paths embraced a moral equivalence of East and West, he argued, that ensured the destruction—through bankruptcy or invasion—of the United States. 71

Instead, the West’s only salvation from modernity was to focus society sharply upon its sacred truths and fulfill its obligation to free the world from secular, material tyranny. “It has become fashionable to laugh at the phrase, ‘the white man’s burden,’” he wrote, “but in the laughter what is forgotten, perhaps purposefully, is that the hegemony of Western civilization was indeed a burden, the assumption of which…represented high purpose, and confidence that the truth by which the West lived was the highest truth known to man.” The “abdication” of the West’s burden of responsibility toward the rest of the world meant not only losing other nations to Communist political and economic domination, but also their cultures to barbarism and souls to nihilism. 72

Although William F. Buckley, Jr., largely agreed with Meyer’s views, both on the intellectual roots of Fusionism and his positions on Vietnam, he preferred to focus his energies on building the conservative movement at home rather than commenting extensively on the Cold War. Despite his formidable intellect, Buckley’s role as a Fusionist was less as theorist than facilitator; he sought to make conservatism practical and popular, exemplified in both his editorship of the National Review and campaign for mayor of New York in 1965 (as a member of the Conservative Party of New York). After all, Buckley already bought deeply into the Grand Tradition and the closed society before his leadership of the National Review. 73 One of his more visible achievements in

73 Greater analysis of Buckley’s intellectual and religious background will occupy part of the first chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to note for this section that Buckley was a deeply pious, traditional Catholic,
this effort to strengthen the movement was his founding of the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) in 1960, through which Buckley quite perceptively sought to mobilize the energetic youth of the postwar generation for Fusionism. Buckley also fought to elect Goldwater as President in 1964, advising the Arizona senator on his campaign and defending his views on national television and through the *National Review*. After Goldwater’s loss, Buckley came to his defense against conservative “backbiters” who “strain[ed] justice to the breaking point” with their fierce criticism of the former presidential nominee. Buckley lashed out at the anonymous conservative who wrote that the election was a choice “‘between Cornpone and ineptness’…referring to President Johnson and Goldwater, respectively.” He also lamented that conservatives were as yet unorganized around the Fusionist vision of foreign policy: “One [conservative] will tell you [Goldwater’s] foreign policy statements were too bellicose and erratic. Another, that he did not, in his foreign policy statements, take a line consistent enough in its hardness.”

To a lesser degree than Meyer or Buckley, James Burnham held the Fusionist line. Burnham’s expertise was grounded in foreign policy, from grander Cold War strategy down to the effectiveness of certain tactics in Vietnam. Like Meyer, Burnham was a former Communist, a Trotskyite, who abandoned Marxism in 1940 but retained a binary, Manichean vision of political philosophy. What was arguably Burnham’s most famous work, *The Managerial Revolution*, appeared a year later; it illustrated his

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lingering doubts about the virtues of capitalism in the age of mass society. Over the ensuing two decades, Burnham gravitated slowly toward the New Right; he joined the staff of National Review in the late 1950s as the author of its foreign policy column, “The Third World War.” In stark contrast from The Managerial Revolution, his prominent 1964 book, The Suicide of the West, projected Fusionism as forcefully as any of Meyer’s or Buckley’s publications. The text combined elements of the Grand Tradition, the fervor of an ex-communist’s anti-communism, and laissez-faire economics to argue for New Deal Liberalism’s stifling, ideological, statist hold over America and the West. Although he did not say so explicitly, his work was a testament to fighting fire with fire, to replacing one ideology with another, in a manner not unlike that of his Traditionalist colleague, L. Brent Bozell.76

The Populists

The four aforementioned schools of the early New Right all projected a sense of exclusivity that many Americans at mid-century found repugnant. Traditionalism required, if not a high level of education, then certainly an abiding faith in the Judeo-Christian theological tradition. Classical conservatism typically required intensive reading and preparation, as it lacked the ease of a cut-and-dry ideology. Most of those conservatives attracted to libertarianism were either wealthy enough to care about liberal economics or had some training in the profession. Fusionism, for its part, was limited to the readership of National Review or the membership of Buckley’s YAF. For many

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working class Americans, these conservatisms were either out of reach or dissonant with the values of everyday life.

These Americans turned instead to populist conservatives, who are difficult to classify in any general sense. In *The Populist Persuasion*, Michael Kazin argued insightfully that populism is “more an impulse than an ideology,” as it is “too elastic and promiscuous to be the basis for such an allegiance.” Those conservatives attracted to populist personalities fit this description well, as they committed to political activism and belief in less coherent ways than many intellectuals, journalists, and politicians who drove the New Right. That said, populists left an indelible mark upon the movement and transmitted to vast numbers of the American people the ideas that percolated within the other conservative schools.

The most influential of all New Right populists of the period, Robert H. W. Welch, crafted an idiosyncratic worldview that fused anti-communism, nativism, and natural law Christianity. Born in North Carolina in 1899, Welch attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a precocious teenager. After the candy company he founded went bankrupt during the Great Depression, he worked for his brother’s business, the James O. Welch Company, before retiring wealthy in 1956. From his youth Welch had been a Catholic, Republican, and anti-communist; he supported Robert Taft in 1952 and Joe McCarthy during the Red Scare. In Indianapolis on December 9, 1958, he and eleven others formed the John Birch Society as an anti-communist organization; by

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1961, the Society purported to have 100,000 members across all fifty states.\textsuperscript{78} That same year, the Society began to publish a newsletter of Welch’s views, \textit{American Opinion}, that replaced \textit{One Man’s Opinion}, the circular that Welch started upon his retirement from candymaking. The Society’s status as the leading populist organization of the New Right was evidenced in part by the controversy it would stoke throughout the 1960s and zeal with which many members defended it. One member, for instance, published his own tract in defense of the Society, claiming that any and all detractors were simply part of a dire Communist conspiracy.\textsuperscript{79}

Welch named the Society after a Baptist missionary and military captain who served in China during the Second World War and perished at the hands of Chinese Communists shortly after V-J Day. To Welch, Birch was a martyr and the first casualty of the Cold War. Welch celebrated Birch’s life in his 1954 book, \textit{The Life of John Birch}, and alleged that the federal government suppressed the details of his death as a result of its infiltration by Communist agents. Franklin Roosevelt, Welch continued, consciously “betrayed” and “double-crossed” America’s allies to the Communists; in turn, CIO co-founder Sidney Hillman “selected” Harry Truman to be a Communist stooge for the labor Left.\textsuperscript{80} Like the Traditionalist Clarence Manion, Welch considered the federal government an agent of communism—the difference was that he considered it a willing participant. “Everywhere in the world,” Welch argued in one pamphlet, “the State

\textsuperscript{78} Robert Welch, \textit{A Brief Introduction to the John Birch Society} (Belmont, MA: The John Birch Society, 1963), the Evelyn Philips Anti-Communist Ephemera Collection, 1945-1995 (hereafter Philips Collection), Box 3, the Ronald W. Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California.
\textsuperscript{79} W. Cleon Skousen, \textit{The Communist Attack on the John Birch Society} (Salt Lake City: Ensign, 1963), Philips Collection, Box 2.
\textsuperscript{80} Robert Welch, \textit{The Life of John Birch} (Boston: Western Islands, 1960), 77-78.
Department is doing everything it can to advance the Communist global conquest.”

This effort was not the result of Foggy Bottom’s misguided interpretation of the American mission abroad. It was active and concerted engagement in the Communist cause.

Although Manion also entertained thoughts of a widespread Communist conspiracy in the United States, few members of the New Right personified the theory better than Welch. Until 1961, he was arguably the most powerful conservative in America, given the Society’s membership of approximately 100,000 in that peak year and the nationwide reach of *American Opinion*. By the early 1960s, however, Welch and the Birchers had begun a decline that taxed his potential influence over the shaping of the New Right. For Welch’s many wild claims of a Red conspiracy, many New Right activists began to dismiss him after as the “Boy who Cried Communist.” In 1961, Welch circulated to several prominent conservatives a manuscript for an exposé on former President Eisenhower, *The Politician*, that he eventually self-published in 1963. The entire work sought to portray Eisenhower as an avowed communist. “It simply is not possible to lose so much ground, so rapidly, to an enemy so inferior, by chance or by stupidity,” as Eisenhower had during his tenure in office unless he actively was committing “treason.”

The vast majority of conservatives denounced Welch’s contentions as ludicrous. But the significance of Welch’s views lay less in their controversy than their illustration of not one but many populisms, each being an outgrowth of one individual’s worldview. Despite their common policy views with other conservatives, as Kazin noted, populists

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generally disavowed allegiance to any broader conservative ideology. The contributors to Welch’s *American Opinion* steadily narrowed from a broad range of conservative politicians, activists, military officials, and intellectuals in the late 1950s to a small circle of eccentrics by the mid-1960s who carried on the struggle against the “World Conspiracy.” Earl Lively, Jr., an Air Force veteran and advocate of a Kennedy Assassination conspiracy, argued that Vietnam was “a war we are supposed to lose.” A slew of Administration officials, he alleged, deliberately sought to continue this new Asian conflict, including Dean Rusk, the “Machiavelli” who granted “the Chinese Communists a sanctuary beyond the Yalu” in the Korean War.\(^3\) Hilaire du Berrier, an adventurer, monarchist, and former OSS Agent, contributed an annual column from 1965 to 1968 on the state of communism in Asia that invariably blamed the left and Presidents from Roosevelt through Johnson of ineptness at best and outright collaboration with communists at worst.\(^4\)

Two other prominent figures that scholars often classify as populist conservatives include Phyllis Schlafly and George Wallace. I have chosen to set aside analysis of these two figures for different reasons. A Catholic and one-time Bircher, Schlafly achieved national prominence with her 1964 work, *A Choice, Not an Echo*. Schlafly focused most of her attention on building the Republican Party as a home for conservatives and, in the 1970s, opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment. As her views on the Vietnam War were not particularly innovative or stimulative to the movement as a whole, I will leave

\(^3\) Earl Lively, Jr., “Limited War: The War We are Supposed to Lose,” *American Opinion* 7:9 (October 1964): 25-32.

treatment of her conservatism to others. 85 For his part, George Wallace did have strong and popular views in support of the Vietnam War, and his influence on American politics was quite substantial, as Dan T. Carter has well illustrated in The Politics of Rage and other works. As conservative as many of his positions were, most movement activists shunned him for his idiosyncratic views and controversial profile. His support of select New Deal programs, identification with the Democratic Party, and overt racism prompted many conservatives to deny him their label altogether. For these reasons, and as a result of this dissertation’s focus on the political and intellectual dimensions of the conservative movement, I will let stand the outstanding scholarship of Carter and others on Wallace. 86

Several themes and debates cut across the five schools of the early New Right. First, conservatives were divided over whether to produce a single conservative ideology for political action (let alone what that ideology would entail) or retain a vision of conservatism as a philosophical temperament, one impervious, indeed inimical, to modern ideologies. In this respect, the classical conservatives were squared off against the rest of the Movement, with the possible exception of certain populists. The libertarians, in particular, considered ideology the only path to political relevance; as a result, libertarian-leaning Fusionists like Meyer and Buckley felt that a cosmic war of conservatism against liberalism and communism was inevitable. Traditionalists, on the other hand, denied outright that the Grand Tradition was an ideology, for it predated the modern age and could not co-exist with other, rival ideologies. As later chapters will

illustrate, the Vietnam War put pressure on conservatives to articulate their views with a clear voice, one that left little room for classical conservatives like Viereck.

A second theme centered on the abstract philosophical debate between “realism” and “nominalism,” or whether universals exist. Nominalists, like many classical conservatives and some of the more radical libertarians, drew from the thought of David Hume and remained skeptical that truths exterior to humanity existed, or at least that such abstractions existed in name only. In this sense, nominalist conservatives overlapped with emerging postmodern thinkers. Realists, on the other hand, argued that universals exist. Building upon the Platonist tradition, realist conservatives often identified strongly as Traditionalists or Fusionists and lent weight to these schools’ competing interest in becoming the dominant conservative ideology. To legitimate their views, realist conservatives often looked to the work of historian and English professor Richard Weaver. In *Ideas Have Consequences*, Weaver deconstructed the nominalist theories of William of Ockham to argue vehemently for a conservative tradition premised on eternal truths. Published in 1948, his book had a particularly profound effect upon Traditionalist conservatives, who often quoted his work in their writings and speeches. As ideologies gain legitimacy with justification to universal truths, the realist-nominalist debate shadowed that between advocates of ideology and their detractors.87

A third divide separated conservatives primarily on the grounds of faith. More accurately, conservatives differed in attitude as a result of their faith’s regional origin and attitude toward the Reformation. The classical conservatives, from Burke to Adams to Kant to Viereck, all shared Anglican or Protestant faiths, whereas most Traditionalists

and Fusionists discussed in this dissertation (and even the populist Robert Welch) invested their faith in Continental Catholicism. Catholic thought and realism clearly shared the assertion of universal truths external to human thought. Recent studies that have examined the role of religion in the conservative movement are divided on the separate roles Protestantism and Catholicism have played in conservative politics.\textsuperscript{88}

Although fascinating and appropriate grounds for an intellectual history, these religious differences are not a primary focus for the dissertation, which will focus more on the explicit political philosophies and views on the Vietnam War of the aforementioned figures.

No scholar can conceive of the New Right Movement of the 1950s and early 1960s as monolithic. In their rejection of New Deal Liberalism, the multifaceted schools that comprised the movement found their one common thread. Contentious debates over foreign aid, war strategy, the draft, and Vietnamization would shake its advocates to redefine their loyalties, seek inspiration in the past, and conserve only those principles that they considered efficacious for political relevance.

Chapter 2

The Alchemy of Goldwater:
Foreign Aid and the Politicization of the Early New Right

“The New Right Movement struggled for intellectual coherence in the 1950s. To their dismay, many activists found that only a common rejection of the New Deal at home and abroad, not any unified positive agenda, held their disparate movement together. This negative definition in part led to intense debates among New Right intellectuals on the philosophical foundations of conservatism. In addition, as the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the Korean War receded, many Americans began to question the wisdom of the New Deal’s extension into Eisenhower’s presidency. The most committed conservatives argued that they had to capitalize upon this turn of

public opinion and mobilize politically. The politicization of the New Right in the late 1950s and early 1960s, of course, carried with it challenges and risks. Intellectuals feared that New Right thought would collapse or become oppressed under the intellectual hegemony of New Deal Liberalism. Journalists struggled to find readers and boost circulation in the midst of economic prosperity. Politicians in both parties understood well the power of the New Deal coalition that Roosevelt had forged and few developed any strategy to undermine it.

This domestic political context prompted some New Right activists to see foreign policy as a means to their twin ends of survival and relevance. Although a whole host of foreign issues attracted New Right attention, criticism of foreign aid (and welfare in general) resulted in the chronic exhaustion of many activists’ pens, presses, and voices. As such, foreign aid provides historians with a useful analytical lens through which to view the diversity of the New Right, the intellectual assumptions of many of its most prominent figures, and the challenges they faced in promoting their views for political consumption and policy change.

To this point, scholars largely have ignored how foreign policy issues influenced the rise and evolution of the New Right Movement. The current literature has emphasized, with good reason, such issues as race and the Civil Rights Movement, tax policy and the tax revolt, regional politics and the rise of the Sunbelt, and populism and grassroots organization. Likewise, historians have granted anti-communism a fair deal of discussion. This chapter in no way attempts to overturn such works. Rather, it attempts to complement them with a fuller discussion of foreign aid as a key stimulus for the evolution of the New Right in its Cold War context. Historians have overlooked aid, in
particular, despite its centrality to New Right arguments concerning fiscal spending, foreign policy, and welfare as a principle. Many works have examined the foreign aid components of official administration policy, such as President John F. Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress. Yet few recent works have turned this deep level of analysis on the foreign policy agenda of the New Right.  

This article will focus on a handful of New Right activists of the 1950s and early 1960s and contrast their intellectual foundations on the issue of foreign aid. In the lead up to his Republican nomination for President in 1964, U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona became the nominal head of the New Right Movement, despite the contrast between the secular, Enlightenment provenance of his views and the natural law foundations upon which Traditionalists and Fusionists based their ideas. Among the latter, L. Brent Bozell, William F. Buckley, Jr., James Burnham, and other journalists for major New Right publications like *National Review* and *Human Events* strove to articulate a popular and consistent philosophy for the burgeoning anti-New Deal electorate. Radio host Clarence Manion and John Birch Society founder Robert Welch plumbed deep if often controversial wells of angst and resentment against left-wing policies that, in their view, included foreign aid. Once these figures came together to make a concerted push for the politicization of the New Right—accomplished with the drafting and publication of the bestselling text, *The Conscience of a Conservative*—all realized that their mutual survival and success rested upon collaboration, even if that meant the sacrifice of some intellectual purity or personal involvement in politics.

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Mr. Republican: Senator Goldwater as a Pragmatic Reformer

As a territory and an early state, Arizona typified one-party rule. The Democratic Party held nearly every office of significance on each level of government—and with those offices, all of the levers of power and temptations for corruption. The young Barry Goldwater experienced his basic spiritual and political development in this political machine. Although his deepest personal interests strayed far from religion, ideas, or politics—he much preferred military service, technological tinkering, and photography—Goldwater grounded the convictions that would later elevate him to national prominence in a complex yet relatively coherent worldview. His parents reared him in the traditional rites of the Episcopal Church: Goldwater served as an acolyte before gaining confirmation. Yet such training did little to imbue him with a profound faith in Christianity. As a young man, and throughout his life, Goldwater rarely invoked Jesus as his Lord and Savior, attended Christian services, or engaged in an overtly Christian politics. It is without question that he was a theist—both his public and private statements abound in fond references to a divinity, one that Goldwater typically defined in broad strokes as Christian. Yet Goldwater’s theism tended more toward natural religion, almost a form of deism, than Episcopalianism or any specific Christian denomination. In 1954, just after he and his family visited the National Cathedral in Washington, Goldwater remarked in his diary that, as awe-inspiring as the massive structure truly was, he wondered if we had ever really been in a man made church or chapel that could compare in beauty or serenity to the chapels of God that we visited, hewn out of the rock walls of our canyons or situated under the tall tower pine trees of our forests, or located out on the vastness of our desert itself.

I decided that we never had and never will visit a church of stone and mortar that compares with the cathedrals of God that are at every hand in the open in the west. But then, later reflection convinced me that the best cathedral of all is in the minds of men, for if God dwells there, God is ever with us and we have no fear.  

A decade later, *Time* would profile Goldwater’s faith as “simple, nontheological, conceived as the daily practice of the golden rule,” yet nonetheless foundational to his views on politics and the good life. “If a man acts in a religious way, and ethical way,” Goldwater mused in the *Time* interview, “then he’s really a religious man—and it doesn’t have a lot to do with how often he gets inside a church.” Whether Goldwater was a “true” Christian is not at issue. Yet his appeals to nature, rather than the Bible, are telling of his naturalistic spiritual and intellectual worldview.

If Goldwater grounded his faith in the rational observation of and reflection upon the natural world, he implicated his political philosophy even more in the early Enlightenment tradition of America’s founding documents. Like references to the Grand Canyon, appeals to the Declaration arose countless times in Goldwater’s discourses on politics. “Does [the average American] know,” Goldwater wrote in a brief intellectual biography to L. Brent Bozell, “that Thomas Jefferson warned in the Declaration of Independence that ‘We are endowed by our Creator with certain inablilienable [sic] rights’

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92 Barry Goldwater, notes for diary, 26 April 1954, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 2: Journals (Feelings and Reactions as a Senator).
93 “Goldwater’s Faith,” *Time*.
94 Ibid.
95 Many biographies of Barry Goldwater have discussed the senator’s religious beliefs, including his Jewish ancestry, yet none have inquired very deeply into his commitment to Christianity. At any rate, the purpose of this article is less to define Goldwater’s faith than explain how it may have differentiated him from his New Right colleagues. For some recent examinations of Goldwater’s faith, see William F. Buckley, Jr., *Flying High: Remembering Barry Goldwater* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Lee Edwards, *Goldwater* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1995); J. William Mittendorf II, *A Glorious Disaster: Barry Goldwater’s Presidential Campaign and the Origins of the Conservative Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); and Robert Alan Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).
is the substantial source of all we hold dear, of freedom, and that those words are the
basis of man’s search for sources of freedom through the ages?”

Goldwater hardly claimed a sustained interest in philosophy, yet, when he did discuss his intellectual
background, he occasionally referenced some revealing texts. John Locke’s *Second
Treatise on Government*, Goldwater wrote to Stephen Shadegg, a close friend and his
Senate campaign manager, was a “basic source of inspiration,” not only for his
“conservative position” but also for the “basic beliefs and principles of our founding
fathers”—both of which contrast starkly with the “phony liberalism” rampant in
America.

In the same letter to Shadegg, Goldwater went on to quote lengthily from
John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*. He sympathized with Mill’s self-identification as a
“philosophical radical,” particularly as Mill rejected state interference with the basic right
of free thought.

Indeed, Goldwater’s natural religion and admiration of empirical philosophy
aligned him more with the early Enlightenment thought of the Founding Fathers and
libertarians than any other philosophical camp, and certainly not the Counter-
Enlightenment thought of Traditionalists. He never explicitly acknowledged this
heritage, of course, most likely because he did not consider himself an intellectual or
dwell often upon the grander context of his thought. It is of great significance, however,
that the foundations of his “conservatism” lay not on the natural law grounds. To be sure,
he largely agreed with most conservatives on what would become his foreign and

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96 Barry Goldwater, letter to L. Brent Bozell, 29 July 1959, Goldwater Papers, Personal Files, Box 111,
97 Ibid., letter to Stephen Shadegg, 20 January 1960, Goldwater Papers, Personal Files, Box 59, Folder 13:
98 Ibid.
domestic policy positions. Communism, he strongly concurred, was the most searing threat to the American way of life—but not as a result of its spiritual underpinnings. Rather, Goldwater was much more concerned with the threat of an individual's economic dependency on an authoritarian or collectivist state in a general sense, which he simply thought would more likely take the specific form of communism in Cold War America than any other political or economic program. He exhibited less an affinity to ideologies, doctrines, or dogmas than to pragmatic efforts at political reform, most commonly in what he considered the individualistic, secular tradition of the Founders.

Goldwater’s first moves in his early political career illustrated well his primary interest in expanding the average American’s opportunities for material freedom. In 1949, after inheriting his father’s department store, Goldwater’s, he found himself frustrated with the taxation that he and his fellow merchants endured, even if those revenues funded the continued development of their state. He watched with great interest and increasing cynicism the lucrative patronage of Arizona’s Democratic controllers. He noted how many new immigrants from other states had tried hard and failed to develop businesses and earn fair wages as a result of the Democratic machine. These observations, among others, led him to seek and win an unaffiliated seat on the Phoenix City Council in 1949. Three years later, in his successful run for the U. S. Senate, he first identified as a Republican and cast his message as one of change, reform, and criticism of the New Deal as economic tyranny. As he argued in one of his campaign speeches (and later quoted to open his Senate diary):

The New Dealer will plan your life for you. Now if this concept of the future does not appeal to you, if you believe the individual deserves more importance than to be just a numbered human entity standing in line
waiting for federal beneficence, if you believe in states’ rights, limited central power, if you believe you are still competent to run your own affairs and make wise decisions without the advice and interference of super state, then you and I believe in the same things. If you believe this nation is great because our forefathers put their trust in individual initiative, private enterprise, then you and I believe the same things.99

Indeed, in his 1952 campaign, Goldwater rarely made any comments on issues unrelated to economic well-being or the role of federal or labor power in potentially stifling it, with the notable exception of foreign policy issues like the Korean War, foreign aid, and war policy.

Once in Washington, Goldwater not only continued this line of economic reasoning, but also grew, in general, more dedicated to the reform of the status quo and, in particular, the Republican Party as the best vehicle for unmaking the New Deal. Some of his hardening alignment grew out of disappointment with arcane Senate rules and procedures. In Washington, he wrote, “you get the stifled, rather bound up views of, shall we say, custom,” rather than the “clear, cold light” shed on the more transparent governance of and by his native Arizonans.100 It was far better, he reasoned, to stoke honest dissent of opinion than to honor procedural tradition. Like Mill, Goldwater was not exactly a Burkean conservative. Tradition had a place in American life, of course—especially the Enlightenment tradition of the Founders. But when certain traditions stood in the way of basic discussion of reform and the individual’s economic independence, they had to go.

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99 Barry Goldwater, notes for diary, January 1953, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 1: Journals (Thoughts on the U.S. Senate).
100 Idem., notes for diary, 6 March 1953, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 1: Journals (Thoughts on the U.S. Senate).
Another reason for his commitment to the Republican Party was his early identification with its leader, President Dwight Eisenhower. Although Goldwater would later famously criticize Eisenhower for promoting a “dime-store New Deal,” the Arizona senator took heart in the President’s initial rhetoric of approaching social issues as “liberals” and economic ones as “conservatives.” “It is a commendable stand,” Goldwater noted of this mixed, even libertarian, approach, “and I am hopeful that he can accomplish this without pushing this country so far in the direction of the welfare state that we won’t be able to come back readily.”

Eisenhower enabled Goldwater to hope that compromise, balanced government, and pragmatism, rather than dedication to ideology, would stave off economic authoritarianism.

But Goldwater dedicated himself to the Republican Party, rather than any specific political program, more as a result of his commitment to the health of the two-party system than any other factor. The Democrats and the New Deal, he deeply believed, sought to maintain permanent dominance at the federal, state, and local levels, thus risking the balance of powers that sustained American freedom in the first place. Immediately after he arrived in the Senate, Goldwater developed a sustained interest in the leadership and unity of the Republican Party to remedy this imbalance; he even became the chairman of the National Republican Senate Committee within two years. New Dealers sat in both parties, he readily acknowledged. He anticipated, however, a realignment of the two-party system based on regional differences: the coastal and urban Democrats and Republicans to cohere in defense of the New Deal, the Midwestern,

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101 Idem., notes for diary, 1 March 1954, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 2: Journals (Feelings and Reactions as a Senator).
Plains, and Southern Democrats and Republicans to coalesce in opposition to it. Even if this realignment transpired, the young senator sought to maintain a creative tension between two vigorous parties, not to achieve the permanent dominance of his own. The New Deal was more the insidious product of one party’s nearly unbroken dominance since the Great Depression than the result of bipartisan compromise. “Truman and Stevenson,” Goldwater wrote in late 1953, “…are heaping discredit upon the Democratic party. And, of course, as a Republican, I hope they continue to be that party’s leaders. But for the sake of America, I am hoping that the Democratic [P]arty finds new, vigorous American leadership and will allow it to develop.”

A genuine multiparty democracy was necessary for the sake of America, as in his mind it never would produce as authoritarian a program as the New Deal.

Moreover, federalism and its goal—individual liberty—required adequate balance of federal and state powers. “The concept of government here [in Washington] is one of federal domination,” Goldwater complained. “So engrossed are the members of Congress over international affairs, communism, the atom, and so forth, that they have lost sight of this basic fundamental concept of government that the power of the federal government stems from the states and not in the other direction.” Goldwater certainly held fast to a states’ rights agenda throughout his career, as he well illustrated time and again. Scholars rarely note, however, his prioritization of a rigorous, healthy federalism over such pressing issues as foreign affairs and communism. Indeed, Goldwater’s

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102 Idem., notes for diary, 12 May 1953, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 1: Journals (Thoughts on the U.S. Senate).
103 Idem., notes for diary, December 1953, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 1: Journals (Thoughts on the U.S. Senate).
104 Ibid.
resolute anti-communism may have been a function of his views of federalism. How could communism, after all, come to power in a decentralized state? Once making this assumption, Goldwater made only a small leap to consider the Republican Party the best vehicle for providing a counterweight against the centralizing tendencies of liberal Democrats and their New Deal aspirations.

On foreign issues, as well, the early Goldwater exhibited his role as a rational, pragmatic reformer. Foreign aid in particular remained a vital issue for Goldwater throughout his political career, as with his New Right colleagues. Yet unlike these political brethren, Goldwater’s emphasis on the topic sprang foremost from his desire to preserve individuals’ economic independence. In preparing for his first run for the Senate in 1952, for example, he drew up a list of ten points to guide his campaign. The second point was foreign aid (and second only to reducing federal spending): “I don’t know how much foreign aid can be cut,” he argued to Shadegg, “but I don’t like the idea of sending any amount of money that is asked for out of this country without sound, logical reasons for its use…. [F]oreign countries should work for this money and if they refuse to then we should refuse to send the money to them.” Goldwater rejected outright the idea of foreign aid for the sake of charity, certainly a caricatured view of Cold War policy. His emphasis on “work” as a contingent for aid, as well, was not surprising. After all, as a would-be senator, Goldwater had yet to delve into the technical details of foreign aid policy and likely approached the issue in terms that would appeal to the anti-welfare critics of the New Deal among the Arizona electorate.

Once he began to examine foreign aid as a senator, though, Goldwater overtly exhibited his primary concern for Americans’ economic independence. Less than six months into his tenure, he discussed aid explicitly in a debate on Senate Resolution 2128 in June and July 1953. The bill, in part, would grant $400 million to France in an effort to continue its war in Indochina against communist and nationalist guerilla fighters. On July 1, Goldwater introduced an amendment that required France to announce clear dates on which it would help Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam to form constitutions and receive their respective independence. Goldwater opened debate with an extended appeal to the Declaration of Independence. But he argued that, unless France committed to independence for these nations, “our boys will follow this $400 million.”

“My desire,” he affirmed later in the debate, “is merely to accomplish something that will prevent many of our boys from ending up in the jungles of southeastern Asia.”

Senator John F. Kennedy quickly maneuvered to replace Goldwater’s amendment with his own, one that stripped the ultimatum out of the resolution and merely asked France to use the to bring the war to a swifter end; the Senate eventually voted Goldwater down and that resolution into law. Nevertheless, Goldwater’s action was remarkable for a couple of reasons. First, his amendment explicitly referenced the universal egalitarianism of the Declaration of Independence, accepting its broad reach to cover the peoples of Indochina. “It seems rather inconsistant [sic] to me,” Goldwater later wrote on the debate, “inconstistant certainly with the principles of this Republic, that we, who have fought so hard for freedom against Briton [sic], would now be supporting openly a

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107 Ibid., 7782.
108 Ibid., 7784.
country with colonizing ambitions.”109 The independence of the Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese was, in his mind, part of the mission of the United States. To support a bill that effectively financed imperialism was simply un-American.

Second, and contrary to his later position on Southeast Asia, he argued against military intervention in Indochina—for economic reasons. “We sent our equipment,” Goldwater wrote. “We have done, in fact, everything except send our men into [Indochina]. I don’t want to see our men fight any more wars. Three wars in one generation is [sic] enough. If we continue to weaken the man power of this country, if we continue to weaken the economy of this country, then Russia can take us without firing a shot.”110 Not only did Goldwater fear for the lives of American ground troops if the United States intervened in the region, but he also linked non-intervention to the strength of the American economy and the ability of the individual American to enjoy his economic independence. It is certainly possible that the young Goldwater, impressed by the isolationism of the recently deceased Senator Robert Taft, had yet to evolve the interventionist attitudes on which much of his later political career would be based. Yet his statements and positions in the 1964 Presidential campaign illustrated that, even as a staunch interventionist, his constant, underlying goal was the preservation of economic freedom and a dynamic republic.

109 Barry Goldwater, notes for diary, December 1953, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 1: Journals (Thoughts on the U.S. Senate).
110 Ibid.
Ideology and Politics in New Right Journals

As popular and increasingly powerful as Barry Goldwater became in the late 1950s, the majority of conservatives did not share the foundational elements of his reform attitude toward the New Deal. Goldwater dedicated himself to party and country: the former to preserve the latter, the latter out of investment in the egalitarian and empirical philosophies of the Founders. Whereas such deep concern for the economic independence of all individuals drove Goldwater’s stance on foreign aid to locales like Indochina, a markedly different set of philosophical assumptions underscored the views of many New Right journalists, who published and molded their ideas in mainstream right-wing periodicals. This is not to say that they can be painted with a broad philosophical brush: each journalist possessed his or her own intellectual identity and provided unique insights into New Right thought.

What unified these journalists as a constituent group of the New Right was not only opposition to the New Deal, which they shared with Senator Goldwater. They also exhibited a common tension between intellectual purity and political aspiration. Unlike Goldwater, whose pragmatism was born in part out of the political necessity to compromise, New Right journalists strove to express coherent programs of ideas and policies, tending more toward idealism than pragmatism. These prolific authors often explicitly dedicated themselves to ideology over party, which resulted in several failed attempts for elective office on the local and state levels. Their attempts at crafting an ideology, in turn, tended to eschew Goldwater’s secularism for moral, Traditional approaches to foreign aid and policy. Therefore, as acutely similar as their policy goals
appeared to be, the intellectual divide between Goldwater and the New Right journalists would lead to a growing division within the New Right.

To these writers, ideas trumped parties. Because the New Deal infected both major parties in the United States, neither could be trusted as a force in and of itself. Most New Right journalists chose to associate themselves with the Republican Party, by virtue of its nominal opposition to Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, long ties to the business community, and, until his death in 1952, leadership of right-wing icon and conservative, Senator Robert Taft of Ohio. But the 1950s were a time of ideological prematurity, when the parties reflected regional or generational attitudes more than coherent philosophies. These New Right journalists often used the terms “liberal” and “conservative,” to be sure, but they seem to have done so inconsistently, more as catch-all synonyms for supporters or opponents of the New Deal, respectively, than as labels for more clearly defined political ideologies. The only reliable strategy, they generally thought, was to remain loyal to the ideas of the New Right, to forge them into a platform that, perhaps one day, the Republican Party could espouse.

To this end, the journalists kept close watch on the health and alignment of the Republican Party under the leadership of the centrist President Eisenhower, whom many conservatives mistrusted for his expansion of New Deal programs. The Catholic journalist, L. Brent Bozell, figured prominently in the pages of National Review as one of these GOP watchdogs. In one article, Bozell skewered Eisenhower for his constant call for “non-partisanship” on issues of national security and foreign policy, arguing that the President merely sought to hide key defense issues from the people.\footnote{L. Brent Bozell, “Non-Partisan Politechmanship,” National Review 5:6 (8 February 1958): 128-129.} To Bozell, as to
Richard Weaver, ideas really did have consequences: the President should run openly on either a strong national defense or a weak one, as long as he was transparent about it. That was why elections existed.

After the Republicans lost seats in the 1958 midterm elections, *National Review* published a dreary postmortem for their political vehicle. “Here, visibly,” wrote James Kilpatrick of the results, “were the ruins of the Republican Party, and the wreckage of the conservative cause.” His analysis of the Republicans’ defeat was a telling one: he claimed the GOP failed to produce a clear philosophy, a point of interest for the “political philosopher”; and the Democrats mastered the art of mobilizing voters through labor unions, a lesson more for the “practical politician.” If only the Republican Party ironed out a “realistic program of political action,” a genuine and attractive ideology based on the classical tradition of conservatism—what success, Kilpatrick sighed, it would enjoy.112 Bozell returned with an obituary of sorts only two months after the midterms: “This is the way the Republican Party seems destined to spend its last days: an alliance of two unreconcilable [sic] factions; each morally certain that coexistence with the other precludes success.” If right-wing Republicans had any chance to sink the creeping socialism of Eisenhower’s Modern Republicanism, they had to recognize that they had more in common with their “natural allies, the Southern Democrats” and seek “fusion.”113

Many readers of *National Review* wondered how such “fusion” would be accomplished and what form it would take. Bozell thought he had the answers in 1958: by running for office himself. He gained the Republican nomination for state assemblyman for Montgomery County, Maryland in May 1958, campaigning on right-to-

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work laws, a “return” to “basic education,” and the “affirmation” of the Tenth Amendment, only to lose in the general election.\footnote{“Notes and Asides,” *National Review* 5:19 (10 May 1958): 440.} His skepticism of the Republicans’ electoral chances after 1958 partially grew out of his own personal frustration and defeat at the polls. The dilemma that perennially plagued intellectuals-cum-politicians now stared him in the face: how does a candidate remain true to his philosophical principles while gaining the trust of a diverse electorate?

William F. Buckley, Jr., the editor of *National Review* and Bozell’s brother-in-law and close friend, took a different tack in 1959 and 1960: he gave up on the Republican Party altogether. In October 1959, Buckley, along with right-wing activists like Dan Smoot and Robert Welch, attended a conference in Chicago designed to “launch a federation of third party movements” to accomplish what the Republicans failed time and again to achieve. In its defense of its editor’s actions, *National Review* sought to quell the fears of its readership: “It is important for conservatives to bear in mind that it is not a test of ideological purity whether one favors or opposes the formation of a third party. It is a question of tactics.”\footnote{“Rally in Chicago,” *National Review* 7:30 (7 November 1959): 450.} The following year, Buckley pursued an even different tactic when he helped found the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). A college-based organization for right-wing political action, the YAF sought, according to Buckley, to put conservative “principles into political action in a world which has lost its moorings and is looking about for them desperately.”\footnote{William F. Buckley, Jr., “The Young Americans for Freedom,” *National Review* 9:12 (24 September 1960): 172.} Ideas may have consequences, Buckley reasoned, even if they may take a generation to come to pass.
Despite the examples of Buckley and Bozell, most New Right journalists tended to seek intellectual purity rather than to mire themselves in the muck of politics. Considering the use and abuse of the term “conservatism” in political discourse of the age, these writers hardly agreed on what it meant, let alone how to remain loyal to it. Indicative of the problem was the libertarian-leaning New Right monthly, *The Freeman*, which published more than its share of articles with negative titles, including “Not Victories for Communism” or “No More Socialists.” The self-styled libertarian and editor of *The Freeman*, Frank Chodorov, made clear his confusion over the Right’s rectification of names. “‘Conservative’ and ‘radical,’” he complained, “are words of indefinite meaning.” It would be better to stick with words like “statist” or “collectivist” to denote “liberals” and terms like “individualist, libertarian, or freedom-lover” to describe his kind.\(^{117}\) That way, freedom is the positive, the clear-cut agenda. William Henry Chamberlin, a frequent contributor to journals like *National Review* and *The Freeman*, penned a sustained analysis of “conservatism” and critique of “liberalism” for the journal *Modern Age*. His vision of the New Right drew upon the Traditional values received from a “Judaeo-Christian and Greco-Roman spiritual and intellectual inheritance” as the only true means to fight the one true enemy: communism.\(^{118}\) Most of the writers themselves did not understand how these two interpretations, among many others that appeared in the pages of *National Review*, *Human Events*, and other periodicals, fit under the same ideological umbrella.


Foreign aid, though, proved one of the few issues on which some New Right journalists could and did chart common ground in the late 1950s, even though that ground excluded Barry Goldwater. To be sure, the writers as a whole criticized the foreign aid programs of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson from a variety of quarters. They argued that aid was simply too costly to be effective; it harmed the U.S. federal budget; it tended to flow to communist nations or their sympathizers, thus proving counterproductive; and America’s allies in Europe and elsewhere claimed they did not want any more economic assistance. But among certain regular contributors to *National Review*, an alternative, more intellectual rejection of foreign aid took shape. If the Cold War against communism truly was a war of ideas, how could exporting material goods or dollars—rather than a rival ideology—make any headway? Could such a policy even harm U.S. security?

From a position of fiscal responsibility, the conservative weekly magazine *Human Events* frequently lambasted America’s foreign aid program as excessive and wasteful. Digesting the research of a right-wing aid watchdog group, *Human Events* alleged that the nation’s aid program “consumes the equivalent of 20 per cent of [America’s] personal income tax” as a result of the accumulated interest on the resulting debt.119 Observing President Johnson in his first year in office, the magazine praised the Democrat for his move, albeit a reluctant one, to shave $900 million off the annual foreign aid budget. But even this cut was not enough, for the damage already had been done. Sixteen years of aid, argued Leslie Gould, had “rebuil[t] the economies of our allies and former enemies to an extent that they can now compete with American industry not only in the world

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markets but right here at home. To make matters worse, “the two biggest beneficiaries of the handouts—Great Britain and France—do business with the Red Chinese.”

This latter argument—that aid tended to help communists more than anyone else—resonated more widely throughout New Right publishing in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Openly socialist countries like India and Yugoslavia, both beneficiaries of U.S. assistance, provided easy grist for this mill. Chamberlin pointed to the $745 million the United States wasted on France in its “colonial war in Indo-China,” funds which he charged essentially facilitated the emergence of a communist state in North Vietnam. The Kennedy Administration’s Alliance for Progress suffered even greater censure. Emphasizing the Alliance charter’s “Marxist implications,” The Freeman insisted that the program sought to install red governments throughout the region through the redistribution of wealth from tax evaders to the poor. This line of argument opened up the possibility that officials in the White House, State Department, and other agencies were in the service of communism itself, further stoking fears of an authoritarian Left.

New Right journals also frequently published foreign writers’ exposés of American aid, apparently to showcase how other countries generally viewed such programs as unpopular. Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, an Austrian political scientist and regular contributor to National Review, attested that Europeans had little interest in showing “fiscal generosity” to other countries. After all, Europe’s imperial endeavors of the 19th and 20th centuries “provided the natives [of colonized regions] with infinitely

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123 Edwin McDowell, “Alliance for Progress—or Socialism?” The Freeman 11:12 (December 1961): 33-38. An Arizonan, McDowell was a good friend of Barry Goldwater.
more than it took away from them.” America should learn from Europe’s example and not risk the “West’s undoing” through efforts at “economic democracy.” Modern Age questioned Americans’ basic assumptions regarding the goals of their aid program. Not every country sought to build market economies, encourage consumerism, and develop a middle class, argued Czech writer M. A. Thurn-Valsassina. Rather, beneficiaries of assistance may use those funds for darker purposes, such as military mobilization, regional destabilization, or technological advancement beyond American capabilities—as with the Russians and Sputnik.

Beyond these critiques, a more nuanced argument against foreign aid centered on assistance as a materialistic approach that would fail inevitably to address the essentially ideological problem of global communism. This logic allowed some New Right journalists—particularly those at National Review—to favor some financial aid under certain circumstances, as long as it supplemented the overarching goal of maintaining America’s Cold War offensive. Despite its fascist government, for example, Spain—an “unwavering friend of America”—deserved American assistance after a series of floods and droughts hampered productivity. Examining the issue from a different perspective, John Chamberlain, another frequent contributor to National Review and Human Events, argued that foreign aid was a wise strategy—if that “aid” took the form of multinational corporations unilaterally investing in foreign capital. Chamberlain specifically cited Coca-Cola’s efforts to sanitize and provide water for local populations

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125 M. A. Thurn-Valsassina, “Foreign Aid Seen by a Foreigner,” Modern Age 3:3 (Summer 1959): 237-244.
in Singapore and San Salvador, as potable water was also necessary for product
manufacturing. In encouraging corporations to internationalize, then, the United States
would export more than simply economic aid and goodwill. It would also spread the
rival ideology of liberal capitalism.

Foreign aid without such ideological strings attached either harmed American
national interests or simply went to waste. *National Review*’s editors considered
Sukarno’s government in Indonesia illustrative of this point. In late 1957 anti-communist
colonels in the Indonesian army formed the Revolutionary Government of the Republic
of Indonesia (PRRI) to oppose the socialist president. “Note what is bringing Sukarno to
heel,” the editors wrote. “Not American foreign aid in quantities sufficient to keep
Sumatran stomachs from ‘going’ Communist…. Rather a spontaneous, grassroots move
by natural leaders backed up by millions of convinced followers…. It seems that you
don’t necessarily have to *buy* the anti-Communist conscience of mankind. Often all it
needs is to see the issues clear[ly].” Foreign aid, in other words, was not the
enthralling ideology needed to fight communism adequately. It alone could not inspire
native movements to topple socialist regimes and hold off even more radically Leftist
ones. It could not succeed in maintaining Left-leaning “allies,” or at least not as much as
New Dealers—Eisenhower included—seemed to think.

James Burnham, *National Review*’s resident correspondent for foreign affairs (his
column was titled “The Third World War”), concurred with this line of thought, if adding
a dose of pragmatism. “The globalist humanitarians among us,” he wrote, “are an all-out
100 per cent for foreign aid; and many nationalists are 100 per cent against. Though

these blanket attitudes are emotionally satisfying, neither makes much sense.” Rather, the United States should grant large sums for “direct military aid” and cut the “fraudulent portion” of “bubble-headed do-gooderies” that “served not only to antagonize our genuine friends, but to drive the recipients further away from us, not closer.”129 If foreign aid of this humanitarian sort promoted an ideology, it was a nefariously bureaucratic one: the program “offers a patronage pudding for the regime in power [in Washington], with lots of jobs and supply orders for the plums.”130 Yet Burnham seemed disappointed by, even angry with, many of his fellow New Rightists’ “neo-isolationism” in opposing direct military aid.131 For Burnham, military aid was a means to an end, nothing more; Americans should argue more about ends than means during a fight as ideological as the Cold War.

Reflecting the diversity of opinion within the New Right, journalists came to criticize the foreign aid program on a variety of grounds. Yet for some writers at National Review, opposition to economic aid sprang from idealist assumptions that the United States could only fight communism with another full-blown, rival ideology. Foreign affairs, Burnham and his colleagues seemed to argue, were not like domestic politics. He fervently believed that one does not have to—indeed, must not—compromise his principles to win a war. Even if New Right ideals failed in their politicization in local and state races, or appeared to need time to germinate among college youth, they were indispensable to the global race for hearts and minds.

Clarence Manion and the Birchers

The broad New Right of American politics thus included reformers like Barry Goldwater, who criticized the New Deal and its foreign policy analogues out of concern that their authoritarian leanings threatened the material liberty of the individual; and the journalists of the major New Right periodicals, who saw the New Deal as a weak or counterproductive response to the communist threat. Yet neither Goldwater nor the intellectuals and journalists would have as much sway or impact over the development of the New Right at this time as populists like radio host Clarence Manion and populist Robert Welch. These figures provided a connection to the national electorate that Senator Goldwater and the more intellectual journalists lacked, given the complexity of the issues they addressed and the small circulation of their periodicals.¹³² The general homogeneity of the conservative electorate (they tended to be white, upper- or middle-class Christian professionals from the South, Midwest, or Southwest) resulted in a relatively common view of the New Deal and foreign aid in particular: as a spiritual and moral assault on the American way of life.¹³³

Most populist groups produced countless pamphlets, brochures, tracts, and other fast-circulating media to disseminate their views and opinions. The National Management Association (NMA) in Dayton, for example, published an eight-page booklet entitled *Know Your Freedoms* in an attempt to counter communist propaganda. Communists lied frequently about the “true” meaning of freedom, the Association posited, as they confused Americans with the dichotomy of “freedom to” versus

“freedom from.” In reality, only “freedom to” existed, namely the “Four Great Freedoms” to “try,” “buy,” “sell,” and “fail.” Needless to say, the NMA hoped readers would associate its schema with that of Franklin Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms,” particularly as the latter contained two “freedoms from” and thus must have socialist implications. That consumerism and free-market capitalism served as the only philosophical foundation for political liberty simply emphasized this point in a positive manner. “If we try to help someone in trouble by the Freedom From system,” the pamphlet alleged, “we may destroy his independence and healthy ambition,” his work ethic and his dignity, thus leading to moral decay.134

The Christian Freedom Foundation, with headquarters in New York, took an even more dire interpretation of aid programs and mixed economics in general. In God, Gold, and Government, founder Howard E. Kershner echoed the NMA to claim that “subsidy destroys character.” “Welfarism”—and its Christian analogue, the social gospel—formed “the Great Apostasy…from the moral law to the man-made law.” More than even the New Right journalists, many of whom were well-versed in Western philosophy, Kershner viewed aid as an Enlightenment conception, one that placed humanity, not God, at the center of the moral universe and thus diverged from the natural law tradition. Modern economics as a whole, he argued, led Americans down the slippery slope from “Christian economics,” which combined “the love that Jesus taught” with the “free market,” toward a communist Hell. In a manner evocative of Andrew Jackson, he lambasted paper money as “deception and falsehood,” “a violation of the moral law.” The United States, he advised, should return to the gold standard, fully deregulate the

134 Know Your Freedoms (Dayton: The National Management Association, 1960), Philips Collection, Box 1.
economy, and recall that the First Commandment, not the First Amendment, was the “Charter of Our Liberty.”\footnote{Howard E. Kershner, \textit{God, Gold, and Government} (New York: Christian Freedom Foundation, undated, c. 1960), Philips Collection, Box 1.}

Organizations like the National Management Association and the Christian Freedom Foundation merely represent two of the hundreds of right-wing advocacy groups that appealed to populist sentiments. As with Father Coughlin and other radio hosts of the Depression era, New Right populists also took to the airwaves, with few more influential than Clarence “Pat” Manion. Given his Traditional attitudes, Manion logically singled out welfare and aid programs as subversive policies designed to coax unwitting spiritual Americans into material sin and, eventually, authoritarianism. “A ‘Welfare State’ is…a contradiction in terms,” Manion averred, for “[b]ig centralized government generates a system of moral anarchy” that actually destroys the general welfare.\footnote{Ibid., 39-40.}

In a polemical style not uncommon on his radio program, he boldly asserted in his 1964 work, \textit{The Conservative American}, that “the subsidization of Socialism all over the world has been the guiding principle of our government-to-government Foreign Aid program.”\footnote{Manion, \textit{The Conservative American}, 169.}

Indeed, Manion opposed aid of any sort, even if it were not economic and thus stripped of its materialistic consequences. The American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution, he believed, were designed solely for Americans, not “to do all things possible for all people.”\footnote{Ibid., 182.} On this point, Manion differed strongly with Goldwater, whose vision of the Declaration endorsed universal equality for all human
individuals. Rather than emphasize the term “equal” in the Declaration, though, Manion considered the term “created” to be the operative one.\textsuperscript{139} Not only did it emphasize the ostensibly Christian nature of the document, but also the term underscored Manion’s opposition to any notion of equality of outcome and, thus, in his mind, economic redistribution.

Manion generally remained loyal to this vision throughout his radio career, warning his listeners about the threat that materialism posed to the American way of life. On the April 12, 1964, episode of \textit{Manion Forum}, he interviewed Elgin Groseclose, the first editor of \textit{Fortune} and a former professor of economics at the University of Oklahoma and City College, New York. “The trouble with the foreign aid program,” Groseclose asserted, “is that it goes counter to all experience of history. In particular, it goes contrary to every teaching of the Christian religion. Its foundations are in the mire of materialism; its premises are columns of rotten chalk.” Manion, whose published works essentially made the same point, sounded concerned that Groseclose was bordering on insult of the Christian audience. Yet Groseclose persisted: “The principle of foreign aid is that we can reform and remake the underdeveloped countries and set them on the road to progress by injections of capital and scientific techniques. The Christian religion teaches that you reform societies by reforming men, and that you reform men by changing their hearts and not their garments.”\textsuperscript{140}

Like Manion and other populists, Robert Welch also found foreign aid a perennial topic of interest. In May 1959, for instance, he published an open letter to President

\textsuperscript{139} Idem., \textit{The Key to Peace}, 26.
\textsuperscript{140} Elgin Groseclose, “The Theory Of Foreign Aid Is Rooted In Materialism And False Promise,” \textit{Manion Forum}, Broadcast No. 497, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 12 April 1964, Manion Papers, Box 83, Folder 83-6.
Eisenhower in which he demanded to know the aim of the foreign aid packages dispatched to Poland and Laos, considering the presence of socialist governments in the two nations. Yet for all his scathing criticism of the President, Welch seemingly did not take a position on aid, other than its proper use as a means to the end of victory against global communism. “Foreign aid, as a measure of defense, means defense against the Communists,” Welch reasoned. What he did express was a black-and-white vision of global politics: “We do not have to protect ourselves from anybody else. It seems clear, therefore, that the purpose of all foreign aid expenditures should be, directly or indirectly, to weaken the Communists or to strengthen their opposition.”

Even if Welch considered aid a valid weapon to wield against communism, he cast the Cold War in the same Manichean colors as other New Rightists, exhibiting an equal measure of philosophical absolutism.

A similar logic, with a dose of fatalism, applied to his analysis of foreign aid to Vietnam. In its war in Indochina, he informed readers, France “receiv[ed] some monetary subventions from the United States while being stabbed in the back by American officials,” citing Raymond Cartier’s accusation that Colonel Edward Lansdale stirred up nationalist sentiments among the Vietnamese. “But the French did not lose Indo-China at Dien Bien Phu,” Welch continued. In a generous grant of foreign aid, Eisenhower willingly “dispose[d] of French territory” with the help of communists at the 1954 Geneva Conference. The billions in aid that the Eisenhower Administration granted Vietnam over the next five years was a constant “flow down the drain,” a phrase Welch commonly used in discussing the conflict. As a result of this “suicidal policy,” he

asserted that South Vietnam’s independence would end “whenever the Communists decide that the proper time has come.”

Despite the enormous popularity of Welch’s thesis among many Americans, his conspiratorial edge and management of the Birchers drove some New Rightists to avoid close association with Welch or the Society. To be sure, National Review praised Welch as a model activist in 1958: “Mr. Robert Welch is an amazing man who a) runs a business (Welch Candy), b) writes books (The Life of John Birch), c) publishes and edits a magazine (American Opinion), and d) is as conservative as they come.” Buckley also met with Welch at the 1959 Chicago conference on the possibility of forming a right-wing third party network. But after Welch publicly denounced Eisenhower as a communist in 1961, controversy began to spread throughout the New Right over Welch’s place in it. In an aptly titled article, “The Uproar,” Buckley used a question-and-answer format to respond to media allegations and readers’ concerns over Welch’s “fascist” tendencies, secretiveness, and ties to other Rightists like Buckley. For his part, Buckley flatly denied these charges, calling them “irresponsible,” yet he also politely distanced himself from the Society’s “corporate projects” and views on Eisenhower.

National Review did not take issue with the substance of Welch’s views until early 1962, when it published a lengthy article denouncing Welch and his views as “far removed from common sense.” The sticking point, the anonymous article related, was

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Welch’s refusal to distinguish “between 1) an active pro-Communist, and 2) an ineffectually anti-Communist Liberal,” an elision that “promotes a split in the conservative movement.” “Woe to the man who disagrees with Mr. Welch,” the article continues, for “[h]e is 1) an idiot, or 2) a Comsymp, or 3) an outright Communist.” Welch simply “brooks no disagreement” with his views and always “anathematizes” detractors as “non-rational or treasonable.” With these observations, National Review confirmed for its New Right readership the absolutist nature of Welch’s Manichean thought and, perhaps more importantly, its vehement condemnation of such attitudes. The article summed up this point quite well: “there are bounds to the dictum: Anyone on my right is my ally.”

For Buckley and his fellow editors, Welch simply was too far to the right—not in his rejection of the New Deal, but in the collectivist overtones of his absolutist philosophy and demanding leadership of the Birchers. Welch, in Buckley’s mind, defined intellectual collectivism on the New Right.

Goldwater, as well, initially considered Welch an ally, but his feelings soured quickly as his presidential prospects brightened. On January 23, 1960, Welch was a spirited participant in a Chicago meeting of conservative activists interested in drafting Goldwater for the presidency. As November approached, though, Goldwater feared Welch’s prominent support for his candidacy would become a major liability. In June, Goldwater asked Manion, an organizer for the Americans for Goldwater Committee, to purge Welch from the group, which Manion felt was unwise. “This blackball is going to hurt him deeply,” Manion replied to Goldwater, “[b]ut there are more practical reasons

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why his exclusion at this late date would be disastrous. […] [T]he deletion of Welch’s name now would cause an uproar straight across the board, that would wreck us completely and hurt you politically in the days ahead.”149 Goldwater wrote back to admit his decision had been overly hasty, particularly since Welch was a “very personal friend.”150

By the summer of 1961, however, Goldwater was finished with Welch. When the latter called for the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren, Goldwater furiously wrote Manion that it was “as stupid a move as I have ever heard.” He went on to argue that:

All Welch is doing is making it more and more difficult for people who know the Birch Society and its members to even make a pretense at defending them. I continue to hold the belief getting him to resign and leave the organization would enable that group to accomplish a lot more good that it is going to be able to do with his statements and publications hanging around their necks.151

Manion replied only to say, rather cryptically, that “a few of us are doing what we can to remedy the situation with good hopes for success. Remember, however, that we are confronted with a condition as well as a theory in this Birch business.”152 The “condition” to which Manion alluded, of course, was the burgeoning size of the John Birch Society, which had reached its peak of 100,000 members at that very time. Whereas Goldwater, the pragmatic politician, sought to cut ties to Welch swiftly and completely, the more ideological Manion felt that such a move could threaten the

coherence of the New Right Movement, in addition to any future chance that Goldwater had at the Republican nomination for president. Although Welch remained a key figure in the New Right for the next several years, significant rifts between him and others within the Movement began to shape not only political boundaries but also the outlines of what would become the conservative philosophy.

Mr. Conservative: Candidate Goldwater as the Conservative Ideal

The 1964 presidential election was a watershed moment for the New Right Movement, as is well documented in the burgeoning literature on conservatism. Goldwater’s candidacy motivated the disparate sections of the movement, from journalists to populists, to organize a modern, national political campaign for the first time. Although activists had utilized such tools as direct mail, television, church sermons, and grassroots meetings in campaigns against fluorinated water or for school prayer many times beforehand, the goal of electing a candidate for the presidency taxed these skills and resources of the New Right to the breaking point.

The one resource that seemed limitless was the integrity of the Goldwater name. Two terms in the Senate, two years as the chairman of the Republican Senate Campaign Committee, and scores of speeches at luncheons and conventions nationwide had honed the Arizonan’s political skills well and developed his reputation as one of Washington’s high-profile leaders. Goldwater, with the invaluable assistance of Stephen Shadegg and his campaign team, rightfully could claim these achievements as his own. He owed his presidential prospects, however, to others. Without the work of Traditionalists like

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153 One of the most engaging recent works on this event is Perlstein, *Before the Storm* (2001).
Clarence Manion and like L. Brent Bozell, Goldwater likely would never have been the favorite for the 1964 nomination—let alone a threat Richard Nixon’s candidacy in 1960. In fact, Manion and Bozell deserved more credit for the New Right surge that bore Goldwater’s name than Goldwater himself, at least when it comes to the ideas that inspired his presidential campaigns. Goldwater the candidate took on new emphases on issues like foreign aid, certainly, but Goldwater the public servant ultimately retained the reasons for his stances on such issues. The senator never personally recanted the pragmatic foundations of his policies—even if he agreed to downplay them in the public eye in order to burnish his political star. The deal he made with populists and journalists to sponsor an ideological vision of New Right thought brought coherence to the Movement—a coherence that within a decade came to exclude Goldwater himself.

In 1958 and 1959, Clarence Manion set in motion a plan to craft the New Right into a political force that could capture the presidency. Much like Goldwater’s vision in 1953, Manion’s plan was to pull away the Southern caucus of the Democratic Party to join those Republicans who opposed the New Deal, or its modern form of “Eisenhowerism.” “These two armies (North and South),” Manion wrote to a fellow activist, “could unite, then their march would be irresistible.”

On 21 July 1959, Manion wrote to Goldwater to convince him they must seize the opportunity provided by Goldwater’s emerging status as a leading conservative voice and set the foundation for his candidacy. The key to starting up a winning campaign, Manion advised Goldwater, would be to write a book of New Right principles, which he offered to assist in

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Within a week, Manion had signed up L. Brent Bozell as the book’s ghostwriter, and Goldwater had chosen “The Conscience of a Conservative” as its title. Although Goldwater did not draft the bulk of the manuscript, he did communicate to Bozell the general themes that he desired. Nowhere in these notes to Bozell did Goldwater emphasize the roots of his conservatism in the natural law tradition that so animated the ideas of Manion or Bozell. Goldwater’s spiritual feelings emerged from observation of America’s natural beauty, its people, and the secular, republican system that the Founders created to preserve both. “I have always thought the spiritual feeling of seeing my America unrolled below me to be the strongest,” Goldwater wrote in a memorandum to Bozell while flying to Arizona on July 29. “The greenness of the valleys of California, the better known and loved beauties and canyons of my Arizona; the Rockies, the flat Middle West, the streams and farms of the East, the hills that keep the East from the West. But in this emotion is the strong one wrapped up in the people who live in our land.” Goldwater went on to cite Benjamin Franklin’s desire for a republic and Thomas Jefferson’s appeal to equality in the Declaration—not explicitly a profound faith in Jesus or the investment in the Judeo-Christian values in American life—as the foundational influences on what he considered his mission as a public servant. Goldwater did not explicitly reject those elements, either. But the fact that they did not come to his mind, especially when Goldwater consciously sought to articulate the basis of his philosophy, revealed the secular hues that truly inspired him.

After having lunch with Bozell a couple weeks later, Goldwater typed up a summary of structural elements they discussed for the text. Goldwater reemphasized his dedication to the ideas he wrote in his July 29 memorandum, asking for them to form the book’s introduction. The body of the work would concern the notion of freedom and warn Americans that they must “think primarily of the powers that might threaten that freedom before they think of the material things they can gain from it.” In all of Goldwater’s correspondence with Bozell, this phrase was the only time he referenced “material” concepts of any sort. That it appeared at all should not be surprising. After all, Goldwater believed strongly that ideas had consequences—he readily drew upon the Declaration and the philosophy of the Founders to justify his points of view. But he was not a scholar who dwelt upon the implications of his political thought. In addition, he did not disdain materialism outright. He simply asked that Americans have a sense of duty to preserve their freedom, prioritizing liberty over the fruits it could bear. Goldwater concluded the synopsis with a list of topical issues of relevance to the New Right: “centralized government, big labor, big business, high taxation, the agricultural program, etc., etc., and foreign policy.”

Whereas Bozell would remain faithful to these subjects in drafting The Conscience of a Conservative, he transplanted the libertarian foundations of Goldwater’s thought with his own Traditional, natural law philosophy. In so doing, Bozell helped define “conservatism” for a generation. “Conservatism,” he wrote in the introduction of The Conscience of a Conservative, “…looks upon the enhancement of man’s spiritual

nature as the primary concern of political philosophy.”159 It was socialism that
supplanted the spirit for things material. Bozell did not define what the “spiritual” goal
was, or from which tradition it should emerge, preferring to wed himself and Goldwater
to the notion of the individual’s right to answer those questions himself. Nevertheless,
Goldwater rarely, if ever, publicly or privately claimed that the “spiritual” side of human
nature was his primary concern, either as a legislator or as a human being. In fact, he
often claimed the opposite, as illustrated by his stance on foreign aid to Vietnam in 1953.

Bozell’s ideas trickled through even more in his discussion of the welfare state. If
the government, he claimed, provided economic assistance to a citizen, that individual
“may not immediately, or ever, comprehend the harm…done to his character. Indeed,
this is one of the great evils of Welfarism—that it transforms the individual from a
dignified, industrious, self-reliant spiritual being into a dependent animal creature
without his knowing it.”160 First, Bozell’s reasoning on this point echoed the populists
Howard Kershner and Clarence Manion more than Barry Goldwater, for whom matters of
the spirit were personal, individual, and best left out of politics. For Bozell, though, they
were the very provenance of all politics; separation of the two would be impossible.
Second, on top of his reiteration of the spirit’s priority, Bozell used religious language—
the “great evils” that “Welfarism” produced—to emphasize the absolute, unquestionable
nature of such a program. To disagree with the evil that was Welfarism, he argued, was
to deny a spiritual truth. Third, he lumped the advocates of “Welfarism”—notably,
leftists and New Dealers—to Karl Marx and communism with the term “collectivism.”

University Press, 2007), 2.
160 Ibid., 68.
“The collectivists,” he wrote, included “non-Communists as well as Communists,” or American liberals as well as Stalinists, Trotskyists, Leninists, or Maoists.\(^{161}\) In defining “collectivism” narrowly, only on economic matters, Bozell failed to note the intellectual absolute on which his argument was based. His use of morally weighted language essentially dared potential critics to risk their souls if they even began to question such an unmistakable truth. In effect, Bozell sought the victory of a political philosophy as logically flawless as communism itself—much as did Robert Welch, whom Buckley condemned as too far to the right.

On welfarism toward other nations, Bozell blended the ideas of Clarence Manion and his fellow New Right journalists more than those of Senator Goldwater. He ticked off the laundry list of grievances that *National Review* and *Human Events* contributors lodged against the foreign aid program as a whole: its negative influence on the American economy, “waste and extravagance,” and unpopularity with foreigners. To rebut the grounds for humanitarian aid in particular, Bozell turned to Manion’s nativist argument: that the U.S. Constitution was meant for Americans, not foreigners; its silence on foreign aid was tacit prohibition. To disprove the effectiveness of aid, Bozell drew upon John Chamberlain’s logic: that “material wealth can help” other nations, “but it will not change them.” To fight an idea with material things is to wage a hopelessly losing battle, one in which the soul itself is at risk because of the adoption of such an evil as welfarism. Of all of the New Right journalists and populists, James Burnham seemed to impress Bozell most. Like Burnham, Bozell admitted the virtue of military aid to non-communist allies that were too poor to defend themselves, as the critical goal of defeating

\(^{161}\) Ibid., 63.
communism may require such actions. Military aid to nations like Britain and France, which could afford large armed forces, was unnecessary, unwelcome, and even counterproductive. Bozell did not address how, if humanitarian aid were unconstitutional and unaffordable, military aid was exempt.\footnote{Ibid., 90-93.} With these views, of course, Bozell took the exact opposite view of Goldwater in 1953. At that time, the Arizona senator sought to limit military aid to France, not because France could already afford its war in Indochina, but because the United States should avoid the slippery slope to war. Both America’s soldiers and economy were ultimately at stake, Goldwater argued, if military aid were dispensed to war-torn areas.

The Goldwater of 1953, though, was a political novice compared to the Goldwater of the 1960s. He had noted with great interest the resonance such New Right ideas possessed in the national electorate. He recognized the close similarities between his policy positions and those of Bozell, Manion, and other New Rightists of a traditional character. After the great success of \textit{The Conscience of a Conservative}, Goldwater significantly altered the emphases he placed on specific issues to fit the part of the standard-bearer that Bozell and Manion created.

Goldwater’s self-identification and growth as a “conservative” was deliberate and willing. He honestly felt that the philosophy was the key to unlocking the hold that the Democratic Party and the New Deal had over Arizona and national politics. He came to this conclusion partly as a result of his campaign manager, Stephen Shadegg, whom he personally thanked in 1964 for tutoring him in the conservative tradition.\footnote{Barry Goldwater, letter to Stephen Shadegg, 30 July 1964, Goldwater Papers, Personal Files, Box 59, Folder 16: Stephen C. Shadegg, 1963-64.} Shadegg, it
should be noted, was much more of a Traditionalist than his boss and intellectual protégé. When Shadegg ran for the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate in 1962, hoping to join Goldwater in the Arizona delegation, he explicitly disclosed his Traditional beliefs on his campaign literature. In one pamphlet, he claimed that “It is wrong and wasteful to woo neutral nations with billions of dollars of mis-directed foreign aid, at the expense of our proven allies. We should help only those people and those governments sharing our faith in man as a spiritual being whose first requirement is freedom.” Furthermore, he saw it essential that Americans “[r]eaffirm [their] belief that: This is one nation under God; that His laws govern our actions; that His love and His promises provide man with the only real security we can find on this earth.”

Goldwater, though, never supported a religious test for aid nor demanded piety from his supporters. Goldwater even explicitly repudiated “modernism”—in a way. In 1962, Goldwater published another book, Why Not Victory?, based on a speech that Bozell also wrote for him. In the introduction, Goldwater claimed, “I am willing to be as ‘modern’ as anyone—as long as ‘modernism’ does not constitute a debasing of our traditional values.” Here, of course, he appears to be in full accord with the Traditionalists, like Bozell and Manion. But Goldwater’s definition of those values was illustrative:

[I]f to be ‘modern’ I must accede to policies that would turn the foreign affairs of the United States over to the United Nations, disarm our great military machine, welcome Red China into the Community of Nations, give away our food and technical skills to the so-called neutralist nations and get nothing in return—if this is what is meant, then indeed I am not modern and never want to be.

By “modernism,” Goldwater essentially described a crude caricature of his New Deal liberal opposition, which he thought was willing to sacrifice American sovereignty, dismantle the military, recognize China because of its weak anti-communism, and support foreign aid. These specific policy positions had little, if anything, to do with the foundations of Goldwater’s thought—his secular, Enlightenment libertarianism.

Nevertheless, the Goldwater of the early 1960s walked the walk that conservatives like Bozell had talked for him; the disparate elements of the New Right Movement loved him for it. Human Events and National Review practically became the media arms of the Goldwater for President organizations in 1960 and 1964. In May 1960, Human Events published a laudatory piece on Goldwater that served more as an advertisement for The Conscience of a Conservative than anything else. On the same page, the Human Events editors printed an order form for the book and subscription form for their magazine. Three years later, Theodore Humes claimed that the senator “never faulted [falter] in his Americanism” and “offered a positive program for victory,” presumably against both the New Deal and communism. In January 1964, Human Events ran as its cover story another promotion for a Goldwater book, this one written by the senator’s friend, Edwin McDowell. The fifteen-page piece included images of Goldwater’s family and a digest of McDowell’s forthcoming text.

National Review likewise ran a large number of Goldwater articles, covering the senator regularly from April 1960 through the 1964 election. Over these four years, Buckley, Bozell, Burnham, Frank S. Meyer, and Russell Kirk all authored numerous

pieces to inform National Review’s readership of Goldwater’s allegiance to Conservatism. Soon after the release of The Conscience of a Conservative, Bozell argued that the Republican National Convention should subvert the nomination of Richard Nixon and nominate Goldwater on the first ballot. Although he admitted that Nixon had the nomination all but wrapped up, Bozell encouraged readers that a strong showing could elevate Goldwater to the vice presidency.169 Historian and philosopher Russell Kirk’s exploitation of Goldwater’s intellectual caliber proved more insightful—of Kirk’s views, if not Goldwater’s. Kirk reassured readers that Goldwater was presidential material partly by arguing that presidents rarely engaged in scholarship, anyway. Although he compared favorably to all other Republican presidential aspirants—thus laying bare Kirk’s own preference for the nomination—Goldwater lacked the theoretical vigor and rhetorical skill of “conservatives” like Benjamin Disraeli or John Adams.170 Just after President Kennedy’s assassination, Frank S. Meyer pleaded that conservatives should keep faith in Goldwater’s chances to win in the 1964 election. “[T]he artificial storm the Liberals have stirred up will pass away because it is a construction blatantly contradictory to reality,” he lamented, “and while the American people can be bemused and manipulated for a time, their solid sense of reality will prevail before long.”171 As Bozell had failed in his run for politics, and Kirk and Meyer lacked the taste for it altogether, all three saw in Goldwater the opportunity to install vicariously their ideas into the political realm.

For his part, Goldwater reflected some of these concerns in the early 1960s. After bemoaning the 87th Congress’s “unlimited appropriations for foreign aid,” Goldwater wrote in his diary that he hoped “the mad rush to socialism” would end with the opening of the next session.172 Goldwater cited foreign aid as one of the “wild-eyed schemes of Kennedy” that served as “a perpetuation of the New Deal philosophies,” which he considered tantamount to “American socialism.”173 His dedication to what he considered to be the conservative cause was also genuine. His references to “conservatism” were legion, but a media flare-up in the summer of 1961 exemplified his sensitivities. A former Republican who saw the Party drift from her own interest in social welfare, Washington Post journalist Agnes E. Meyer went on the lecture circuit and published articles castigating Goldwater as an “extremist.” The Party, she argued, “is an attempt to combine all [t]he evils and shortcomings of our society into a witches brew which [Goldwater] calls a program.”174 The charges infuriated Goldwater. Less than a week after Meyer made her statements, the senator wrote Shadegg to call them “obviously unintelligent, uninformed remarks” and attached a draft editorial to rebut them. Yet the position from which he argued against Meyer was hardly the conservatism of Bozell or Manion. Rather, he cited only the Declaration and the Constitution as the foundations of his “conservatism” and alleged that Meyer, in turn, disparaged these documents as “evil” and the source of his “witches brew.”175

172 Barry Goldwater, notes for diary, 9 September 1961, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 4: Journals (Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nuclear Testing, NATO).
Indeed, a careful reading of Goldwater’s public and private statements reveals that the core of his beliefs—the health of a two-party republic and the economic independence of the individual—remained fully intact. Goldwater deeply felt it was his solemn duty as an American citizen to ensure the survival of competitive politics. As he argued in his critique of Meyer:

A man should, in my opinion, during the course of his life, make strong efforts to contribute something to the place where he lives—to his town or his state or our Republic. […] In the case of Arizona I felt that my best contribution would be to help those who saw the need for a strong two-party system in our State. To that end, I have found reward and satisfaction in watching the combined efforts of this group slowly raising Arizona’s politics to a position where benefit is derived from two strong parties vying for leadership.176

Feeling Meyer’s sting and those of others who labeled him “extreme,” Goldwater insisted in a draft editorial for the Los Angeles Times that common ground was necessary, and extremist rhetoric tended to produce extremism. “Our problem,” he wrote, “…is not to preserve either the extreme right-wing or the extreme left-wing or the extreme middle-of-the-roader. We are confronted with the necessity of finding a philosophy which will preserve the republic, defeat communism and guarantee to each individual an opportunity to develop his own creative ability to its absolute maximum.”177

On foreign aid, in particular, Goldwater stressed such themes. Kennedy’s foreign policy, he argued, “responds like a high strung puppy to any mention of colonialism but sh[ie]s like a frightened colt from the real problems of development.” The lack of “basic education administrative responsibility and the accumulation of native capital” in post-colonial nations ensured that they would “remain forever dependent upon international

176 Ibid.
The global fight against communism, then, was not the only matter at hand—or, at least, it was not a result of American military weakness alone. As all individuals had a natural right to economic freedom, so Goldwater saw the plight of post-colonial countries as problems in and of themselves, not simply as wild cards in the American grand strategy in the Cold War. On this specific issue, his disagreement with the Kennedy Administration was more a difference of means of policy execution than substance. Moreover, in preparation for a speech in Philadelphia, Goldwater argued that, as President, his foreign aid program:

would not be a doctrine of vague altruism but of concrete effort to extend freedom. It would recognize the vastly different capacities of vastly different nations to absorb aid, and use it advantageously in terms of building free institutions. …[A]nd when it comes to resistance to Communist intrusions, I feel that foreign aid doctrines, well thought out and defined, rather than emotionally shouted, would recognize that military aid—not welfare-centered economic aid—has always been the really successful front line against Red imperialism.

Goldwater reiterated the position that Bozell presented in The Conscience of a Conservative and Burnham in his editorials for National Review—that the best sort of aid was military, not humanitarian, specifically as a means to fight communism. The way in which Goldwater couched his opposition, though, was revealing of how he framed his own views. New Dealers and liberal advocates of foreign aid, he believed, were “vague” and “emotional,” lacking in the cool rationality required to design an effective aid program. In other words, only Goldwater and other conservatives could pierce the veil of ideology to see foreign issues and address them realistically. Goldwater considered his conservative program not as an ideology to dominate, but as a means to the end of

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rebalancing the republic and providing more economic opportunities to both Americans and peoples abroad.

As the New Right attempted to articulate its views on foreign policy, and specifically foreign aid, in the 1950s and 1960s, it revealed a subtle tectonics that increasingly divided its constituent parts as it made a concerted effort for political power. Barry Goldwater premised his foreign policy views on secular, early Enlightenment libertarianism, both as a young senator and as a seasoned candidate for president. Yet, by the early 1960s, he gradually packaged and sold his agenda, both for public and personal consumption, as a traditional, spiritual one, even when he himself did not see much of an intellectual gap. This transition was in part the result of the success of New Right journalists and populists, not his own, in defining conservatism upon the natural law tradition of Western philosophy. L. Brent Bozell and Clarence Manion preferred to envision and sell their strain of New Right thought as an antidote to political modernity—namely, the New Deal and its foreign equivalent of economic aid. In so doing, they co-opted the rationale behind the New Right Movement as a whole and began a decade-long transition that would leave libertarians and other camps within the movement, including Goldwater himself, in exile.
Chapter 3
A Conservative Creed:
Total War and the First Excommunication

“[E]xpand the guerilla war to North Vietnam. You can’t win a football game behind the 50-yard line.”

In 1967, the staff of the Senate Republican Policy Committee prepared a white paper regarding the Party’s stance on war strategy in Vietnam. Its anti-interventionist conclusions stirred the conservative movement from one end to the other. “We Americans,” it argued, “cannot simply go to Asia, wipe the slate clean, and say to them, ‘This is how it shall be.’” On one end, Barry Goldwater, the Party’s erstwhile presidential nominee, shot off an angry letter to Senate Minority Leader, Everett M. Dirksen, to demand how such a position ever saw the light of day. “I am suggesting that we seriously consider a discussion of the Coordinating Committee’s position on Vietnam,” he advised. “I think it’s very imperative that the Party, through the Coordinating Committee, clear up a position that has become a bit cloudy.” On the other end, the classical liberal Leonard P. Liggio offered some praise of the Republican

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181 Barry M. Goldwater, letter to Everett M. Dirksen, 19 May 1967, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 5, Folder 4: Everett Dirksen.
study, writing in the relatively new libertarian journal, *Left and Right*. To him, it appeared that at least some Party members “understand the realities of both the recent history of the Vietnamese people and of the present political situation.” That said, he doubted whether the Republicans, or any presidential administration, could “accept without any kind of intervention the revolutions which will be undertaken against foreign and domestic exploitation by the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.”

Yet all hope was not lost for those conservatives who sought to bring coherence to such cacophony. In fact, less than a year later, the Republican Coordinating Committee released a policy paper entitled “Gradualism—Fuel of War.” “Peace is poorly served,” it declared in its opening sentence, “by those who shrink from the steps necessary to ensure it.” The paper was a scathing rebuke of the “flexible response” and “gradualism” strategies of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, respectively, a censure that clearly echoed the conservatives from Goldwater’s end of the movement more than Liggio’s. Not even Goldwater, however, could take full credit for the Republican Party’s move toward a “total war” strategy in Vietnam—the full mobilization of ground, air, and naval forces in South Vietnam and the potential invasion of North Vietnam. The new doctrine owed less to the Republican Party—still, as of the late 1960s, hospitable to liberals and conservatives alike—than to the emerging power of an alliance of two strains within the conservative movement: the Fusionists and the Traditionalists.

Although these two strains differed in their intellectual pedigree and content—such as belief in the primacy of freedom versus virtue—both embraced what Isaiah

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183 The Republican Coordinating Committee, “Gradualism—Fuel of War,” 19 March 1968, Reagan Papers, Research Unit, Series I – Subject File, Box RS70 – Subject File (Foreign Affairs).
Berlin called “monism,” or “the idea of the world and of human society as a single intelligible structure.” In other words, both were lumping ideologies that embraced an absolute truth, not splitting analyses that questioned truth. As a result, Fusionism and Traditionalism harbored absolutist tendencies. They allowed little, if any, room for dissent. As such, they effectively comprised closed societies, the opposite of what Karl Popper popularized as open societies. With their roots buried deep in the idealism of the Platonic tradition, as Popper argued, closed societies often vehemently repelled the secularizing, tolerant attitudes of modernity. Indeed, closed societies viewed open, pluralist ones as weak and unstable, without firm grounding upon ancient or tested truths.

These intellectual commonalities, along with personal contacts among the editors at the preeminent conservative journal, the *National Review*, facilitated the alliance of Fusionists and Traditionalists that emerged principally from the debates over war strategy in Vietnam. The result, in effect, was a new ideology, which for simplicity I will call American Conservatism. This distinctly American vision embraced concepts like total war, bound Fusionism to Traditionalism, demarcated the boundaries of the movement, and defined a political philosophy for a generation of Americans. This chapter will examine how that alliance emerged and how the ideology of American Conservatism stood initially upon the issue of Vietnam War strategy. First, it will investigate a

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185 Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1945). It should be noted that the liberal Popper was a member of the Mont Pelerin Society, a group of economic liberals and free-market advocates that also included libertarian conservatives Ludwig von Mises and Frederick Hayek.

186 Note again that my usage of capital-C “Conservatism” differs from small-c “conservatism” in that the former denotes the Fusionist-Traditionalist ideology and the latter the more general right-wing tradition.
selection of prominent conservatives—all classical and libertarian conservatives—who did not endorse total war but instead either opposed the Vietnam War or sought what they considered more prudent or pragmatic action in Southeast Asia. The second section will explore the ideas of those Fusionist and Traditionalist theorists who forged the Conservative alliance at the *National Review*. A third part will examine two major public media figures, Clarence Manion and Robert Welch, as they sought to interpret and reshape Conservatism for the masses. The fourth section will discuss how the two primary conservative standard bearers in politics, Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, largely towed and promoted the Conservative line even if at times they stood at odds with the dictates of the Fusionist-Traditionalist alliance. Finally, the chapter will examine how the new Conservatives, in an effort to gain dominance and maximize their political influence, purged from the movement those in opposition to total war.

**Conservative Intellectuals for Limited War**

Those conservatives who came out critical of the Vietnam War in the late 1950s and 1960s had more in common than simply their foreign policy views. The vast majority of these figures fell into the Anglo-American conservative or libertarian conservative strains of the wider movement. In some ways, this kinship was not surprising. Both strains largely celebrated the individual and upheld reason as an important, if not always paramount, value, even as they criticized the excesses of Enlightenment thought. That said, not all were advocates of pluralism and tolerant of views different from their own. Ayn Rand, for example, fashioned a libertarian conservative monism that rivaled the Fusionist-Traditionalist alliance in intellectual
coherence and moral absolutism. Among the most prominent of these war critics were
the “classical” conservative professor, Peter Viereck; Rand and her Objectivists; and
libertarian economist Murray Rothbard.

Viereck carried over his Renaissance humanistic vision of ethics and skepticism
of rational utopianism to matters of war. His popular 1953 work, The Shame and Glory
of the Intellectuals, dedicated more attention to the Cold War than nearly any other topic.
“In fighting what we rightly or wrongly believe to be evil,” he wrote
of the American
approach to global communism, “force must be only the reluctant last resort after all
other alternatives are truly maintained. A circle of brotherhood, inclusive and not
exclusive, must be the first resort.” An advocate of pluralism, Vier Eck
questioned the
absolute nature of the communist enemy as “evil” even as he forthrightly asserted his
own vehement opposition to communism. In addition, “moderate in all things,” Vier Eck
felt that prudence dictated the exhaustion of all peaceful measures before individuals or
nations employed violence. Warfare, he believed, tore indiscriminately through the
organic threads that bound societies and peoples. “America’s strength,” he went on, “is
not the brute militarism of Prussianism and Russianism. Ours is the stronger strength of
gentleness and tolerance.”

As the Vietnam War escalated, though, Vier Eck questioned the directions that
some of his erstwhile “new conservatives” sought to take the movement that he helped
revive. No longer did some of these ostensibly Burkean conservatives eschew ideology
for reason tempered by tradition. Writing in his updated, 1962 edition of Conservatism

187 Vier Eck, Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals: Babbitt Jr. vs. the Rediscovery of Values (New York: Capricorn, 1965), 136-137. Vier Eck first published this work in 1953, but like his Conservatism Revisited, the later 1965 edition contains an important addendum.
Revisited, Viereck added a new chapter, “The New Conservatism—What Went Wrong?”

He cried that

the historic content of conservatism stands, above all, for two things: organic unity and rooted liberty. Today the shell of the ‘conservative’ label has become a chrysalis for the opposite of these two things: at best for atomistic Manchester liberalism, opposite of organic unity; at worst for thought-controlling nationalism, uprooting the traditional liberties (including the Fifth Amendment) planted by America’s founders.

Ideology was what went wrong with the “new conservatives”—the dogmatic strictures of laissez-faire capitalism for the libertarians and militant nationalism for the Fusionists and Traditionalists. Although he too saw the “menace” of the “foreign Soviet” as the most dangerous to America, he considered “the domestic rightist one the second greatest, and the domestic Communist Party the least by far. But only a monomaniac concentrates on a single menace,” he added, renouncing such prioritization itself as tantamount to intellectual monism. “An effective defense of freedom…would fight on all three fronts simultaneously.”

Wary of ideology on either extreme, the American people “reaffirmed a sane middle position” when they voted for President Johnson in 1964. Indeed, Viereck insisted that a “basic reason for Goldwater’s electoral defeat lay in foreign policy.” The best way to conduct the war in Vietnam and other Third World nations, he advised, was neither to be “trigger-happy” nor seek “peace at any price at all,” but to “work for gradual liberation from within, along the line of each country’s local traditions and Burkean roots. America can and should speed up this history-rooted process, not by military violence…but by recognizing, encouraging, and honorably dealing with ‘revisionists,’” or reasonable communists. After all, “American policy ought to exploit…polycentrist

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188 Idem., Conservatism Revisited, 152.
splits” like those between the Soviet Union and China. As monist as communists were in theory, Viereck thought that, in practice, their disagreements were legion, as was the case with any widespread ideology or faith.

To Viereck, conservatism was “not an ism: Adams, Burke, Tocqueville detested all systems, all ideologies. It is a way of living…it is not science but art.” As such, conservatism could no more endorse a total war strategy in Vietnam than control the minds of its advocates. A genuine conservative, in his mind, drew upon the Anglo-American tradition of Burkean thought that, far from endorsing war in 1776, actually applauded British colonial self-determination. As the monistic ideology of Soviet communism stood in the way of the organic development of individual freedom on a global scale, it was truly repugnant and required firm, sustained opposition. Just as dangerous, however, was the monistic ideology of militant nationalism that Viereck saw on the rise among his fellow “new conservatives.”

Like Viereck, Ayn Rand in part opposed the Vietnam War on grounds that its pursuit was an expression of militant nationalism, a form of collectivism as nefarious as communism. Her general opposition to the initiation of force, though, lay deep within her thought. As early as 1943, she wrote in her journals of her acceptance of the non-aggression principle common to libertarian philosophy: “Never initiate the use of force against another man. Never let his use of force against you remain unanswered by force.” This axiom drove much of her libertarian policy stances, including her disdain of the state. War, she claimed, was the very means of the state; as long as government

190 Idem., Conservatism Revisited, 153.
exists, individuals will try to use it to force their will upon others, destroying freedom and
capitalism in the process.\footnote{Idem., “War and Peace,” \textit{The Objectivist Newsletter} 1:10 (October 1962): 44-45.}

Although she primarily expressed her anti-war views in abstractions, Rand’s message was clear: the Vietnam War was a statist plot to infringe Americans’ individual property rights. Discussing the “roots of war” in a 1966 article, she attributed the rise of totalitarian regimes in Russia, Italy, and Germany to American Progressives’ attempts to “reform” the postwar domestic and international economic systems. Such efforts invariably resided upon collective “tribal” or “gang” mentalities that preferred one group over another, under the guises of altruism or egalitarianism. Furthermore, the United States, normally a beacon of freedom and justice, became mired in Vietnam as a result of tribal, interest-group lobbying that weakened the purity of free exchange and debate among individuals within Congress and the executive branch. As a result, “instead of bringing progress to the world [American foreign policy brought] the bloody chaos of tribal warfare and [delivered] one helpless nation after another into the power of communism.”\footnote{Idem., “The Pull Peddlers,” \textit{The Objectivist Newsletter} 1:9 (September 1962): 37-38, 40.} Despite such vehement opposition, Rand never publicly offered her own program to extricate America from the Vietnam War.

In the first issue of his journal, \textit{Left and Right}, fellow libertarian Murray Rothbard published an intellectual history of American politics that effectively agreed with Rand that statist intervention in the economy was the root of war. Citing a Leninist philosopher, Rothbard viewed the New Deal as “social fascism” that harbored an “implicit ‘advance to war.’” But statist economic intervention was not simply the left’s \textit{modus operandi}. Drawing upon Gabriel Kolko’s 1963 book, \textit{The Triumph of...}
Conservatism, Rothbard argued that collectivists on the right often successfully pushed regulations through the U.S. Congress under the guise of the New Deal that effectively created monopolies and distorted free market forces. In other words, the New Deal was as much a right-collectivist project as left-collectivist one. This conception of pervasive collectivism is how Rothbard accounted for the “me-too-ism” that Rand noted among Democrats and Republicans on both economic and foreign policy. If any consensus reigned in America since the Second World War, it was one of creeping left-right collectivism, “embodied in the permanent war economy, the full-fledged state monopoly capitalism and neo-mercantilism, the military-industrial complex of the present era.” The Cold War and Vietnam were simply logical outgrowths of state power. In a perverse way, Rothbard would agree with Lloyd Gardner’s depiction of President Johnson in Pay Any Price that the Vietnam War was effectively an extension of the Great Society to Southeast Asia. Rather than support the war on these grounds, though, Rothbard fiercely opposed both efforts.

Rothbard’s younger colleague, Leonard Liggio, echoed his libertarian conservatism. In “Why the Futile Crusade?,” a review of Sydney Lens’s The Futile Crusade, Liggio found it shocking that a leftist would agree with libertarian conservatives to “find the Cold War not only evil in itself, but evil because it centralizes political power, destroys constitutional limitations on government, and relies upon control and regulation by government.” He went on to portray the abrogation of civil liberties in World War I as a warning to Americans of the Vietnam Era. Liggio laid bare his neo-isolationist attitudes in a series of articles that documented the history of

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isolationism in America. He did so notably, though, within the context of Rothbard’s libertarian conservatism, on the basis that the collectivism on both the left and right tempted Americans of the past and present into war.\textsuperscript{196}

Rothbard’s \textit{Left and Right} was hardly the only libertarian journal to express anti-war sentiments. Over the late 1950s and 1960s, \textit{The Freeman} developed a reputation as not only libertarian but broadly conservative, open to articles from laissez-faire advocates like Ludwig von Mises, the Objectivist Ayn Rand, and the Traditionalist Clarence Manion. Although by the mid-1960s many conservatives began to see Viereck, Rand, Rothbard, and \textit{The Freeman} as fringe examples of their movement at best, or even interlopers on their territory, this perception had more to do with the Vietnam War’s influence over the intellectual direction of the movement in the early 1960s than changes in these anti-war figures’ opinions. The rise of Fusionism and Traditionalism, and their subsequent alliance through the \textit{National Review} for greater political voice, at once relegated anti-war conservatives to the margins and strengthened their increasingly ideological authority among those who remained less than committed to either a limited or total war strategy in Vietnam.

\textbf{Conservative Intellectuals for Total War}

The \textit{National Review} proved to be the primary incubator of the modern American conservative ideology. Four figures in particular, Frank S. Meyer, William F. Buckley, Jr., James Burnham, and L. Brent Bozell, set the tone for the conservative movement on a

host of policies. None of these issues were as consequential as American war strategy in Vietnam. Their intellectual and personal kinship, coupled with clear articulation of policy, facilitated their quest to guide and lead the movement on their terms.

As analyses of each of these figures in turn will illustrate, these writers brought their unique worldviews and philosophical backgrounds to the editor’s table, often to the point of fervent disagreement on first principles. They nevertheless forged an alliance between Fusionism, primarily the brainchild of Meyer, and Traditionalism, whose most eloquent defender arguably was Bozell. Buckley formed the personal link between these two theorists, serving not only as their chief editor but also their primary interface with conservative activists. In his capacity as foreign affairs columnist for the *National Review*, Burnham best expressed how Conservatives should approach foreign policy, making the ideology accessible and meaningful in light of the Vietnam War.

Specifically in this regard, the Conservatism that emerged from the *National Review* represented a monistic, substantive critique of New Deal foreign policy. It fundamentally opposed the policies of all postwar presidents, from Truman through Johnson (and very much including Eisenhower), all of whom Conservatives claimed pursued a risk-averse, low-cost, “gradualist” strategy toward communism in Asia that cost thousands of lives, damaged American credibility abroad, and made victory difficult to achieve. Like libertarian conservatives, these Conservatives linked the New Deal and its subsequent iterations with gradualism by arguing that liberals, as advocates of pluralism, were too intellectually weak to rally around a workable strategy and exert the will necessary to execute it. They considered the fear of Chinese reprisal if the United States invaded North Vietnam, for example, as an irrational one born out of President
Truman’s unwillingness to bomb China during the Korean War. Rather than learn the lesson of strength, Conservatives argued, liberals became increasingly less willing to exert force after the Chinese incursion. In addition, Conservatives consistently saw Vietnam not as an isolated conflict or nationalist revolution but as one key theater in a war against a monist aggressor: international communism. China and Russia, they argued, were *already* at war with the United States. As advocates of any monist ideology are prone to do, the Conservatives considered any competitor—either the liberals’ pluralism or the communists’ monism (not to mention the competing right-wing monisms of Objectivism and libertarian conservatism)—a mortal threat to their vision of absolute truth.

As President Johnson escalated the war in Vietnam in 1965, Frank Meyer expressed gratitude that the United States actually began to exhibit leadership. He remained deeply skeptical, though, of Johnson’s “obscure,” “ambiguous,” and “uncertain” conduct of the war’s operations. Johnson, he argued, somehow saw Russian communism as acceptable but not Chinese communism. If only he understood the reality that Vietnam was a subset of the larger war against one colossal foe, he could bring order and purpose to Americans’ sacrifices there. Given this mixed situation, Meyer observed that conservatives were quite rightly torn on whether to support the conflict but should nonetheless back the President and encourage him to strengthen his hand.197 The vacuum of leadership in the Republican Party also explained the movement’s division on Vietnam and convinced Meyer that Johnson deserved at least some additional support. The 1964 election, in which the “Liberal wing [of the GOP] thoroughly disgraced itself by its

sabotage of the campaign,” left conservatives demoralized and the centrists in charge, with the latter’s lack of “conservative principles and yet…loyalty to the Party.”

To clear up this murkiness of conservative support, Meyer spelled out exactly how a Fusionist would conduct a total war in Vietnam. In a task force study he helped prepare with two other conservatives, Stefan T. Possony and David N. Rowe, Meyer enumerated a series of proposals to turn the war in America’s favor. First, the United States should dump its narrow air strike approach and allocate full land, air, and sea resources to help the South Vietnamese seal their borders with North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Second, Johnson must make a formal declaration that America would not honor the legal protection of “sanctuaries” because communists flagrantly abused them for tactical advantage and supply of Viet Cong. Third, detailing the escalation of forces in South Vietnam, Meyer demanded stronger counterinsurgency support for U.S. troops and guerilla training for Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) soldiers. Fourth, to allow for such escalation, the United States must increase its troop deployments in Southeast Asia, concomitant with more volunteer units from Asian allies. Fifth, expansion of the war into North Vietnam may be necessary, “up to and including the elimination of the Hanoi Communist dictatorship.” Such a “crescendo” could include measures like blockading North Vietnamese ports, chemically destroying their crops, and landing amphibious attacks. Finally, to support these military actions, Meyer suggested the United States supply economic, humanitarian aid to the South Vietnamese and call a conference with South Vietnam leaders to facilitate political stability. Meyer justified these last two points—in the face of his former condemnation of humanitarian aid as an

effective foreign policy tool—as supportive of the predominantly military strategy necessary to bring the war to a successful close.199

Meyer and his associates then addressed the concerns that this total war approach could provoke China or require the United States or Soviet Union to use nuclear weapons. If the Chinese did respond with an armed incursion, Meyer argued that “we could not be defeated in such a contest on the battlefield, but only in our minds.” Meyer drew that lesson, after all, from Truman’s unwillingness to support General MacArthur’s aggressive strategy in Korea. Meyer insisted, though, that such a concern was academic at best, for China would never invade North Vietnam to rebut an American offensive: “such a step would be suicidal.” “Full scale revolt,” supported by the Taiwanese, would likely result. As for the nuclear issue, one raised mostly by “defeatist and alarmist agitation,” Meyer posited that the Soviet Union would never deploy such weapons “except in the defense of its own soil.” He remained silent on whether the United States may have to or should use nuclear weapons.200 Meyer reiterated most of these points for his National Review readers a year later, although he added the caveat that, “since the Asian continent is hardly the ideal strategic arena for American arms,” the expansion of the war into North Vietnam may not be the most prudent course of action.201

Meyer’s Fusionism thus was prescriptive of a total war policy, as long as that total war did not result in an Asian land war. Nonetheless, sheer will for victory would preserve America’s advantage, even in this conflict. A direct line connected this faith in

200 Ibid.
American notions of free will with Meyer’s intellectual grounding in the Grand Tradition of Judeo-Christian idealism. In his mind, the one truth of man’s nature required only faith, just as victory in the Vietnam War simply demanded unified, clear volition.

In contrast to Meyer’s binary, zero-sum light, William F. Buckley, Jr., cast his infrequent commentary on Vietnam in the hues of patriotism and compassion. He praised Johnson for making support of the war in Vietnam “a test of patriotism,” for “patriotism is the final, and the greatest, reserve of any nation-state.” Critics of the war were not exactly traitors, Buckley reasoned. Their misguided ideological passions simply did not allow them to see how their rhetoric amounted to support for the Viet Cong. Likewise, Buckley noted that Johnson’s limited bombing campaigns undoubtedly saved the lives of many American troops, but many more would have been and could be spared if Johnson simply bombed Hanoi directly. “It is as though all the doctors in New York City,” he reasoned, “were assigned to running down and curing cholera victims…but were forbidden to give up their attention to the central water supply.” Concern for the welfare of American troops compelled the President to abandon the limited war for an escalated one.

Given his deeper interest in foreign policy issues, James Burnham was among the first of the Fusionists to tackle head on the question of limited war. In 1960, he demanded that conservatives clarify their terms on the Cold War. “Our way of defining the struggle sums up our understanding of its nature,” he posited. If Americans go on describing the Cold War as “limited” or seeking an end-state of “peaceful economic competition,” they will refrain from using certain methods that may end the conflict more

quickly. At times, however, he exhibited a sense of pragmatism in waging what he considered a “total” or “all-out” war.\textsuperscript{204} From his communist years onward, Burnham was an admirer of Machiavelli, or at least the Machiavelli of \textit{The Prince}, which put him at odds intellectually with Meyer, Buckley, and most other conservatives.\textsuperscript{205} In 1960, he lamented Americans’ characteristic propensity to cast foreign policy in moral terms rather than view the international system through a lens of Machiavellian realism, or what he considered basic common sense.\textsuperscript{206} Burnham also avoided the conception of international communism as a monolith, arguing that, if the Sino-Soviet split indeed existed, U.S. policy should exacerbate the rift for the Free World’s benefit. The very fact that he could envision a divide between the Soviet Union and China illustrated his ability to distance himself from ideological monism.\textsuperscript{207} As Johnson escalated in Vietnam, Burnham remained critical of the President’s limited strategy, “stuck” as it was, but ultimately supportive of the overall effort.\textsuperscript{208} Part of the reason why Burnham granted Johnson some leeway on Vietnam was his perception of the President’s own pragmatism, for Johnson was a Texan, not a member of the liberal “Eastern Establishment.” “So far as foreign policy goes,” he remarked generously as a conservative, “Lyndon Johnson expresses the same basic temperament as Barry Goldwater.” As Burnham stated in \textit{The Suicide of the West}, an essential problem with liberals was their European, Atlantic orientation, which accounted for their pluralism and slippery-slope statism.\textsuperscript{209}

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\textsuperscript{205} Burnham actually published a book in support of realpolitik, \textit{The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom} (New York: John Day, 1943). It should be noted that he did not come around to Fusionist Conservatism until nearly two decades later.
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What elements of pragmatism Burnham harbored, though, clashed frequently with his equally strong inclination to embrace and expound Fusionist ideology. In a downright Orwellian take on the ideological struggle facing Cold War America, he suggested that conservatives adopt the tactics of communists, effectively to view “the enemy as teacher,” in the “polwar,” or political warfare, of the age. Although democracies, as open societies, may seem weak in their ability to mobilize the masses on ideas, Burnham insisted that such historic achievements as the Emancipation Proclamation and President Wilson’s Fourteen Points belied American feebleness. In one of his more trenchant defenses of Fusionism, he adopted Meyer’s binary method to insist that America’s only choices were submission to either “Communism or war.” Only “better luck than we deserve” could spare the Free World from this dilemma. Leaders like President Kennedy, who Burnham believed had the good intentions to spare the world from both communism and war, nevertheless had to make a tough choice as to which enemy was worse. The hapless president realistically could not avoid both evils. This indecisiveness was the root cause of his gradualist, ineffective foreign policy.

Time and again in his positions on Vietnam, Burnham’s Fusionism won out over his pragmatism to a significantly more radical degree than even Meyer proffered. From 1962 onward, Burnham wrote frequently on the Vietnam War, always insisting that the United States should expand the war not only to North Vietnam but also to China. Such a move would force America to “abandon certain of the current axioms of [its] world policy,” he conceded, but was absolutely necessary if America was to be “serious in South Vietnam.” These very axioms were the Lilliputian ties that held down the

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American colossus. Expansion of the Vietnam War into a total conflict meant not only north into China but also east into the United States. The formerly Leninist Burnham recognized the *dau tranh* strategy of the “good Leninist,” Ho Chi Minh. Americans should view their “enemy as a teacher” and fight back against this “global psywar campaign” through ideological strength of their own, even if it meant domestic mobilization for total war. Burnham was also much less fearful of full-scale war on the Asian mainland than Meyer. Although he agreed with Meyer that the Russians were unlikely to intervene unless their territory were threatened directly, Burnham advised “a nuclear strike or two on a Vietcong concentration or in North Vietnam” to serve as a warning against Chinese intervention. Even without nuclear provocation, though, China would not reenact the crossing of the Yalu, as Mao Zedong certainly realized how vulnerable his territory was to American airborne attacks. Indeed, liberals’ failure to deploy nuclear weapons against the Chinese in the Korean War, he argued, proved to be one of the most flagrant errors in the history of U.S. foreign policy. Not only did such reticence damn Korea to divided status but it also elevated the Soviet Union and China threats to unrealistic levels in the minds of liberals, centrists, and non-Fusionist conservatives alike.

With his clear articulation of Fusionist foreign policy, Burnham served as a bridge to the primary Traditionalist within the upper echelon of the *National Review*: L. Brent Bozell. The ability of Fusionists and Traditionalists to ally on foreign policy lay in their common rejection of pluralism, with the deepest concern that any concession granted to

communism may strike a fatal blow to the integrity of the free West. Bozell thus recoiled in disgust when President Eisenhower agreed with the Soviets in 1960 to proscribe underground nuclear weapons testing. “It would be a mistake,” Bozell raged, “to view this latest concession as just another in a series. It is, in all likelihood, the end of the line.”

He reacted with similar ire when the liberal Catholic Friar George H. Dunne asserted in an article for the Jesuit periodical, *America*, that Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, despite their atheism, at least had the good intention to “set the peasants free.” Bozell could not tolerate the claim to a shade of gray within communism. Dunne, he was forced to conclude, “has allowed himself to become a propagandist for the Communist revolution.”

Although Bozell rarely commented directly on the Vietnam War as a particular matter, he nevertheless held enormous intellectual sway over Meyer, Buckley, and Burnham in their articulation of policy on the war. Deans of their respective conservative strains, Meyer and Bozell in particular shared a common, public disdain for the pluralist foundation that they felt lay at the base of liberalism. Meyer even quoted Bozell in his trenchant critique of the notion: “the concept of the ‘open society’….I cannot define better than was done by Brent Bozell” for the *National Review Bulletin* in 1959.

Nevertheless, Meyer’s Fusionism put a premium on individual freedom that Bozell’s Traditionalism was willing to sacrifice for the sake of Judeo-Christian virtue. Meyer perhaps best expressed Fusionism’s emphasis on liberty as the prime virtue in January

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1962, when he sought to situate libertarian conservatives properly within the broader conservative movement.\textsuperscript{217}

But Bozell was not convinced. In two successive September 1962 issues of the *National Review*, Bozell and Meyer conducted a dialogue on the primacy of virtue versus freedom that effectively produced, in Meyer’s article, a second manifesto for the Fusionist-Traditionalist alliance of American Conservatism (the first arguably being the ghostwriter Bozell’s *The Conscience of a Conservative*). Bozell readily admitted his qualms about any ideological alliance the two strains could potentially produce. “I do question…whether the libertarian-traditionalist amalgam, as the fusionists define it, is *worth* bringing to power. For I doubt whether a movement dominated by libertarianism can be responsive to the root causes of Western disintegration.” A genuine monist, he immediately thereafter cautioned his readers that, in whatever alliance two different intellectual groups may foster, one must have priority over the other—one’s most cherished value must take absolute precedence. In his conclusion, he targeted modernity as the root cause of the West’s decline and vulnerability to communism: “what the freedom-first people fail to understand is that the communist proposal to ‘change man’ is an answer to a problem they have created. *The Communist answer is to give man a nature, and thus a purpose outside himself*—exactly the thing that six hundred years of Western ‘progress’ have progressively denied him.”\textsuperscript{218}

In his response, Meyer recognized that the conservative movement, regardless of what either Meyer or Bozell thought, harbored a vast number of people who to varying degrees honored both freedom and virtue. Although Meyer himself believed that the


virtuous life required a free society, he concluded, contrary to Bozell, that a Conservative must honor both equally. “Neither virtue nor freedom alone,” he argued, “but the ineluctable combination of virtue and freedom, is the sign and spirit of the West.” The Conservative, then, was neither wholly anti-collectivist nor entirely pro-individualist. A state was necessary to conserve the virtue of the Grand Tradition, but that state must be limited to conserve the liberty of the individual. Meyer thus articulated the alliance that would galvanize the movement for the next four decades and implicitly exhibited why the ideological Conservative had little choice but to support total war, not only in Vietnam but against any ideological foe. It, too, was a collectivism—one of the mind and spirit—that ironically demanded its adherents to be free, individualistic Judeo-Christians.

Conservative Populists for Total War

As abstract and academic as this cultural imperative appeared to the National Review inner circle, for Americans of the 1960s, to be a free Judeo-Christian increasingly meant to possess a specific identity within a genuinely diverse country. The Civil Rights Movement, the Warren Revolution, Second Wave Feminism, and other sweeping social changes fundamentally reshaped American identities over the course of the long decade, affecting conservatives no less than any other group. Race, the vast majority of movement activists would argue, was not a requirement for admission to the movement. Any non-white theoretically could become an individualist, liberty-loving, God-fearing American. The overriding power of ideas made material issues like socioeconomic status and education much less significant. But both of these latter factors, among many others,

determined in large part whether the conservative movement, or the much more specific Conservative ideology, was even attractive, let alone welcoming, to diverse Americans. To interface with the movement, to find its drift toward a specific ideology meaningful, most conservatives joined groups centered on media outlets—the National Review, of course, being the most prominent. But Buckley’s journal was skewed highly toward middle-to-upper class and relatively highly educated Americans by dint of its subscription fee, literary nature, and intellectual discourse. For most Americans, radio was much more accessible than an issue of the National Review. Likewise, it was much easier to join the John Birch Society than hear L. Brent Bozell speak in person.

Scholars sometimes overlook media and populist figures’ influence on the movement or argue it away to highlight intellectuals like Meyer, Buckley, or Rand. This neglect is a mistake. Movement conservatives like Clarence Manion and Robert Welch certainly reached more Americans than read any single National Review article. Whereas Manion and Welch held their own idiosyncratic views and represented two different strains of conservatism, their struggles (or lack thereof) to reconcile with the emerging ideology, not necessarily the substance of their views, best explain their contrasting experiences. Manion, for his part, largely squared his opinions with those of Conservatism by the late 1960s and thus remained somewhat influential into the next decade. Welch, however, did not, which partly explains why his ultimate expulsion from the movement was so bitter and dramatic.

George H. Nash, for example, rightly did not consider Manion and Welch intellectuals. To exclude them from shaping the intellectual milieu of the conservative movement on this basis, however, is to reduce that movement unrealistically to very few politicians, scholars, and journalists.
Manion’s deep nationalist sentiments explain in part how he gravitated from a critic of foreign interventionism into an advocate for total war in Vietnam. Manion’s fervent and public support for the Bricker Amendment, which sought to limit the treaty-making powers of the President, exemplified his Old Right, Taftite concerns over threats to American sovereignty. In 1954, he even made his first radio broadcast for the Manion Forum a plea for the restoration of national independence. In so doing, he not coincidentally turned his attention to the conflagration in Southeast Asia. “The United States dropped several billion dollars in the futile French War in Indo China,” he pointed out as an illustration of America’s increasing commitments abroad. “Now, under the terms of the U.N. Charter, we are obliged…to run our soldiers off to Indo China, as we did to Korea, whenever the Kremlin says the word. Is that a demonstration of American independence?” The unrestrained interventionism of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, he reasoned, implicated the United States in a morass of international commitments that, like crude oil on the wings of a bald eagle, limited the nation’s free agency and spirit. A year later, he continued his anti-interventionist theme, with a dose of his characteristic sarcasm:

Repeatedly we are told that never, never again must Americans succumb to the grave sin of national, self-interest. And so it is better, far better, to destroy ourselves in waste, war and world-government than ever again to entertain the sinful, torturing thought of ‘America First’…. There is no discernable plan for ending that crisis [the Cold War], nor is there any promise, express or implied, that the cold war [sic] will ever end.222

221 Clarence Manion, “Revive American Independence,” *Manion Forum* Broadcast No. 1, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 3 October 1954, Manion Papers, Box 81, Folder 81-11.
222 Idem., “Why Not End the Cold War?” *Manion Forum* Broadcast No. 24, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 13 March 1955, Manion Papers, Box 81, Folder 81-12.
A few years later, he simply stated, “[Robert] Taft was right.” American Cold War foreign policy was not really anti-communist at all, as much as Manion genuinely hoped it should be in some capacity. Rather, “the purpose of this foreign policy is not to destroy the big bad Communist enemy but to preserve that enemy and use it indefinitely as a built-in excuse for the progressive destruction of the solvency, the sovereignty and the Constitutional government of the United States.”

In a sense, Manion was a quasi-Conservative long before the theorists at the National Review expounded the ideology in 1962. Although his deepest commitments were to the Grand Tradition and its application to the American nation, he blended limited government into his Christian faith long before Meyer even conceived of Fusionism. The only arena in which the Manion of the 1950s seemed to differ from his general conformity to the later Conservative ideal was foreign policy—until the escalation of the Cold War under President Kennedy. In a 1961 radio interview with Representative John R. Pillion, a Republican from New York, Manion began to budge slightly on his Taftite loyalties. Pillion recently had proposed a bill in the U.S. House to declare war on the “International Communist Conspiracy,” a plan Manion suggested was “realistic” and worth consideration. A year later, Representative Craig Hosmer, a

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223 Idem., “Our Internationalist Foreign Policy—Road To Ruin Of Civilization,” Manion Forum Broadcast No. 189, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 11 May 1958, Manion Papers, Box 82, Folder 82-6.
California Republican, came on the *Manion Forum* to discuss his similar declaration of war on international communism, which Manion agreed “should be passed.”

The commonality between these stances and Manion’s early Taftism, of course, was the bills’ affirmation of the Constitutional principle of sanctioning war through Congress as opposed to granting unlimited warmaking powers to the president. Manion never really had been a doctrinaire isolationist. His early concerns over interventionism stemmed from the potential of its overuse; the subsequent effects of such abuse were, in his mind, as dangerous as communism. Republican U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina frequently appeared on the *Manion Forum*, twice in the spring and summer of 1962, to criticize heavily President Kennedy’s “no-win” strategies in the Cold War and Vietnam, in particular. Manion had nothing but praise for the Senator’s views, despite the interventionist commitment that Thurmond—a member of the body empowered Constitutionally to declare war—implicitly championed.

By 1964, Manion had come to believe that the preservation of liberties at home required a foreign policy of both bold intervention and prudence. Goldwater, who Manion worked so hard to promote in 1964, ran on such a platform. Frank Meyer, who appeared on Manion’s radio program to promote the new Conservative ideology, demanded of Manion’s listeners that an all-out war against communism in Vietnam and

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225 Clarence Manion and Craig Hosmer [Congressman, CA-Long Beach], “Two Giant Steps Toward Victory in the Cold War” *Manion Forum* Broadcast No. 386, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 18 February 1962, Manion Papers, Box 83, Folder 83-4.

elsewhere was inevitable.\textsuperscript{227} In a 1966 speech to the Sons of the American Revolution, Manion argued that only a foreign policy of total war, not the gradualist efforts of the liberals, would end the Vietnam War quickly, conclusively, and honorably. Fallout on American civil liberties would thus be minimized. “We are not interested in victory anymore,” he bitterly claimed of the Johnson Administration’s attitudes. “We are spending two and one-half billion dollars a month on a war that we do not expect to win; and that no responsible American military man expects could be won by the present methods from ten to 100 years [sic].”\textsuperscript{228} The Taftite fear that Johnson intended such “present methods” to drag out the war haunted Manion to the point where he simply had to back the Conservative plan for total war.

Robert Welch experienced an entirely different response from Conservatives than did Clarence Manion. It was not that Welch disagreed with a total war policy—far from it. In his nationally disseminated 1967 pamphlet, \textit{The Truth about Vietnam}, Welch pondered “why…we impose, or allow to be imposed, so many incredible handicaps on our men who are trying to fight” in Southeast Asia. To him, the only possible way to fight a war was in a total fashion, without regard to political consequences. He even suggested that a war that was not total in its vision was not worth backing at all.\textsuperscript{229} The main reason why Welch lost credibility within the conservative movement was clear on the very first page of this same tract, in the question that so frequently disturbed the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{228} Clarence Manion, speech to the Sons of the American Revolution, Charlottesville, VA, 10 September 1966, Manion Papers, Box 111, Folder 111-2.
\textsuperscript{229} Robert Welch, \textit{The Truth about Vietnam} (Belmont, MA: John Birch Society, 1967), 5, Reagan Papers, Research Unit, Series I – Subject File, Box RS157 – Subject File (Vietnam).
\end{footnotesize}
quieter Manion: “Did the death of those hundred and forty-four Americans [the U.S. death toll in Vietnam in January 1967] constitute deliberate, conscious, and coldblooded murder on the part of the Johnson Administration?” Where Manion remained skeptical of the Johnson Administration’s goals and only criticized his limited war means, Welch outright alleged Johnson’s ends and means as thoroughly red.

Not all populists, of course, were advocates of total war. The populist journalist Morris Bealle published his own newsletter, *American Capsule News*, from Washington, D.C., in which he berated the war effort as a plot “to protect the profits of the Rock Mob.” The entire U.S. government, he suspected, was a shill for the “House of [Nelson] Rockefeller and its offshoot, the Rockefeller-Soviet Axis.” Although he clearly had no love for the New York Governor, Bealle considered none other than Robert Welch, the “Pied Piper of the John Birch movement,” the “falsest prophet this country has had since Franklin Roosevelt.” Bealle’s conservative yet thorough criticism of both the New Deal left and other conspiracy theorists illustrates in microcosm how such monistic ideologues simply could not tolerate any competing claims to truth. Bealle, Welch, and many members of the John Birch Society rejected outright any semblance of pluralism in intellectual affairs, forcing them to take absolute stands for or against the war in Vietnam.

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230 Ibid., 1.
The Political Standard-Bearers: Conservative Politicians for Total War

As with many adherents of ideological movements, conservatives left for others the translation of their abstract ideas into concrete reality. Frank Meyer effectively passed the responsibility of a Conservative politics to Barry Goldwater when Meyer called for a separation of movement and state, with himself claiming the intellectual vanguard of the movement. Although William F. Buckley, as an editor, had the most experience in making Conservative ideas relevant, his loss in the New York City mayoral race in 1965 illustrated how genuinely devoid of governing experience the intellectual founders of the ideology truly were. Among the three remaining *National Review* theorists, only Bozell made the effort to run for public office, failing several times; for all their popularity with the conservative masses, neither Manion nor Welch entered politics. All of these figures ultimately resorted to political criticism, viewing candidates and politicians from afar and assessing their loyalty not only to the movement in a broad sense but, particularly by the mid-1960s, to the ideology of Conservatism.

Although conservative politicians sat in at every level of government in the country, few had the opportunity to guide the movement with a combination of charisma, experience, and intellectual heft. To make analysis manageable, the remainder of this chapter will focus only on the movement’s designated standard bearers of conservatism and their views regarding war policy in Vietnam: Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan. This focus is not to claim that Senators like Strom Thurmond or Representatives like Marvin Dies lacked significant voice within the movement. The simple fact that
Goldwater and Reagan represented the conservatives’ favorite sons in the elections of 1964 and 1968, respectively, commands particular analysis of their roles.\textsuperscript{232}

In the preceding chapter, the libertarian, pragmatic roots of Goldwater’s views were contrasted with the Traditionalist, idealistic wellsprings of Manion and Bozell. These latter two figures deserve more credit from scholars than they typically receive for their work on \textit{The Conscience of a Conservative} and its powerful influence over the conservative movement. Goldwater’s public and private statements reveal a less cerebral and consistent thinker than the intellectuals who edited the \textit{National Review}. Yet these sources also portray Goldwater as quite distinct from the Conservatism that the latter theorists fashioned. Although he was the standard bearer for the Conservative creed, he was not an adherent so much as a vehicle for its dissemination. Despite his fury at times with the flaws of the presidents under whom he served as a U.S. Senator, he mostly remained convinced that Eisenhower’s moderate approach to politics—liberal in “human relations,” conservative in economics—provided America with the best route toward prosperity and security.\textsuperscript{233} As stated previously, he was even a great admirer of Ayn Rand and her libertarian views (if not quite her Objectivist ideology).

At the base of Goldwater’s intellectual worldview was not, therefore, a dedication to any monist philosophy like Objectivism or Conservatism but a politician’s pragmatism to realize substantive goals. Although he was among America’s most vocal and respected supporters of a total war strategy in Vietnam, he did not come around to this view out of loyalty to doctrine but from a desire to see the war resolved as quickly as

\textsuperscript{232} The Republican leaders Nelson Rockefeller and George Romney never garnered much enthusiasm among conservatives. Richard Nixon, the one arguable exception, will be a focus of future chapters.  
\textsuperscript{233} Barry Goldwater, notes for diary, 1 March 1954, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 2: Journals (Feelings and Reactions as a Senator)
possible. Goldwater released a foreign policy text in 1962, *Why Not Victory?*, based largely on a speech that Bozell helped write for him. The book did not contain a specific chapter on Vietnam (even if it did for such issues as Cuba, disarmament, and the World Court), but Goldwater did touch on the theater when he described a “new kind of war.”

> Our objective must be the destruction of the enemy as an ideological force possessing the means of power. Our purpose must be the world-wide defense of human society against a nihilistic force. Where the Communists seek to destroy the live tissues of social order, we must seek to destroy the decomposing virus…. [O]ur program must be directed toward the removal of Communists from power, whether they hold it ninety miles off our southern coast or in distant Laos and Vietnam…. We must mount an intellectual counterattack against the enemy’s ideology….  

Neither Meyer nor Bozell could have phrased the Conservative foreign policy any better (in part because of Bozell’s own contribution). Goldwater at once rejected any notion of victory short of unconditional communist surrender, exhibiting a rejection of pluralism and embrace of the spiritual dimension of the Cold War. In 1964’s *Where I Stand*, Goldwater reiterated these points under the guiding rubric of “freedom though strength,” one of his campaign slogans.  

> In many of his campaign speeches, though, Goldwater struck a markedly different chord. He prepared many speech drafts with his primary speechwriter, the libertarian conservative Karl Hess, who clearly had some intellectual influence over the Senator. In a 1963 speech in Newark, for example, Goldwater argued that conservatives “hold that the walls of a divided [sic] world can be brought down by the determination of free men every where—not by war, but by will and dedication, by the long struggle that will not

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pause to rest or to compromise until the last shackle has been struck off.”236 This rhetoric is neither that of Why Not Victory? nor that of the conservatives of the National Review. Goldwater sounded, in fact, much more like Peter Viereck, with his effort to consider war as a last resort. A year later in San Francisco, the presumptive Republican nominee spelled out a curiously non-Conservative vision of how to deal with the communist threat:

Since we hold that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, a world in which we can live safely by our principles must include both opportunity for all nations to live in the way prescribed by their people’s convictions and the assurance that our system will enjoy a decent respect from other governments. In present day terms, the major objective of the U.S. Foreign Policy should be the reduction of Communist power to a level from which it cannot threaten the security of our nation or the peace of the world.237

The Goldwater of this speech fully endorsed pluralism. He sought less the destruction of communism than its “reduction” to an unthreatening level—a notion that Meyer, Bozell, or Burnham could not even imagine, let alone espouse. They would argue sternly that the existence of communism anywhere, even in weakened form, was a dire threat to American security. This Goldwater, in contrast, both possessed a pluralistic stance toward communism and premised it on classical liberal ideals of America’s founding, as he was prone to do in his private journals. Furthermore, only several days prior to the

election, the nominee said that, “Of course, we must negotiate with Communist leaders—but we must do it with strength, not with fear—and on our terms for a change.”

Several theories could explain these discrepancies between Goldwater’s speeches and writings. Goldwater, for one, was not an intellectual. Although he was highly educated and gave his positions much deep consideration, he was not driven to organize his worldview or knowledge in any systematic way, which may account for his inconsistency. In addition, as Goldwater was a politician seeking votes, he may have tailored his speeches and writings to his audiences’ proclivities. A more liberal interpretation of foreign policy, for example, would likely have gone over in his aforementioned San Francisco venue than in, say, Savannah. Another important point to remember is that ghostwriters, such as Karl Hess, Brent Bozell, or other conservatives, wrote most of Goldwater’s public statements. As Hess and Bozell represented very different strains of conservative thought, Goldwater’s ultimate image may appear fuzzy and contradictory. It is just as likely, however, that Goldwater had sincere reservations about the foreign policy strictures of the Conservative orthodoxy, given its intellectual foundation in the Grand Tradition as opposed to Goldwater’s sympathy for modern, pragmatic attitudes.

After the movement’s political apparatus suffered collapse in the wake of Goldwater’s devastating loss, conservatives did not need to cast about long for a new standard bearer. They quickly found one in Ronald Reagan. The former New Dealer, actor, and GE spokesman had been a rising star in the movement since his “Time for Choosing” address in support of Goldwater only days before the 1964 election. Like

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238 Barry Goldwater, thoughts on foreign aid from a Los Angeles speech, 30 October 1964, Goldwater Papers, 1964 Campaign, Box 134, Folder 20: Foreign Policy Speeches.
Goldwater, Reagan possessed a mixed intellectual background that incorporated elements of libertarianism, anti-communism, and Fusionism. In his 1965 autobiography, co-written with Richard G. Hubler, Reagan demonstrated this motley heritage, citing Thomas Paine, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jesus, and Clark Gable within the span of a few paragraphs. The underlying theme appeared to be a profound commitment to individualism. “The classical liberal,” he wrote, “used to be the man who believed the individual was, and should be forever, the master of his destiny. That is now the conservative position.”²³⁹ He regularly sought to extricate himself from the political spectrum, often deploying the famous slogan from his “Time for Choosing” address: “There is no such thing as a left or right. There is only an up or down.”²⁴⁰ In his materials for the 1966 California gubernatorial campaign, in fact, he filed away a notecard that depicted the “horseshoe” diagram of the political spectrum, in which the “extreme left” and the “extreme right” meet at the bottom of the graph, whereas the “moderate” is at home at the top.²⁴¹ By “extreme,” of course, Reagan effectively meant “collectivist,” denoting his understanding of the dangers of both right- and left-wing collectivism.

In light of this conceptualization, Reagan could have taken a more Anglo-American or libertarian conservative path, in the vein of Peter Viereck or Murray Rothbard. From the beginning of his political career, though, the Californian saw the Conservative orthodoxy gathering steam and, like Goldwater before him, accordingly

jumped aboard. As a candidate for office, and, by 1968, a prospective Presidential
nominee, Reagan carefully tailored his positions on the Vietnam War so as to reach the
broadest possible audience. In 1965, after he suggested publicly that it may be beneficial
for Congress to declare war officially in Vietnam, he had to fend off relatively strong
media criticism that he was a warmonger. Writing to a (prospective) constituent, he
argued that he did not advocate a declaration, but merely that Congressional approval
would clear up Constitutional questions regarding its proper execution. In this sense,
Reagan aligned with the Constitutional scholar, Clarence Manion. One scenario under
which Reagan would oppose a formal declaration, though, was if the United States would
become “aware of commitments by other nations to North VietNam which could be
ignored under the present circumstances, but which would call for their action under a
formal declaration of war.” In other words, Reagan was deeply concerned about a
prospective Chinese or Soviet invasion in response to American escalation in Vietnam, or
at least more so than the Conservatives with whom he shared talking points.242 He
reiterated this position in another letter to a Californian citizen, in that instance
specifically mentioning how “protective treaties with Russia and Red China” may make a
declared war on North Vietnam a bad idea.243

Upon his election as governor of California, Reagan delivered weekly press
conferences in which journalists often pressed him on his foreign policy views—in
anticipation, clearly, of his presidential prospects in 1968. But here, too, as in his letters

242 Reagan, letter to Royce Brier (constituent), 26 October 1965, Reagan Papers, 1966 Campaign, Series IV
– Campaign Subject Files, Box C34 – 1966 Campaign Subject files (Foreign Policy and Southeast Asia).
243 Idem., letter to Arleen A. Green (constituent), 17 November 1965, Reagan Papers, 1966 Campaign,
Series IV – Campaign Subject Files, Box C34 – 1966 Campaign Subject Files (Foreign Policy and
Southeast Asia).
to individual citizens, Reagan walked a fine line around the contours of the Conservative total war strategy. Again like Goldwater, Reagan stated that he felt a total war strategy was the most effective approach in Vietnam, but not because of any ideological rejection he had to pluralism or the inherent inability to tolerate communism in any form. “I think you win as swiftly as possible,” he told the press in May 1967, for “attrition over the long period of time will cost more lives than a sudden strike for victory.” Efficiency in warfare was foremost the economy of resources, the most valuable of which were American troops.²⁴⁴ A week later, he argued that the Johnson Administration was not deploying enough resources, but again, he considered a temporary surge of total mobilization preferable to a long-term, gradualist policy that wasted men and materiel and allowed the North Vietnamese time to regroup.²⁴⁵ The California governor even admitted later that fall that escalation may have been an unwise policy in the first place.

[P]retty tragic thing, now we are going to sit down and fight about whether four or five years ago we should have accepted the invitation of the South Vietnamese Government to go in there. We killed a great many Americans since then. My contention is that once the decision is made, you are killing men, and there is a, you either should not have gone in or you should have gotten out, the moment you knew you were making a mistake, that we shouldn’t have gone on for this long a period killing men.²⁴⁶

His rationale stood upon the assumption that a short-term, total war of massive resource mobilization would have resulted in a swift and decisive end to the conflict. Had such a course of action led to unforeseen widening of the war, though, he suggested that retreat and peace may be the best response.

²⁴⁴ Press Conference of Governor Ronald Reagan, 2 May 1967, Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P1 – Press Conferences, 01/67-02/68.
²⁴⁵ Idem., 9 May 1967, Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P1 – Press Conferences, 01/67-02/68.
²⁴⁶ Idem., 12 September 1967; Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P1 – Press Conferences, 01/67-02/68.
Reagan and Goldwater before him undeniably and full-throatedly endorsed the policy of total war in Vietnam and a constant, resolute illustration of strength toward communists abroad. Yet their roles as politicians clearly shaped their interpretations of the reigning Conservative creed. They could not afford the abstractions that intellectuals like the *National Review* editors enjoyed, or policy debates that blended ruminations on Western philosophy with all-or-nothing rhetoric. The pressures of politics, for both incumbents and candidates, may have served as a moderating agent upon some conservatives that, in an indirect way, demonstrated the limited utility of Conservatism as an ideology.

**The First Excommunication**

The Conservative ideology that rose to prominence after 1962 facilitated cohesion within the movement. On the one hand, political candidates like Goldwater and Reagan found themselves publicly bending to its rhetoric and philosophy, even if they did not share privately its intellectual provenance. On the other hand, the ideology rationalized for the expulsion of those figures who remained wedded to their non-Conservative strains, particularly to a limited war strategy in Vietnam. By the late 1960s, right-wing stalwarts like Peter Viereck, Ayn Rand, Murray Rothbard, and Robert Welch found themselves either adrift without movement allies or even berated constantly and viciously by the *National Review* and other Conservative outlets. More than anything else, this excommunication campaign established the monist, ideological nature of Conservatism, whose reliance on a closed-society doctrine demanded individuals to be either for it or against it.
To weaken the classical conservatives, Fusionists and Traditionalists largely ignored figures like Peter Viereck, who more easily could illustrate his intellectual descent from Burke, Adams, and other conservative deans. As soon as Meyer and Bozell articulated their alliance at the *National Review*, Viereck reveled in popping the balloons that held the new ideology high within the movement. “The main defect of the new conservatism,” he argued in 1962, “is its rootless nostalgia for roots.” Far from being anti-utopian, Conservatives actually repudiated Voegelin to realize their “own utopian dream of an aristocratic agrarian restoration.” If they were true conservatives, Viereck argued, they would understand that the New Deal gradually became a *conservative* force, made fully American and organic through precedent and stability. “[C]hildren,” he admonished the Conservatives, “don’t oversimplify, don’t pigeonhole; allow for pluralistic overlappings that defy abstract blueprints and labels.” In their wholesale rejection of reason and pluralism, these “rootless doctrinaires” effectively “betrayed” the conscience of the movement “by messianic sloganeering, betrayed [it] into the far grimmer chains of totalitarianism.” Viereck concluded *Conservatism Revisited* in part with some characteristic cheek: “LIBERTARIANS OF THE WORLD, UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT ABSTRACTIONS. YOU HAVE A WORLD TO CHAIN.”

In his 1965 edition of *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, Viereck unleashed the mighty fury of his pen against these “hothouse Bourbons and czarist serf-floggers, with all their exotic romanticism.” He particularly reserved disdain for Conservatives’ treatment of the hapless Barry Goldwater. “There was always something synthetic and

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247 Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 134, 142, 147, 155.
unconvincing,” he wrote, “about the later attempt by ghostwriters to hang conservative and traditionalist spiritual values over Goldwater’s basic Manchester-liberal materialism.” Although by no means a “fascist,” the misguided Goldwater committed the grave error of tolerating “right-wing thought-controllers” in a vain attempt to rule them. What resulted was a movement that moved only from organic unity in domestic and foreign policies to a new “McCarthyism” and “crusade” for global dominance driven by “chauvinistic emotional appeal.” Viereck reiterated that he had no animus against an uncompromising foreign policy that projected strength—such a stance “would have prevented the betrayal of free Poland at Yalta.” He simply rejected the ideological attachment to means rather than the rational and organic pursuit of tradition-inspired ends.248 For his pluralism, his refusal to endorse a total war strategy—in the realm of ideas or in Vietnam—Viereck effectively exiled himself from the conservative movement he helped create.

Compared to how Conservatives treated Ayn Rand, Viereck’s choice to leave the movement consciously was probably the most prudent one. Unlike Viereck, Rand’s sin against movement was not a pluralist rejection of the Conservative orthodoxy but the creation of a competing, monistic ideology. In total war for ideas, there can only be one victorious monism; Conservatism simply proved more attractive to conservatives than Objectivism. The National Review spearheaded the campaign to excommunicate Rand well before 1962 with the 1957 publication of Whittaker Chambers’ scathing review of her novel, Atlas Shrugged, as a guide to a new totalitarianism. “From almost any page of Atlas Shrugged,” he needled, “a voice can be heard, from painful necessity, commanding:

‘To a gas chamber — go!’” Although E. Merrill Root, a Traditionalist and frequent contributor to *American Opinion*, wrote a Randist apologetic in January 1960 that excused her atheism, the young Fusionist Gary Wills responded a month later with a trenchant rebuttal of both figures: “The narrow fixations of Miss Rand, the logorrhea of Mr. Root, should meet with more strenuous opposition from conservatives than from any other group of thinkers.” To end any notion of Rand’s association with the movement or its intellectual traditions, Wills categorically stated, “Ayn Rand is not Christian; not Aristotelian; and not conservative.” The Traditionalist intellectual Russell Kirk was entirely dismissive by 1962 in his unwittingly ironic diatribe against ideology:

[Objectivists] are often excluded from conservative societies, and even if they are countenanced, rarely are there more than one or two such birds in a conservative club. Some exhibit the common symptoms of neurosis. Yet others are sound of personality: their trouble is that they simply don’t realize how thoroughly opposed Ayn Rand is to the great traditions of our civilization. Reacting against a sentimental collectivism, they fall into the opposite pit of egoistic anarchism.

Aside from his biting rhetoric, it is important to note exactly how Kirk categorized Rand and the Objectivists. Like Reagan, he hit upon the more complex political spectrum that began to reshape the movement in the 1960s—here, with communism as “sentimental collectivism” and “egotistic anarchism” as extreme individualism. Given these polarities, it would be fascinating to know where Kirk situated Conservatism on the line from individualism to collectivism. The fact that Rand suffered such scathing criticism in comparison to other excommunicants almost certainly possessed a gendered dimension, given that Rand was among the most influential and high-profile (if still anti-feminist)

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women in the movement. It would be difficult to imagine Viereck, Rothbard, or Welch, for instance, ever suffering the insult of being a “mink-clad beatnik.”

Rand realized that not all conservatives were out to get her, only the ideological ones. That said, from her monistic perspective, she fired back at all non-Objectivists—liberals and conservatives alike—by painting them as fascists. In 1965, for example, she argued that those Americans who disavowed any ideological proclivities, such as the Conservatives, effectively sought a “Government by Consensus” that would invariably preference white Judeo-Christians and destroy the (property) rights of racial and religious minorities. Such “democratic” attitudes surreptitiously upheld a “fascist ideology” that “regards force as the basic and ultimate arbiter in all human relationships.”

Although she considered liberals to be the “more aggressive type of appeasers” of the people’s irrational whims,

the more timorous type of appeasers, the “conservatives,” take a different line: they share the notion of an intellectual “elite” and, therefore, they discard intellectuality as numerically unimportant, and the concentrate on cajoling the brute (“the masses”) with baby-talk—with vapid slogans, flattering bromides, folksy speeches in two-syllable words, on the explicit premise that reason does not work, that the brute must be won through appeals to his emotions and must, somehow, be fooled or cheated into taking the right road.

To Rand, then, Conservatives were just as willing to abuse the apparatus of mass politics to guide Americans down the ideological path they preferred, one that led to the arbitrary use of force against individuals at home and abroad. She thus welcomed her

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excommunication from the movement as evidence of the authenticity of her own monistic vision.

The *National Review* likewise grew increasingly intolerant of the rest of the libertarian conservative caucus. In one of the founding manifestos of his Fusionism, Frank Meyer sought to differentiate his strain of conservatism from that of Murray Rothbard and the libertarians. These “pacifists,” he argued, “project themselves as true representatives of the Right, attacking the militantly anti-communist position of the leadership of American conservatism as moving toward the destruction of individual liberty because it is prepared to use the power of the American state in one of its legitimate functions, to defend freedom against Communist totalitarianism.” The “pure libertarian,” he claimed, cannot help but engage in “wishful utopian thinking”; in other words, he commits the fallacy about which Voegelin warned, namely, the totalitarian implications of utopian modernity. In what was likely a swipe at Rothbard for his efforts to meld left and right, the editors ran a short piece that described libertarians as “modern (i.e., socialist) Liberals” who were “creeping in the back door” of the movement. James Burnham later took the libertarian on directly: “Murray Rothbard has shown how right-wing libertarianism can lead to almost as anti-U.S. a position as left-wing libertarianism does.”

Needless to say, Rothbard was dismissive of such charges. He turned the *National Review*’s analysis of the libertarian cause around on its head to view a more complex political spectrum, in the vein of Reagan and Kirk, than simply left versus right.

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He identified two strands within collectivism, left and right, that emerged over the 19th century. “Right socialism,” as he called it, closely affiliated with and ultimately bonded with 19th century “Conservatism,” which he defined as an ideology that sought to “restore the hierarchy, statism, theocracy, serfdom, and class exploitation of the Old Order [the ancien régime].” “Left socialism,” he argued, eventually passed through Marxist thought to become communism. The right-socialist Conservatism emerged in the 20th century as fascism and “cemented into power the old ruling classes,” whereas left-socialist communism “ruthlessly displaced and overthrew the old ruling elites.” Rothbard reserved the pole of individualism (and specifically a right-leaning one) opposite the collectivisms of left and right for himself and his libertarian colleagues. In this typology, he identified the new Conservatism of the National Review as a watered-down form of right socialism. “The recent Conservative Revival,” he claimed, “embodied the death throes of an ineluctably moribund, Fundamentalist, rural, small-town, white Anglo-Saxon America.” No longer did the movement accept or attract the “ardent ‘extreme right-wing Republican,’ in the days of course when this term [did not mean] a racist or enthusiast for the obliteration of any peasant whose ideology might differ from ours.”

Though not quite fascist, the new Conservatism possessed an intellectual collectivism that betrayed what Rothbard and the libertarians considered the first and most important liberty of all: free thought.

Viereck, Rand, and Rothbard, among their associates and others, departed or were expelled from the conservative movement for their refusal to accept Conservatism’s total war against intellectual dissent and communism in Vietnam. But Robert Welch entirely

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supported such total wars. His populist strain was even less tolerant than Conservatism of pluralism and considered any war strategy short of total war downright treasonous. His expulsion from the movement demonstrated the extent to which Conservatism, contrary to Rothbard, was not a wholly collectivist ideology. Rather, the rejection of Welch’s hyper-collectivism revealed Conservatism to be a tenuous hybrid of right-individualism (mostly from Fusionism) and right-collectivism (mostly from Traditionalism). William F. Buckley took decisive leadership of the National Review’s campaign to sideline Welch from 1961 onward, condemning the Bircher’s assertion that President Eisenhower was a thorough-going communist.\(^\text{260}\) To protect Goldwater from collectivist contamination, Buckley argued two years later that Welch had to be considered apart from the individual members of the John Birch Society. Whereas Birchers on the whole were respectable, mainstream-conservative, Goldwater supporters, their leader’s “spectacular theses” regarding Eisenhower and the Cold War should not in any way reflect upon either the Senator or Society members.\(^\text{261}\)

By 1965, Buckley’s efforts became even more systematic. In October, Buckley, Meyer, and Burnham collaborated on a twelve-page “Special Feature Section,” entitled “The John Birch Society and the Conservative Movement,” designed to excommunicate Welch once and for all. In his contribution, Frank Meyer actually defended liberalism as a means to situate the anti-liberal Welch far outside the boundaries of the movement. To him, Welch was simply too intellectually monist: “Everything is seen, not as it is, but as the operation of a vast conspiracy of evil.”\(^\text{262}\) Once Buckley observed that Welch was


only an eccentric populist, he eventually shed his outward respect for Society members and called them “forces of official intolerance.” The Conservatism that emerged in 1962 from an alliance between Fusionists and Traditionalists thus defined more clearly its hybrid of individualism and collectivism in its repudiation of both Welch and populism.

For their part, Goldwater and Reagan distanced themselves from the John Birch Society almost immediately after the press questioned any links among them. Goldwater, as stated in the previous chapter, publicly and privately repudiated the Society in 1961. The senator could not abide Welch’s castigation of one of his role models, Eisenhower, as a communist, let alone the Society’s “stupid” effort to impeach Chief Justice Earl Warren. Reagan had a tougher time in his effort to separate his gubernatorial campaign from the massive California arm of the Birchers. In September 1965, newspaper editorials across the state picked up the story that John Rousselot, a public relations official for the Birchers (and later Congressman and adviser to President Reagan), offered to either endorse or denounce Reagan’s bid, whichever course would improve his electoral chances. The California Democratic State Central Committee even released a tract later that same month blasting Reagan as an “extremist collaborator,” a hapless actor who served as the unwitting shill of right-wing conspiracists. Reagan soon held a press conference to deny any link between his

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265 “The End and the Means,” *San Luis Obispo County Telegram-Tribune*, 1 September 1965; Reagan Papers, 1966 Campaign, Series IV – Campaign Subject Files, Box C31 – John Birch Society.
campaign and Robert Welch, although he carefully trimmed his words so as not to offend individual members of the Society.\textsuperscript{267}

Welch’s friends came to his defense on the pages of *American Opinion*; Clarence Manion traded correspondence for years with prominent conservatives in an effort to preserve the head Bircher’s reputation.\textsuperscript{268} That said, within the inner circle of Bircher leadership, a coup against Welch was in the making right as the *National Review* published its long exposé of the Society in 1965. Rear Admiral Chester Ward, who co-wrote *The Betrayers* with Phyllis Schlafly to accuse Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara of treason, wrote in a letter to Fred C. Koch, a Bircher philanthropist and chairman of Koch Industries, of his doubts regarding the narrow vision of Welch’s leadership. “History will record,” he complained to Koch, “that the most decisive accomplishment of Communist subversion in this country was to convince Robert Welsh [sic] that Communist subversion was the primary threat, and that the military threat could be ignored.”\textsuperscript{269} After receiving several of these complaints from other leading Birchers, Koch wrote to Welch directly to suggest that he retire: “I think you should look into your own heart and see if you shouldn’t move over and get someone else to run the Society, with you setting the policies, lecturing, and writing, but having no direct hand in the administration of the Society. If you don’t do this, I am afraid that what you have built up is going to be destroyed and is going to dissolve away.”\textsuperscript{270}

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\textsuperscript{268} Frank Cullen Brophy, letter to Robert Welch, 4 September 1964; Manion Papers, Box 63, Folder 63-3: Brophy, Frank C., 1964-1967; Clarence Manion, letter to William F. Buckley, Jr., 20 December 1966; Manion Papers, Box 54, Folder 54-5: Correspondence with William F. Buckley. \\
\textsuperscript{269} Chester Ward, letter to Fred Koch, 1 December 1965; Manion Papers, Box 74, Folder 74-4. \\
\textsuperscript{270} Fred C. Koch, letter to Robert Welch, 19 August 1966, Manion Papers, Box 74, Folder 74-4.
\end{flushright}
Even less prominent Birchers questioned Welch’s fitness to lead the Society. In late 1966, Welch fired Peggy J. Smith, a secretary at the Society headquarters in Belmont, Massachusetts, for allegedly calling him a “dictator” and a fellow staff member a “drunk.” That December, she wrote to Clarence Manion to plead her case, denying any wrongdoing, even if she ultimately agreed with the insult. “RW,” she said, “cannot and will not take criticism from ANYONE.” She deeply regretted the falling out, as she had uprooted her life and moved to Massachusetts simply to work for the Society. “My heart aches for Belmont and the invisible iron curtain they have erected to keep God out. However, it must always be remembered that any organization is only as good and successful as its top man and, that, when only lip service is given our Creator an avalanche of hopelessness and chaos is inevitable.”

Welch contributed fewer and fewer columns to *American Opinion* after 1966, acceding in part to Koch’s and others’ demands for a change of Society leadership. He continued to lead the Society and published tracts on various issues, including two in which he accused President Johnson of collaborating with communists to drag out the limited war in Vietnam. Nevertheless, few people recognized him as a guiding figure of the mainstream conservative movement. To the strict Conservative monists, Welch’s concentrated power and eccentric views posed a threat to the credibility of the national movement. Like other exiles, Welch both pulled himself out of the movement and also was pushed out by Conservatives for his views. The Conservative ideology of the

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271 Peggy J. Smith, letter to Clarence Manion, 26 December 1966, Manion Papers, Box 60, Folder 60-15.  
National Review subsequently consumed what oxygen the exiled populists, as well as the Objectivists, libertarians, and Anglo-American conservatives, left upon their departure.

The rise of a Conservative ideology in the mid-1960s cannot be understood outside the context of the Vietnam War. Movement figures who supported a total war strategy in Vietnam tended to hold monistic attitudes that facilitated the codification of a Conservative ideology, one that has remained potent in American politics to the present day. To these activists, communism was a rival ideology with claims to truth that fundamentally denied Conservatives’ own binary vision of the human condition. Fusionist and Traditionalist Conservative intellectuals felt that American credibility, at the very least, or perhaps even the survival of the American way of life itself, necessitated a swift and decisive course of action against such a dire threat. In their view, liberal modernists and New Deal advocates failed in their pursuit of gradual or pragmatic strategies in Vietnam because of their intellectual weakness, namely their lack of firm, principled grounding in this one true tradition of Western philosophy. The political necessity of one clear, crisp ideology to mobilize the American public rapidly behind their common cause urged the Fusionist and Traditionalist camps into a philosophical merger. Over time, this new formulation of Conservatism pushed competing right-wing philosophies out of the movement and, in the process, defined American politics for a generation.
“I have always felt that [Barry Goldwater] could be the essential link between various forms of native American dissent or, to use the scarier word, radicalism.”

In January 1965, after Americans resoundingly told Goldwater they would prefer moderation in the pursuit of liberty, a group of disheartened yet faithful Conservatives met in Washington to form the American Conservative Union (ACU). This new organization promised to solidify the Fusionist-Traditionalist alliance that Frank S. Meyer, L. Brent Bozell, William F. Buckley, Jr., and James Burnham forged at the National Review. Indeed, the ACU promptly elected National Review editor William A. Rusher and frequent contributor John Chamberlain to its Board of Directors and rather inconspicuously elevated to ex officio membership Buckley, Bozell, and Meyer. Although their candidate had lost the 1964 presidential election in a landslide, these new Conservatives remained steadfast in their commitment to battle the New Deal and its foreign policy prescriptions. According to one member present at the ACU’s creation, the purpose of the group was to wage battle against all of the elements of the federal government and “rub their noses in the Constitution of the United States,” a document as

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central to the natural law tradition as the Bible itself.274 Published on 23 January 1965, the ACU Statement of Principles rang with allusions to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, “unalienable rights,” and a “transcendent moral order,” while promising to defend “the principle of federalism,” “a free, competitive market,” and “American military superiority” against the existential danger of the “global Communist revolution.”275

To many observers, right-wing or otherwise, the new ideology of Conservatism that was born out of the debates on war strategy in the early 1960s—and now embodied in the ACU—appeared primed for dominance over the New Right Movement in the mid-1960s. Right-wing periodicals like National Review largely defended the ACU’s platform, less out of deference to its creators than as a result of genuine agreement with its planks. Yet the escalation of the Vietnam War under President Lyndon Johnson would shake American Conservatism once more, resulting in a second purge of its membership. Despite general consensus on the folly of foreign aid to and a limited war strategy in Vietnam, Conservatives had yet to reckon with what was arguably the most controversial aspect of the war to most Americans of a certain age—the draft. Fewer than five years after the ACU’s founding, its student counterpart, the Buckley-inspired Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), bitterly split in a very public schism at its 1969 Annual Convention. Although an August meeting ended with general comity among the YAF’s diverging caucuses, by December three state delegations had declared a rowdy

274 “American Conservative Union,” National Review 17:2 (12 January 1965): 13-14. In this chapter, as in the completed dissertation, the term “natural law tradition” will denote the intellectual foundations of Traditionalist Conservatism. Chapter One will detail the origin and propriety of these terms.
independence from the organization and formed the Student Libertarian Alliance in conjunction with other young libertarian groups.276

What led to this division of the Conservative alliance was not simply a generational gap between the Conservative elders at the ACU and their younger protégés at the YAF, nor was it even the draft per se. The vast majority of Conservatives remained solidly united in their support for the war in Vietnam and their opposition to conscription. Rather, they divided vociferously on how to respond to the Antidraft Movement and the Antiwar Movement as a whole. In essence, the Conservatives who now led the New Right Movement failed to cohere their right-wing kin into an effective countermovement, not “Pro-War” as much as “Anti-Antiwar,” that would win the war swiftly on its most pressing front—the one at home. The monistic nature of the new Conservatism made the dissent of many non-Conservative right-wingers seem heretical and traitorous, including that of moderate pragmatists and the libertarians who remained after the First Excommunication. As a result, American Conservatism further purified the New Right of its modernist elements, solidified its opposition to the modernist and Romantic leanings of the New Left, and forged a crusade under the banner of traditional Western ideas of natural law.277

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277 For the purposes of this chapter, “modernism” will denote Enlightenment Liberalism or secular thought. “Romanticism” will denote that body of Western thought—from revolutionary Marxism to the Countercultural ideas of free expression and free love—that partially mobilized the Antiwar and Antidraft Movements.
Conservatives and the Draft

Even as early as 1964, it would be difficult to find a Conservative—indeed, any New Rightist—who fully endorsed the Selective Service System. Calls for reform bridged the political spectrum from left to right but varied widely in motivation and degree. Those Conservatives who opposed the draft largely did so on libertarian grounds, such as their appeal to the personal ownership of an individual’s labor and body or the budgetary costs of the system vis-à-vis an all-volunteer military. As such, the draft reform debates invoked the libertarian face of the Conservative alliance much more so than its Traditionalist side. The most popular New Right journal, National Review, formed the lynchpin of right-wing opposition to the draft system as it was in the 1960s; the Young Americans for Freedom, in their respective periodical, The New Guard, largely echoed National Review’s sentiments on the issue. The New Right’s most visible politicians, from Goldwater to Nixon and Reagan, likewise generally cohered around draft reform or abolition. The only clear voice who supported the draft in principle as well as practice was James Burnham, who nevertheless joined his Conservative brethren in their opposition to antidraft protests. Clarence Manion, already an outlier for his more Traditionalist views, remained oddly silent on the issue of the draft, which itself was perhaps an expression of his tacit support for conscription.

In the span of a single editorial, National Review clearly made its views and motivations known to its New Right readership. “If the Vietnam war is the most important single issue in American politics,” its editors argued in May 1967, “surely the military draft is a close second. Everyone has an opinion on it…[from] Joan Baez, who wants to create a nation of conscientious objectors, to the libertarian conservatives
(include us in) who want to abolish the draft and substitute a voluntary professional military force.” Not only did the editorial board critique the draft in principle, it did so expressly as an agent of “libertarian” conservatism, at a time when the magazine had exiled self-styled libertarians like Murray Rothbard from the New Right. To clarify its position for (and perhaps mollify) their readers, the editors claimed that this ostensible agreement with the New Left on dumping conscription nevertheless was based upon a stark divergence of first principles. Whereas Conservatives sought an all-volunteer military “in order to enhance the area of liberty,” the New Left only opposed the draft “in order to cripple the warmaking power of the United States,” as volunteer soldiers, to the Left, would be indistinguishable from “mercenaries.”

National Review would continue to publish a variety of antidraft pieces throughout the late 1960s, with few more representative of the Conservative line than those from two of the ideology’s founders: Frank Meyer and William F. Buckley. The more libertarian of the duo, Meyer wrote as early as June 1966 of his opposition to the draft and restated his views more trenchantly—if a bit surprisingly—in July 1967. “Although in time of urgent national necessity the draft is politically legitimate and constitutional,” he argued, “there is no political or moral excuse for the draft under the circumstances that have prevailed over the past 22 years.” With this formulation, Meyer implicitly claimed that neither the Vietnam War nor the Cold War qualified as “times of urgent national necessity,” for at least the Vietnam operation “would be conducted with greater enthusiasm, greater efficiency, greater support, if the patent injustice of the draft...”  

were eliminated.\textsuperscript{279} Meyer’s nuanced view here should be underscored: although he took a principled stance against conscription in peacetime as morally indefensible and anathema to personal liberty, he reserved the right to make an equally principled endorsement of the draft during emergencies more extreme than Vietnam or the Cold War. What such a conflict would look like, Meyer never said; such were the Traditionalist checks on Meyer’s libertarianism.

For his part, William F. Buckley did not call for a repeal of conscription as frequently as Meyer. Although he discussed the War and the Antiwar Movement regularly on his television interview program, \textit{Firing Line}, after it began to air in 1966, he rarely discussed the draft and did so only tangentially. Nevertheless, Buckley committed himself to a volunteer force along the same qualified terms as did Meyer. “The desirability [of abolition] is more obvious than its feasibility,” Buckley wrote in \textit{National Review}. “Sometimes it becomes necessary to conscript the general citizenry not only to serve but also to fight,” although in an ideal world “no American would…be called to engage in combat activity if he elected not to do so.”\textsuperscript{280} It must be noted that neither Meyer nor Buckley opposed the draft out of concern over domestic politics. In other words, they did not wish to concede ground to the Antiwar Movement in order to win the home front. Rather, theirs was an opposition firmly grounded in moral principle, namely the preservation of individual liberty—to a point.

With few, if any, such reservations, the editors and contributors to \textit{The New Guard} articulated their strong views. These YAF members dedicated the bulk of their May 1967 issue to a scathing, if principled, rebuke of the draft system. That issue’s main

editorial, “Involuntary Servitude in America,” drew a patent allusion to the legacy of slavery to lambaste conscription as abhorrent to individual freedom. Indeed, the authors went so far as to argue that free citizens bore no “duties” toward their governments, including any form of national service like the Peace Corps or VISTA, as the term “duty” simply reeked of “authoritarianism.” Subsequent pages carried antidraft testimonials from influential politicians and opinion-makers, such as hallowed right-wingers Senator Robert A. Taft, Governor Ronald Reagan, and William F. Buckley; the editors also quoted a few prominent non-Conservatives, like Adlai Stevenson and John K. Galbraith, so as to project a non-partisan consensus for draft reform or abolition. Barry Goldwater, Russell Kirk, and Milton Friedman, however, contributed page-length columns that undoubtedly served as the main attractions of the antidraft issue.

Goldwater himself had long been on record as a staunch opponent of conscription. In his 1964 campaign, he requested that the GOP platform explicitly call for a voluntary military to replace the Selective Service System and often evoked the draft in an attempt to stir the youth vote to his side. Like many libertarians, Goldwater partly grounded his opposition in “man’s most fundamental right and responsibility...to live his own life.” Yet his military background also prompted his appeal for a more efficient, better-trained, professional armed force, one that only a voluntary system could provide.

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284 Barry Goldwater, “End the Draft!” The New Guard; and “What They Say...About the Draft,” The New Guard, 3-4.
proudly noted, both privately in his journals and publicly to *National Review*, that he was
the first public figure to denounce the Selective Service System, even though public
figures engaged in heated debates over its merits, and reformed it several times, since its
founding in 1917. Goldwater even suggested that his 1964 call for abolition in Prescott,
Arizona was the impetus for President Johnson’s later creation of a commission to study
the draft system.\(^{285}\) One of the major influences on Goldwater’s position was
undoubtedly Karl Hess, Goldwater’s primary speechwriter during his 1964 presidential
campaign. A self-described libertarian conservative, Hess frequently brought the draft to
Goldwater’s attention and would co-write a book-length critique of conscription, *The End
of the Draft*, after he publicly ended his association with the Arizona senator.\(^{286}\)

Goldwater’s very public stance against the draft unmistakably made the right-wing political waters safe for other figures, including Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon,
to stake out similar positions. Despite *The New Guard’s* inclusion of Reagan as a
sponsor of draft abolition, the California governor’s record on the issue was much less
even than Goldwater’s or Nixon’s. As a candidate for the governorship, Reagan took few
hard stances on the question, asking only that the system be reexamined for efficiency.
Yet in a speech before the American Women in Radio and Television Convention on 3
May 1968, Reagan sounded his support for the draft as “a responsibility that goes with
our freedom” in all times of war, although in peacetime he (presumably as president)


\(^{286}\) Thomas Reeves and Karl Hess, *The End of the Draft* (New York: Random House, 1970). The end of this chapter will give due emphasis to Hess’s relationship with Goldwater, as their public breakup formed a key episode in the second purge of the Conservative Movement.
would “turn to a professional army and eliminate the draft.” The governor spoke in abstract, general terms—not specifically about the Vietnam War, but about wartime in general. If he genuinely held such a position, he was less a libertarian ideologically opposed to the draft in all cases and more of a pragmatist who endorsed conscription when necessary for national security. The even more elusive Nixon likewise avoided clear stances on the draft before he assumed the presidency, sounding much the same evasive tune during the 1968 campaign as did Reagan in his 1966 gubernatorial race. As President, however, Nixon went on record several times early in his first term as critical of the system as it then stood, including a major speech on 13 May 1969 advocating a transition from the draft toward a volunteer force. By 1973 he ordered Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to terminate the draft in favor of an all-volunteer force.

Few Conservatives, then, viewed the draft as a universal moral good, with perhaps the sole major exception of James Burnham. He held an influential position within the upper echelon of National Review and left his distinct imprimatur on Conservatism, even if he was loathe to acknowledge deference to any ideology after renouncing his communist past. His stature as a Conservative dean lost a great deal of luster when he and Frank Meyer had a bitter falling out over the Antidraft Movement on

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287 Ronald Reagan, excerpts from speech before the American Women in Radio and Television Convention, Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles, 3 May 1968, Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P17 – Speeches, Index, and 1/67-7/68.
288 As a later discussion will note, Reagan’s dedication to Traditionalism was suspect, even nonexistent. His stance on the draft, therefore, was likely not an ideologically driven one.
289 EX SP2-3-16, “The Military Draft,” 05/13/69, Box 25, Folder 17, the Nixon Papers, Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, California (hereafter Nixon Papers), White House Central Files, Subject Files – Speeches; EX SP 2-3-47, “Draft Reforms, All Volunteer Armed Force, Box 43, Folder 3, Nixon Papers, White House Central Files, Subject Files – Speeches; and EX SP 2-3-2, “Draft Reform,” 01/28/71, Box 47, Folder 4, Nixon Papers, White House Central Files, Subject Files – Speeches. Despite Nixon’s achievement of this Conservative (and non-Conservative) policy issue, it did little to endear him to the New Right Movement, as a later analysis will show.
the pages of National Review. Although the two thinkers shared a zeal for Conservatism that only their conversion from erstwhile communist loyalties could provide, Burnham lacked the libertarian inclinations that drove Meyer. Indeed, Burnham retained a more Manichean vision of the Cold War as an ideological struggle, one that led him to see any appeal to weaken the draft as, at best, an endorsement of a limited war strategy in Vietnam or, at worst, a traitorous effort to support communism indirectly. In hindsight, the two writers were mismatched from the start: soon after Meyer proclaimed the founding of the Fusionist-Traditionalist alliance, Burnham denounced Meyer’s isolationist sympathies and defense of a “Fortress America” as out of touch in the Cold War environment.290

This low-level intellectual feud burst into a heated war of words in the early summer of 1967, just as the Antidraft Movement reached a fever pitch across the nation. Burnham launched the opening salvo in “The Antidraft Movement,” published in the 13 June edition of National Review, when he not only attacked the label “libertarian-conservative” as “self-contradictory” but also equated the Antidraft Movement to the Antiwar Movement. He began the piece with a throwback to his days as a communist political tactician:

> When I was a Trotskyite…we made much of a distinction between ‘principled’ and ‘unprincipled’ united fronts…. [W]ithin any given political context, a Left-Center front against the Right, or a Right-Center front against the Left is principled; a Left-Right front against the center is unprincipled. It was the Trotskyite teaching that at least one party to an unprincipled front would be politically injured by it…. This analysis then seemed to me valid, and it still does.291

The problem with Conservatives joining an antidraft front with the Left, he thus argued, was that such a maneuver was an unprincipled one against the apparently prodraft, prowar center. “Varied as is its political plumage, the antidraft movement does not extend across the board…. To clasp hands, Left and Right have had to stretch their arms over and across the national Center.” And, further with his residual Trotskyite logic, Burnham concluded that it was the Left, not the Right, that would benefit parasitically from the coalition. Leftists, after all, had always opposed the war and were at least consistent theoretically. “How is it to be explained,” Burnham mused, “that some citizens of the Right have fallen into this trap” of inconsistency? “Some from naïveté; others, seduced by ideology—always an untrustworthy guide to practical conduct. They wonder (as an old music hall song put it), ‘How could anything so good (in this case, liberty) be so bad?’”

Aside from the fact that Burnham did not see the (Trotskyite) ideological basis to his own “practical” conclusions, his bold assertion that “libertarian conservatives” were either naïve or ideological stunned his Conservative colleagues, as it was nothing less than a direct attack on their alliance. Frank Meyer, Burnham’s intended target, could not contain his fury. In the 11 July issue of National Review, Meyer replied with a direct, ad hominem critique of Burnham and his views. “Mr. Burnham mocks at principle,” Meyer wrote,

putting the word in quotation marks and equating it with ideology; but if conservatives do not stand on principle, their entire reason for being vanishes…. Indeed, so weak is his argument that he has failed to maintain his usually acute perceptions and equates those of us who wish to eliminate the draft legislatively with Cassius Clay and the draft-card burners. But Mr. Burnham must recognize on a moment’s reflection that

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292 Ibid.
to work for the repeal of a law and to break it are two radically different acts…. All action is dangerous, but to refuse to support a vitally important principle because of the minor dangers which might arise would be timidity, not prudence.\textsuperscript{293}

The stance Meyer took on why Burnham was misguided illustrated how the grounds for their disagreement lay more in ideas than any personal animus the two may have shared. More than any other thinker, Meyer articulated the quandary that the draft created for Fusionist-Traditionalist Conservatives. On the one hand, the law appeared unjust, but the draft was a \textit{law} nevertheless. To those who abide by the natural law tradition, the primacy of the rule of law, even of an unjust one, must be respected. This commitment was the reason Meyer carefully selected the word “legislatively” to express how he sought to end the draft—through the law, not outside of it. Indeed, an antipathy for lawbreaking (and, hence, the primacy of the maxim, “law and order”) drove Conservative disdain for Leftists or libertarians in the Antidraft Movement, as will be discussed in greater detail below.

Meyer also infused his reasoning with a libertarian hue, one that all but repudiated the classical conservative tradition of Peter Viereck. In his insistence that political inaction amounted to “timidity, not prudence” in the face of the potential “minor dangers” that action may create, Meyer effectively channeled the revolutionary, materialist Thomas Paine, not the gradualist forbears of the New Right, like Edmund Burke. After all, the “minor dangers” to which Meyer referred were not minor at all to Burnham—they were the future prospects of the Vietnam War and of Conservatism itself. Their row, however, marked less Burnham’s excommunication from Conservatism than his waning influence on the philosophy, or perhaps even underscored his weaker

pull on its formation in the first place. At any rate, Burnham continued to write for *National Review* and bear the Conservative standard on the Vietnam War; his self-acknowledged consistency in supporting the draft and the War, after all, still meant he was useful on the home front.

One other key Conservative figure who may have supported the draft, if more tacitly than Burnham, was the Traditionalist radio talk host, Clarence Manion. Although he did not contribute as influentially to the formation of Conservatism as Meyer, Bozell, Buckley, and Burnham, his status as one of the most prominent New Right media figures put him in an even stronger position than any *National Review* editor to shape Americans’ opinions on the new political philosophy. Ever interested in the connections among foreign policy, natural law, and the Constitution, Manion dedicated nearly one of his *Manion Forum* episodes each month to Vietnam or Cold War issues. That said, he rarely mentioned the draft or focused on it as squarely as *National Review*. Rather, Manion typically sounded the Traditionalist horn, namely Meyer’s argument that all laws deserve respect on principle, or else natural law and Judeo-Christian values themselves become open for debate. Unlike Meyer, Manion may have felt the draft was *not* an unjust law, for to him it seemed consistent with a total war strategy in Vietnam. Manion also espoused a more inconsistent libertarianism than Meyer, a result of his inability to square natural law with his received knowledge of the Founding Fathers.\(^\text{294}\) Of course, Manion’s silence on the issue does not mean *ipso facto* that he opposed the draft. His

\(^{294}\) Like Meyer, Manion frequently dropped Thomas Paine’s name in his broadcasts, even though Manion himself was far from a revolutionary.
rather deafening silence was interesting, though, even as he railed on the Antidraft Movement with a Burnham-like fervor.²⁹⁵

The exceptions that the idiosyncratic Burnham and Manion provided to the Conservative consensus generally proved the rule that adherents to the new ideology endorsed draft reform or its outright abolition. Neither figure represented the alliance as faithfully as Meyer or Buckley, for both Burnham and Manion were more committed to their own New Right factions—anti-communism and Traditionalism, respectively—than to Fusionism-Traditionalism, at least for the purposes of defending the war in Vietnam. The most important point is perhaps that the libertarian elements enmeshed within Conservatism largely drove its followers’ attitudes on what even Meyer considered as the most pressing domestic issue related to the War.

 Conservatives and Antiwar Dissent

The Burnham-Meyer debate put Conservatives in the rhetorically and intellectually convoluted position of backing a total war strategy in Vietnam with clear limitations on the human resources needed to fight it. In order to maintain coherence within, and leadership of, the wider movement, Meyer, Buckley, and other Conservative voices began to shift their focus away from positive encouragement of the war effort and toward negative analysis of protests against both the war and the draft. This subtle change in emphasis was significant for three reasons. First, Conservatives effectively

²⁹⁵ Not once in the Manion Papers, from transcripts of his many public speeches to Manion Forum broadcasts, does Manion explicitly reference or take a position upon the draft. That said, he quite frequently discussed his and other New Rightists’ attitudes on antidraft and antiwar dissent, which will be examined in the next section of this chapter and further illuminate his incongruity with the foundations of the Fusionist-Traditionalist alliance.
came to conflate antiwar dissent with the wider culture of dissent that bloomed in the mid-1960s to early 1970s, viewing both phenomena as consequences of the erosion of a natural law-based morality in American life. Second, in their effort to unmask the ideological roots of antiwar dissent, Conservatives further revealed their own increasing reliance upon Traditionalism over libertarianism. One notable exception to this trend was Ronald Reagan, who, in his actions against student protesters as governor of California, revealed a more pragmatic Conservatism evocative of, if quite distinct from, Goldwater’s first principles. Finally, with great hope, Conservatives sought a wellspring of support for a grassroots “Anti-Antiwar” Movement. By the late 1960s, many activists began to pour their hopes for such a countermovement into a new standard-bearer—Reagan himself.

Although some writers took pains to differentiate among the mostly university-based protests in favor of draft reform or peace in Vietnam, not to mention civil rights or student power, most Conservatives opined that all of these pernicious issues sprang from rapid cultural and moral degradation as a result of New Deal Liberalism and its pluralist claims. Others claimed that they were merely deceptive variations of one organic communist front. When they began reporting on the protests of the 1964-1965 academic year, the editors of National Review initially claimed it would be “false and stupid…to think that bad manners, Communism and Sex,” as well as the Civil Rights Movement, “are playing no part at all” in the rise and fury of student protests. Civil rights, they clearly argued in March 1965, was partly responsible for the troubles, as the cross-pollination of civil disobedience from black activists in the South to white students at
universities nationwide appeared too obvious to ignore. But Conservatives increasingly saw the war as a key stimulus, especially when the protests became more visible to the national media that summer. A frequent contributor to *National Review*, *Human Events*, and other New Right journals, Will Herberg linked campus unrest to the liberal “Professoriat.” Faculty members who engaged in Antiwar teach-ins, he disdainfully suggested, thought they inhabited an “Estate of the Realm” and possessed special advisory power to the federal government on foreign policy. Professors, he concluded, should not be political or—in a word he used to draw a parallel with the Enlightenment (and French Revolution)—“philosophes.”

Frank Meyer, William Buckley, and James Burnham hardly felt pressure to lead Conservatives on this equation of the Antiwar, Civil Rights, and Student Power Movements, for their common intellectual assumptions all guided them to the same conclusions. They, too, blamed these phenomena on Enlightenment Liberalism or Romantic Marxism. Communist influences, Meyer avowed, infused the Antiwar and Black Power movements with a militancy designed to “damage…the social fabric” and “disrupt the civil order”; by “social fabric,” he undoubtedly meant traditional Western values. Using the example of a University of Wisconsin prowar activist who complained of student apathy, Buckley noted how liberals promoted a “see-no-evil, remember-no-evil attitude” that made nearly impossible any effort to guard the nation

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296 “Students, Teachers, Bureaucrats,” *National Review* 17:12 (23 March 1965): 228, 230. As stated in the Introduction, the role of the Civil Rights Movement in shaping the New Right Movement is well documented in the wider historical literature and is less of a concern here than that of the Vietnam War and Antiwar Movements.
against communist assaults via protest movements.\textsuperscript{299} Without the intellectual hurdle of opposing the draft while supporting the war, James Burnham drafted more critiques of the protest culture and its antiwar foundations than his \textit{National Review} colleagues. He was among the first, for example, to argue that the Vietnam War raged not only in Southeast Asia but also in America—the “weakest front”—where the administration and the New Right battled the New Left and activist students.\textsuperscript{300} His searing condemnation of the Antidraft Movement, after all, threw “libertarian conservatives” in the same motley camp as right-leaning libertarians, the Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy, the Congress on Racial Equality, Cassius Clay, and Martin Luther King, Jr.\textsuperscript{301} Burnham even explicitly pegged the New Left as “romantic” in its relativistic attitude toward truth and, therefore, if not genuinely communist, certainly conducive to the communist onslaught against Western civilization.\textsuperscript{302}

To a much greater extent, Clarence Manion and his guests on \textit{Manion Forum} elided, willingly or not, the differences among protest groups to censure all dissent against their vision of proper cultural mores. One common trope in his broadcasts was to depict protest methods like non-violent resistance as surreptitiously violent and, by extension, acts of civil war. “The trick in this idea of civil disobedience,” Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina voiced on Manion’s program, “is to cause the violence to appear” on the side of “the police and conservatives.” Martin Luther King, Jr., in particular, was guilty of this trickery in his demonstrations “against any attempt by our

Although the Berkeley Free Speech Movement at first included many Conservatives and moderates, YAF California Chairman John E. Cox testified to Manion, the former split from the Leftists after the latter refused to work through established legal channels—legislation and the court system—to protect First Amendment rights. Manion went on to allege conspiracy by insisting that this demand for extralegal action “was done to build up a vanguard of young people to lead future activities—such as the anti-Viet Nam war movement.” The potential aim of this conspiracy, Manion later suggested, was to ignite “the same kind of Communist guerilla war here at home that our soldiers are fighting in Viet Nam.” Manion premised this conclusion on the claims of Congressman John H. Buchanan of Alabama, who believed that the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the Progressive Labor Party, and other labor groups also worked in cahoots with Marxists, civil rights activists, and student protesters.

In this straightforward conflation of the Antiwar and Antidraft Movements with the rising tide of cultural dissent in general, Conservatives achieved more than their stated aim of exposing their dark undercurrents. Whereas they strongly emphasized their libertarian influences in their position on the draft, Conservatives rested more upon Traditionalism—specifically the preservation and integrity of natural law—when they denounced the Antiwar, and the Leftist or libertarian elements within the Antidraft,

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305 Clarence Manion and John H. Buchanan, “Guerilla War in America’s Streets,” Manion Forum Broadcast No. 626, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 2 October 1966, Manion Papers, Box 83, Folder 83-8.
Movements. In a reversal of common political wisdom, Richard S. Wheeler, known best for the Old West novels he would publish later in life, drafted for The New Guard a two-part attack on liberal protesters as resoundingly fascist. He claimed that “fascism falls on the left side of the domestic political spectrum” by dint of its “collectivist organization,” a point that even many New Rightists, from Murray Rothbard to Robert Welch, would likely contest. More significant than this contrarian claim, though, was his equation of fascism with Enlightenment thought, specifically the “Collective Will” theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (even if Wheeler never mentioned Rousseau by name). This simplification of the Left-Right spectrum as collectivism versus individualism effectively allowed Wheeler to triangulate what he considered a modernist-fascist front against a Conservatism that protected traditional Western values. 306 Another common method by which Conservatives indirectly asserted the primacy of Judeo-Christian natural law was to paint caricatures of those figures they had already booted from the New Right. The Indianapolis News editor M. Stanton Evans drafted a piece for National Review in which he castigated Objectivist agitators as consummate modernists, for, despite their libertarian-conservative leanings, they followed the atheist Ayn Rand, who sought to create her own alternative to Christianity. 307 The Conservative historian Russell Kirk frequently published articles that took a different tack, namely the articulation of a continuous intellectual genealogy of Conservatism that pegged liberal Enlightenment and Romantic Marxist thought as aberrations from the Grand Tradition. In so doing, he

argued that universities, instruments for these bastard offshoots, cultivated an “anti-culture” mentality responsible for students’ antiwar and pro-civil rights attitudes.\textsuperscript{308}

Given his long commitment to Traditionalist Conservatism, Clarence Manion arguably articulated the best defense of its strictures in the face of the modernist- and Romantic-inspired dissent culture. Americans, he argued, suffered less from economic poverty than a “poverty of principle.” The protest movements fed upon liberal advocacy for pluralism and “co-existence” with communism, to the detriment of “Objective Truth” and “every word out of the mouth of the Lord.”\textsuperscript{309} Indeed, atheism was a common link among dissenters, as he repeated to many audiences on speaking tours across the nation.\textsuperscript{310} Like his Conservative brethren, Manion also came to see the university as a “sanctuary of subversion” of “American patriotism” and “religious morality,” not just on the part of student protesters but also their Liberal or Romantic professors.\textsuperscript{311} Everyone from Leftist protesters to North Vietnamese guerillas engaged in “cleverly maneuvered Communist judo-warfare” against the one, absolute, capital-t “Truth” of the Grand Tradition.\textsuperscript{312} In his most telling address, Manion condemned outright any dissent against what he considered three main sources of American values—“the Ten Commandments, the Constitution of the United States and the institution of private property.”

\textsuperscript{310} See, among many other speech transcripts, Clarence Manion, excerpts from address to the Wanderer Conference, 12 June 1965, Manion Papers, Box 110, Folder 110-5.
\textsuperscript{312} Idem., excerpts from speech before the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Washington, D.C., 18 April 1967, Manion Papers, Box 111, Folder 111-3.
of speech contrary to these pillars of Traditional Conservatism, he averred, was tantamount to toleration of “war against ourselves.”

It is important to note, however, a glaring exception to this general trend of Conservatives who viewed Traditionalism as the best means to counter the culture of dissent against the Vietnam War, the draft, and other issues. The man who would become the darling of the Conservative Movement, Ronald Reagan, ascended to that role in part from his rhetorical talents in fusing libertarian and anti-communist ideas—but largely shunning Traditionalist ones. Unlike the writings of most Traditionalists, his political speeches and writings exude a confident optimism in the direction of the war and the nation as a whole, a resolute faith in the inherent goodness of the human individual. The classic iteration of this sunny philosophy, a 1966 speech entitled “The Creative Society,” later became the inspiration for his folksy 1968 book of the same name.

Reagan had to contend with political pressures of governance, most notably campus unrest at California state universities, in a way that National Review contributors or Manion Forum guests generally did not. Yet Reagan grounded his pragmatism vis-à-vis other Conservatives in much deeper soil than the shifting layers of political expediency. Like Barry Goldwater before him, the Reagan of the late 1960s rarely clothed his public statements in Christian overtones, even if he did refer more frequently to God or a generalized deity than the Arizona senator. In one letter to a concerned voter, Reagan

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313 Idem., speech before the Freedom Club, Los Angeles, California, 13 May 1969, Manion Papers, Box 112, Folder 112-3.
even admitted that his conception of God did not conform to that of any organized religion:

I don’t exactly know how to answer as to who, or what, is my God. I believe in God, I believe in him as a living presence. I believe in him as the author of everything good that happens to us, the author of our freedom, and I believe that we were created in his image with a spark of the divine and the ability with his help to shape our destiny.\(^\text{315}\)

This language is not that of any Traditionalist Conservative. Clarence Manion premised nearly all of his speeches, broadcasts, and letters on the work and teachings of Jesus and resoundingly Catholic interpretations of Western values. L. Brent Bozell, the most Traditionalist of all National Review contributors, also rarely shied away from claiming who his God was; this tendency, in part, motivated him in 1966 to leave what he considered a secular National Review to edit his own Catholic periodical, Triumph.

Again, Reagan astutely dropped references to God and the moral necessity of spiritual faith in his addresses, as in his remarks to the California Association of Christian Schools in April 1969. Even in that speech, however, the God he sought to “reweave” back into government was not unequivocally that of Jesus, or any other Judeo-Christian figure.\(^\text{316}\)

As a result, Reagan’s attitudes toward dissent likely emerged from simple patriotic pride more than the natural law tradition. Both publicly and privately, he argued strongly for the lawful protection of non-violent dissent as a patriot’s obligation. He even rebuked a potential voter in December 1965 who pleaded for him to arrest antiwar

\(^{315}\) Idem., letter to Jacob Weber, 11 July 1966, Reagan Papers, 1966 Campaign, Series IV – Campaign Subject Files, Box C34 – Campaign Subject Files (Foreign Policy and Southeast Asia).

protesters if he became Governor. “Let me make my position crystal clear,” he wrote in a letter to a California housewife:

I personally support President Johnson’s position [on the Vietnam War]. This is my privilege. But I will not try to force everyone else to agree with me…. Therefore, I will not interfere with the students or faculty or any other private citizen who speaks out for or against our policy in Vietnam—or any other policy—as long as their actions are within the law. But I will not allow violations of law, either.317

“Patriots,” he later argued to a group of Congressional Medal of Honor recipients as Governor in autumn 1968, “know the difference between dissent and revolution, between liberty and license.” They would never dissent to the degree that “permissive” antiwar or antidraft protesters effectively promote “anarchy,” which to Reagan was as dangerous a condition as communism.318 This latter distinction was key, for Reagan did not necessarily equate antiwar protesters with communists, as did many Traditionalists. Rather, he simply saw them as dangerous as communists, in that their disdain for law and order bordered on anarchy. Reagan time and again invoked patriotism, not natural law, as the basis from which to castigate antiwar dissenters. He did so perhaps most clearly in his address to a joint meeting of California school boards and administrators in late 1968, when he enumerated the “four basic elements” of campus unrest: weak administrators, apathetic students and faculty, “coercive groups” like Students for a Democratic Society or the Black Student Union, and deceptive campus spokesmen and national media outlets who preyed on public ignorance. With the possible exception of the third element, this list reflects Reagan’s practical formulation of the protest culture

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317 Idem., letter to Mrs. R. F. Cook, 1 December 1965, Reagan Papers, 1966 Campaign, Series IV – Campaign Subject Files, Box C34 – Campaign Subject Files (Foreign Policy and Southeast Asia)
and how best to reshape it. Ineffective and incompetent individuals, not Soviet puppetmasters, were most responsible. As for SDS, BSU, “Progressive Labor, Castroites, Communists, Maoists, and some arrogant intellectuals”—that third element—they were “bent on anarchy” as a result of their “contempt of the average man.” In other words, simple respect for Americans and order could quell the Antiwar Movement to a large degree. Crusades against communism were not required.

Yet an army of supporters was exactly what most Conservatives believed would be necessary to rout antiwar dissenters. Because the Antiwar Movement thrived primarily on college campuses, the Young Americans for Freedom seemed an ideal seed organization for a wider political mobilization of New Right voters against the culture of dissent. In the first seven years of its existence, the YAF accumulated 30,000 members and founded 400 chapters nationwide. It even claimed a membership ten times that of the SDS, a gross overestimation considering that the SDS recorded 15,000 members as of June 1966. In light of the spike in antiwar protests that year, The New Guard trumpeted the YAF’s new eight-point program in September 1965 to organize new chapters and more members on university campuses. At the program’s heart stood a series of seminars and workshops, including a national summer camp, designed to train students in the arts of “conservatism, anti-communism, politics, and psychological warfare.” The following January, the YAF announced it would begin to organize

319 Idem., excerpts of speech before the Joint Conference of California School Boards Association and California Association of School Administrators, Anaheim, California, 8 December 1968, Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P18 – Speeches, 8/68-12/72.
internationally, as well, holding a revealingly titled “International Youth Crusade for Freedom in Vietnam,” with rallies held simultaneously in India, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Korea, Australia, Thailand, Vietnam, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Honduras, and Somalia.\(^\text{322}\)

Not coincidentally, with a sort of “fight fire with fire” mentality, Conservatives also met with great acclaim a variety of other student groups in support of the Vietnam War. Russell Kirk lauded the foundation and tactics of the Victory in Vietnam Association (VIVA) at the University of Southern California in 1966. Although VIVA organized parades and rallies like its antiwar competitors, it held “teach-outs” in protest whenever Leftist teach-ins were in session.\(^\text{323}\) The Student Committee for Victory in Vietnam, founded in September 1966 by a coalition of fifteen college chapters, similarly sought to organize youth in support of the war and the draft, including many ROTC students.\(^\text{324}\) Seeking the endorsement of a well-known, popular Conservative, the Committee even reached out successfully to an enthusiastic Clarence Manion.\(^\text{325}\) In its weekly news column, National Review would publish occasionally reports of prowar rallies held across the nation, including a parade in New York sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the YAF. Likely as a result of low turnout, though, National Review did not follow up on the event in subsequent issues.\(^\text{326}\)

Tepid interest in a youth-led Anti-Antiwar Movement forced many Conservatives to turn once more to national politics, much as they did in 1964, in hope of stemming

\(^{325}\) Michael W. Thompson, letter to Clarence Manion, 11 January 1967, Manion Papers, Box 76, Folder 11.
what appeared to be a rising tide of opposition against the war in Vietnam. Barry Goldwater still held the hearts of many activists; despite his return to the Senate in 1969, however, most Conservatives reluctantly viewed him as a political has-been (if still a symbol of tenacity and principle) and were embarrassed still by his poor showing against Johnson. Although Goldwater himself vocally and very early on backed Nixon for the 1968 Republican presidential nomination, most Conservatives looked beyond the former Vice President and his more centrist views to Reagan.

Arguably more than any other governor in the United States, Reagan confronted antiwar, antidraft, and student protests during his tenure as California governor from 1967 to 1975. Only a month after taking office, Reagan stirred controversy when he publicly condemned the ability of communists to speak openly on California state campuses. The wily governor, however, knew how to tow the Conservative line without actually suffering a political hit, for he never signed a bill that actually enforced it.327 Later that spring, he tacked to the political center when he strongly criticized George Wallace’s call for antiwar protesters to be charged with treason. This “extreme” view, in Reagan’s words, went against the very definition of American patriotism.328 For the rest of his governorship, Reagan oscillated from flirtation with the Conservative position to an almost unimpeachable defense of basic freedoms that served him, and his presidential prospects among Conservative fans, quite well. As early as his gubernatorial campaign, he advanced a Conservative position on academic freedom that sought to undercut what many activists considered the Antiwar Movement’s strength: university faculty. He

distilled his ideas into a speech on higher education at Kansas State University in the fall of 1967. “Those who teach,” he opined, “understandably enough, define [academic freedom] as the right to teach as they see fit without interference from administrators…. But those who pay for the education, students and taxpayers, also have a definition of academic freedom: their freedom to have some say in what they get for their money.”

Like their hybrid position on the draft, Conservatives presented a sundry blend of values with this position—in this case, democratic majoritarianism and anti-intellectualism. Meyer, Buckley, Bozell, Burnham, Kirk, and other Conservative deans were themselves elite intellectuals, despite a few claims they quietly made to the contrary. The idea that a university curriculum should sustain the oversight of taxpaying parents—with whatever whims those parents may have at any given moment—ran directly contrary to any permanent, universal claim to natural law. Indeed, that definition of academic freedom reflected the views of populists like George Wallace more than any conservative.

Nevertheless, Reagan continued to employ this vision of academic freedom as an appeal to that more democratic slice of New Right voters without backing it up with actual legislation.

Reagan eventually settled on “permissiveness” as a functional and palatable critique of the antiwar protests on state campuses. Upon the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, for example, the governor advanced a veiled assertion that liberals were responsible for fostering a “permissive” culture. Whenever liberals subsequently blamed

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society for creating criminals, rather than demanding personal responsibility, they in
effect excused crime and facilitated the decline of basic order.\footnote{Ronald Reagan, press conference of Governor Ronald Reagan, 11 June 1968, Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P2 – Press Conferences, 3/68-2/70.} This full-scale attack on liberal tolerance resonated strongly with California voters, who rewarded Reagan with ever-higher poll numbers despite his general inaction on campus unrest. The message also played well nationwide. At a campaign stop in Indianapolis, he bemoaned “the erosion of old and valued standards” in the wake of years of liberal rule, which imbued the nation with a toleration of “permissiveness from cradle to crime.”\footnote{Ronald Reagan, excerpts of speech at the Indiana State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis, Indiana, 13 June 1968, Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P17 – Speeches, Index, and 1/67-7/68.} To most Conservatives, Reagan sounded every note that Goldwater had in 1964 but possessed the political acumen to win, potentially, a national race. Looking for a vehicle for their Anti-Antiwar Movement, they instead found something even better—a new leader for the Conservative Movement.

\textbf{The Second Excommunication}

By choosing Reagan as their standard-bearer, Conservatives effectively found a personification for their imagined solidarity, much as they had with Barry Goldwater in 1964.\footnote{The concept of imagined solidarity is taken from Craig J. Calhoun, “Imagining Solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, Constitutional Patriotism, and the Public Culture,” \textit{Public Culture}, 14:1 (Winter 2002): 147-171.} That solidarity would endure another trial and purge, however, in the lead up to the 1968 Presidential election. With the expulsion in the early to mid-1960s of Anglo-American conservatives like Peter Viereck, intellectual libertarians a la Murray Rothbard, the Objectivist followers of Ayn Rand, and conspiracists in the mold of Robert Welch, the Conservatives managed both to construct a monistic political ideology and to capture...
the leadership of the New Right Movement. Conservatism, to most New Rightists, essentially had become a synonym for the “right-wing,” even if the former provided much stricter tenets and prescriptions for how to deal with the latter’s more generalized antipathy toward the New Deal Order.

Nevertheless, by the late 1960s, Conservatism still retained heterodox adherents as a result of its growing cachet as a popular political label. Some Conservatives detected not a solidarity among those who adopted the name, but opportunism among individuals who sought to use it for political gain. As a result, they launched a second round of excommunication, premised in large part on the Vietnam War and Antiwar Movement, to purify the ideology of these parasites. One target for the purge was the Republican Party, which only in the 1980s would become a comfortable vehicle for Conservatives. Richard Nixon in particular actively promoted an intellectual hodgepodge within the GOP as a result of his perceived center-right beliefs and desire to fulfill his own elusive ends. In a remarkable show of pragmatism over purity, Barry Goldwater led more reluctant activists to endorse Nixon over Reagan in 1968 out of fear of George Wallace (or, at least, the threat that his nomination could tip the balance toward Hubert Humphrey)—a compromise they would soon come to regret. Conservatives trended more toward their Traditionalist elements in the late 1960s with a final target for excommunication—what few libertarians remained in the Movement.

More than any other figure, Frank Meyer demanded that Republicans retain or pledge loyalty to the Conservative line, undoubtedly as a result of his unparalleled role in drawing it. After the 1964 Presidential election, Meyer began an effort to rehabilitate the ideology within the GOP as the best, even only, means to “restore” Western Civilization
in the “revolutionary age” of President Johnson and his vision of New Deal Liberalism.\(^3\) Meyer and his Republican-leaning colleagues faced the daunting task of supporting that Democratic President’s commitment to Vietnam. Nevertheless, as Meyer had done many times over the previous decade, he demanded greater obedience among Republicans to a total war, anti-dissent position on Vietnam and the Antiwar Movement. “It seems concerned only with trying to find ways of winning votes, irrespective of principle,” Meyer complained of the GOP in March 1966, as a way to kick it into shape before the midterm elections. “True, [Republicans] have expressed *pro forma* support for the war, but the effective image they have presented to the country is that of side-line spectators of the discomfiture of the party in power.” Republicans lost in 1964, he continued, not because they asserted a tough Conservative line on Vietnam, but because they did so without much enthusiasm; rather than renounce it, Republicans should commit fully to their true faith.\(^4\)

But after Republicans critical of Johnson’s Vietnam and Great Society policies won large Congressional gains in the 1966 midterms, they (and Conservatives) still remained well out of power in both houses—a fact not lost on Meyer. Clearly disillusioned, Meyer demanded that Conservative Republicans try a different approach: ally with “like-minded” Democrats and seize the patriotic right to *legislative* dissent. “The most valuable service the opposition can perform for the country is to oppose,” he wrote. Disagreement was a “long-standing tradition of the Anglo-American political


\(^4\)Frank S. Meyer, “Vietnam: The Republican Performance,” *National Review* 18:14 (5 April 1966): 316. This reaction appears to be a common one after lopsided elections in American history. Rather than moving to the center, ideologues left and right long have encouraged greater purity to their philosophy rather than greater compromise. This phenomenon clearly demonstrates an ideology’s power of intellectual collectivism.
system.”"335 He would take a similar position several months later, when he enumerated a host of reasons why Republicans must trade in their big intellectual tent in Congress—specifically to exclude Rockefeller Liberals, libertarians, and some wayward New Rightists—for a smaller, more purely Conservative one that included some Democrats:

There is nothing [in this article] on specific issues—no conservative ‘party line’ on urban questions or tax structure or the detailed strategies and tactics of the Vietnam war. Nor will any candidate politically likely under current circumstances present himself as the philosophical exponent of such a theoretical conservative position. But in the minds of conservatives that position can act as a criterion by which men and their stance on issues can be adjudged—not only positively as to whom a conservative might most desire as a candidate, but negatively also as to who must be opposed at all costs.336

With this strategy of purity, the ex-communist Meyer presented an unwittingly—if somewhat paradoxically—revolutionary conception of Conservatism’s role in the GOP, one not unlike the Leninist prescription of a vanguard party. To Meyer, the prolonged and tiresome Vietnam War, among other issues, symbolized the corruptive power of New Deal Liberalism and its pluralist endorsement of antiwar dissent. If Americans were to prosecute that war effectively, he believed, they must overthrow the establishment, “restore” a useable past (one that Meyer never fully articulated), limit dissent to its proper (legislative) arena, and demand the allegiance of followers to an undefined “theoretical…position.” In substance, of course, Conservatism was hardly Leninist, given its debts to the natural law tradition and libertarianism. Alleging any substantive kinship would be as questionable as equating Liberalism with fascism. Nevertheless, Conservatism drew upon Leninism in form by the late 1960s, in part because at least two of its founders—Meyer and Burnham—had been Leninist-inspired communists. In his

call for a second purge of the Conservative Movement, Meyer effectively called for a counterrevolution against the modern, Enlightenment Liberalism of the New Deal, on one front; and the Romantic Marxism of the New Left and international communism, on the other. The Republican Party, ostensibly opposed to the New Deal and communism since the Great Depression, simply provided the best means to achieve that revolutionary end.

Despite their lifelong opposition to communism, other Conservatives avidly promoted this vision of a purified Republican Party as the Conservative vanguard. The publisher of National Review, William A. Rusher, went on the public record several times throughout the late 1960s in support of a Conservative GOP. But whereas Meyer sought to motivate Conservatives to vote Republican in the 1966 midterms, Rusher ominously warned them to keep watch on Liberals who sought to seize the GOP through its outreach arms, specifically the Young Republicans National Federation and Women’s Federation. Although “the party was still essentially conservative,” even after Goldwater’s defeat, “Liberals are already on the march. Unless they are resisted, their victory is assured.”

Two years later, Rusher went on Manion Forum to laud how Conservatives had “sufficiently united and articulated” a clear “network,” although that network clearly was not the GOP. “Conservatism,” he argued to Manion, “is a point of view. Republican is the name of a party. There is nothing inconsistent with being a Conservative and a Republican, but there are Conservatives who are not Republican and there are certainly Republicans who are not Conservative.” Rusher responded positively when Manion asked whether the even purer Conservative Party of New York was a sufficient alternative to the Republicans and even claimed that, given the threat of communism,

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foreign problems motivated Conservatives more than domestic ones.\textsuperscript{338} Within the Party itself, U.S. Congressman John Ashbrook of Ohio, a well-known Conservative since the late 1950s and then-chairman of the ACU, announced the formation of a “Conservative Caucus” in the House GOP in June 1967. \textit{National Review} applauded the move, cautioning readers that although the caucus “will work in cooperation with…the House Republican leadership” and fend off Liberal influence from the centrist “Wednesday Club,” it would have “its own research, whip, and campaign operations” so as to operate “independently of” the GOP.\textsuperscript{339}

To many Conservatives, though, the greatest obstacle in the purification of the Republican Party was not its Liberal component but its most prominent national voice: Richard Nixon. Members of the New Right Movement had long expressed doubt about Nixon’s credentials, going all the way back to his tenure as Vice President; by a good margin, Reagan was their favored candidate for the 1968 Republican nomination. When, at the behest of Whittaker Chambers, William F. Buckley first met Nixon in late 1957, the two had a constructive if barbed conversation about the potential rightward direction of the GOP. “It was an hour that confirmed my impressions,” Buckley elusively wrote Nixon afterward. “I do not think your position [on politics in general]…is the last word on the subject; a little tension between the tablet-keepers and the governors is good for

\textsuperscript{338} Clarence Manion and William A. Rusher, “Conservatism and Practical Politics,” \textit{Manion Forum} Broadcast No. 726, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 1 September 1968, Manion Papers, Box 83, Folder 83-10. When Manion asked him whether foreign or domestic issues mattered more to Conservatives, he replied, “I think a good answer could be made either way…. But, my own feeling as of the moment is that the major problems in today’s world as they confront America, being the tremendous power that we are, are foreign problems.”

both of them. But I hope you know we mean well, and well by you.”

National Review tepidly approached Nixon when he began to rehabilitate his public image for a second presidential run. Although he seemed to be “moving right” because he supported “law and order,” in the final analysis he was not a genuine Conservative to be trusted lightly with the 1968 Republican nomination. Unfortunately for Nixon, Conservatives began to embrace Ronald Reagan right at the same time. The New Guard printed an assessment of the then-candidate for California Governor that compared his “style and charm”—favorably, as it turned out—to John F. Kennedy. The YAF, Frank Meyer, and Buckley all publicly flirted with Reagan as their dream candidate throughout 1967.

Some activists on the New Right even feared Nixon and, more specifically, his position on foreign policy, as a result of his former membership on the Council of Foreign Relations. Arnold Bayley, a self-described “sovereign citizen concerned about maintaining that sovereignty,” circulated nationally a pamphlet that called Nixon “a nice guy,” but also “a puppet of the Eastern kingmakers.” “Trickie Dickie’s [former] membership in the Council on Foreign Relations,” Bayley argued in 1968, “is inconsequential, inasmuch as he continues to support its policies leading to central power and world control of people through One World Government,” which in Bayley’s mind

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was ostensibly the ultimate goal of New York Governor and Liberal Republican, Nelson Rockefeller.\textsuperscript{344}

Another New Right populist and conspiracist, Kent Courtney, took aim at Nixon as early as 1960, when he worked diligently on the Draft Goldwater campaign in Chicago to prevent Nixon from winning the nomination. Founding the Conservative Society of America shortly afterward, he published pamphlets throughout the 1960s under its banner that sought to expose the “leftwing” Nixon as a “possible Presidential candidate of the Liberal-controlled Republican Party.” Not only had Nixon committed the unforgivable sins of defending the NAACP and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s civil rights efforts, but he also promoted “a socialist world government” and “long advocated Foreign Aid.”\textsuperscript{345} Courtney’s wife, Phoebe, likewise published anti-Nixon material in her conspiracist weekly, \textit{The Independent American}. Phoebe Courtney continued to link Nixon inextricably to the “Leftwing, Socialist, big Federal spending, extremist civil rights and anti-anti-Communist” Rockefeller, who sought to become the “unelected ruler” of the United States. The Courtneys, for their part, would go on to manage the George Wallace campaign in 1968, for, as Phoebe wrote, he campaigned on genuine Conservative issues like anti-communism, States Rights and victory in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{346}

Even though New Right conspiracy theorists clearly harbored a vehement revulsion for Nixon, the media nonetheless pressed him on whether he or the GOP would

\textsuperscript{344} “Nixon...A Puppet of the Eastern Kingmakers,” pamphlet, Winter 1968, Reagan Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers, Series 500; Box 42, Extremist Groups Left and Right.

\textsuperscript{345} Kent Courtney, “Nixon in ’68?”, pamphlet, Conservative Society of America, No. 5, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1965, Nixon Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers, Series 500; Box 42, Extremist Groups Left and Right.

\textsuperscript{346} Phoebe Courtney, “Nixon Must Be Exposed As the Puppet of Rockefeller and the Communist-Accomodating C.F.R.,” \textit{The Independent American}, 5 January 1968, Nixon Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers, Series 500; Box 42, Extremist Groups Left and Right.
condone their support in his 1968 Presidential bid. As if to confirm suspicions of his anti-Conservative attitudes, he staked a position against all ideologues, left and right: “[R]esponsible Republicanism abhors demagoguery and totalitarianism wherever and however it appears. Any organization, creed, or ‘ism’ which totally subordinates the individual citizen to the arbitrary dictatorship of any single person must be combated, whatever label it carries.”

Despite his claim to the anti-ideological ground, Nixon always held the ardent support and admiration of “Mr. Conservative,” Barry Goldwater, who vouched for Nixon’s sterling reputation at nearly every turn and trial, until Watergate. The senator’s loyalty to the Vice President began with their successful elections in 1952 and was grounded entirely on party, not New Right or Conservative, unity. After the 1958 midterm elections that propelled more Democrats to power in Congress, the Arizona senator candidly wrote to Nixon:

I believe you are the person who must select the spot on which the party is going to stand; put the flag there; and then rally the forces around it. I don’t know whether you will agree with me or not, but I feel that that spot must be to the right of center. I don’t feel that it necessarily should be to the extreme right, in fact I don’t think it should be there at all. But certainly we cannot be a party to the left of center because that spot is completely occupied by the radicals…. [K]nowing you to be basically conservative, I turn to you to ask that you reestablish the principles of this party…. If you will proclaim the party and its principles as being someplace to the right, a place of your selection, then I can assure you that…in 1960, not only you, but the party will be successful.

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348 Barry Goldwater, letter to Richard Nixon, 16 December 1958, Nixon Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers, Series 320 (Vice President—General Correspondence), Goldwater, Barry, Box 293, Folder 2 – Goldwater, Barry, 1953-1959.
Goldwater once again revealed that he was less “Mr. Conservative” than “Mr. Republican,” a loyal party member who sought to balance a nation that had tilted too far to one side (only incidentally, it seemed to Goldwater, leftward) under Democratic rule. Given his and Nixon’s own “basic conservatism,” Goldwater noted a kindred spirit that, if stoked and fueled with national support, could right the country once more.

Over the next decade and a half, the Arizona senator steadfastly defended Nixon time and again in print, on television, and in public and private statements—and always declared him a good Republican, though rarely a Conservative. On the 26 February 1967 broadcast of *Face the Nation*, Goldwater endorsed Nixon as a “stalwart Republican” who was “the best trained man for [the Presidency] that we have had at least in my lifetime,” particularly because he was “far more knowledgeable…in foreign affairs…than any other man being mentioned for the Presidency. Plus the fact that we are old friends.” Not once in the interview did Goldwater mention the words “Conservatism,” “right-wing,” or any variation thereof.

A year later in his private notes, Goldwater recorded:

> I have stated on numerous occasions since 1965 that in my opinion the Republican Party had, in Dick Nixon, a man who was singularly qualified to carry our banner in 1968…. I hereby reaffirm that support and will do all within my power to assist Dick Nixon in obtaining the nomination and winning the general election of 1968…. Nevertheless, I want to set the record straight as to my own personal feelings. Quite obviously, before any man can expect to be the Presidential nominee of the Republican Party, he will have had to spell out clearly and candidly his position on the serious issues facing this country today—particularly the war in Vietnam.

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349 “Face the Nation” transcript, 26 February 1967, Nixon Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers, Series 501; Box 2—Research Files: Special Files, Barry Goldwater, 1967-1968.

350 Barry Goldwater, private notes, 7 March 1968, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 12: Richard M. Nixon.
If Goldwater harbored any reservations about the prospect of a President Nixon, they had less to do with Nixon’s Conservative beliefs, or lack thereof, than his stance on the Vietnam War and other “serious issues” of the day.\footnote{Goldwater’s public and private support for Nixon is well documented. See, among other sources, Goldwater, private notes, 8 June 1966, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 12: Richard M. Nixon; idem., letter to Richard Nixon, 7 November 1967, Nixon Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers, Series 501; Box 2—Research Files: Special Files, Barry Goldwater, 1967-1968; idem., statement, Phoenix, AZ, 7 March 1968; Nixon Papers, Pre-Presidential Papers, Series 501, Box 2—Research Files: Special Files, Barry Goldwater, 1967-1968; Nixon, letter to Barry Goldwater, 26 July 1968, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 12: Richard M. Nixon; Goldwater, telegram to Richard Nixon, 2 August 1968, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 12: Richard M. Nixon; idem., notes for diary, 9 April 1969, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 7: Journals; idem., notes for diary, 17 May 1969, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 14: Richard M. Nixon; idem., notes for diary, 4 July 1969, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 14: Richard M. Nixon; and idem., notes for diary, 8 September 1969, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 14: Richard M. Nixon.} 

It must be noted, however, that if Nixon were to fall from political grace, Goldwater would have joined happily with his Conservative brethren in their endorsement of Ronald Reagan. He informed Reagan in August 1967 that he would continue to support Nixon for the nomination but admired Reagan’s Conservative credentials. Goldwater’s choice, like most of his political stances, was driven more by pragmatism than ideology. A Reagan candidacy reminded Goldwater too much of his failed bid in 1964. One of the major lessons he gleaned from that election was that Conservatism had not yet matured into a national political force, at least one that could adequately face down New Deal Liberalism and succeed. Given its big tent that embraced Liberals, moderates, and Conservatives, the Republican Party simply required more time to rally behind a Reagan than a Nixon.\footnote{Idem., letter to Ronald Reagan, 31 August 1967, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 18, Folder 5: Ronald Reagan.} Goldwater later warned the Reagan campaign several times that it should stay out of Nixon’s way in the primaries so as to
ensure the strongest possible Republican, not Conservative, nominee in November 1968.\footnote{353 Thomas C. Reed, letter to Barry Goldwater, 22 April 1968, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 18, Folder 5: Ronald Reagan; Goldwater, letter to Thomas C. Reed, 25 April 1968, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 18, Folder 5: Ronald Reagan; Reed, letter to Barry Goldwater, 10 June 1968, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 18, Folder 5: Ronald Reagan.}

Other than Goldwater’s resolute support for Nixon, fear of George Wallace and his possible effect on the election pushed most mainstream Conservatives to join the Nixon bandwagon; only Clarence Manion expressed some lingering doubts. As stated previously, Conservatives never granted Wallace, nor did Wallace himself demand, a place within the Conservative Movement. Although Wallace played upon many Conservative themes and won the support of more than a few New Right conspiracists, he nevertheless was a cross between a white, Southern New Dealer and a prowar, populist States’ Rights advocate. White supremacy and majoritarianism were dearer to him, Conservatives noted, than natural law or libertarianism. John Ashbrook, for one, was astounded that anyone would consider Wallace one of their kin; Goldwater and Buckley warned that votes for the “racist” Wallace essentially drained support from Nixon and helped Humphrey.\footnote{354 John Ashbrook, “And Anyway Is Wallace a Conservative?” \textit{National Review} 20:42 (22 October 1968): 1048-1049; Barry Goldwater, “Don’t Waste a Vote on Wallace,” \textit{National Review} 20:42 (22 October 1968): 1060-1061, 1079; William F. Buckley, Jr., “Nixon and Wallace,” \textit{National Review} 20:42 (22 October 1968): 1080; and “A Vote for Wallace Is…,” \textit{National Review}, 20:44 (5 November 1968): 1098.} Among the most prominent Conservatives, then, only Clarence Manion exhibited a flirtation with the Wallace candidacy, although he did so relatively subtly. Wallace, Manion argued, influenced both the Democratic and Republican Parties in positive ways with his candidacy, for he focused lightly on issues about which Conservatives most cared, namely the war in Vietnam.\footnote{355 Clarence Manion, “Is Wallace Winning?,” \textit{Manion Forum} Broadcast No. 730, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 29 September 1968, Manion Papers, Box 83, Folder 83-10.} Manion even
invited Wallace to appear on *Manion Forum*, where the Alabama governor mostly railed against the Warren Supreme Court.\(^{356}\) After Nixon’s election, however, Manion suspended any hint that he had ever been a Wallace supporter and opined that Conservatives single-handedly propelled Nixon to the White House.\(^{357}\)

With Wallace dismissed outright and the failure of their attempted excommunication of Richard Nixon, Conservatives instead sought to cleanse the New Right of the few libertarians who remained in their Movement. Of course, Conservatism stood upon the twin pillars of Traditionalism and Fusionism, the latter of which permanently inhered in Conservatism a libertarian edge. In addition, Conservatives declared ascendancy within the New Right in the mid-1960s after the expulsion of modernist libertarians like Murray Rothbard and Ayn Rand. That said, the Antiwar and Antidraft Movements, combined with the pressure of the 1968 election, challenged Conservatives to select which intellectual strain held primacy over their ideology.

Once again, Frank Meyer held the dominant role in defining that primacy, which he exhibited in a *National Review* article entitled “Libertarianism or Libertinism?”, published in September 1969. “[T]here have been ominous signs,” he warned, “that the dangers of a disbalance [sic] just as alien to conservatism is arising not from traditionalist quarters, but from an untrammeled libertarianism, which tends as directly to anarchy and nihilism as unchecked traditionalism tends to authoritarianism.” Meyer went on to castigate Murray Rothbard and Karl Hess specifically as “libertine ideologues” who, like


all modernists, “replace God’s creation of this multifarious, complex world in which we live, and substitute for it their own creation, simple, neat and inhuman.”\textsuperscript{358} As stated previously, Rothbard had announced his departure, concurrent with his Conservative-driven excommunication, from the New Right when he began publishing \textit{Left and Right} in the spring of 1965. Rothbard’s commitment to libertarianism over bipartisanship, however, led him to close down that journal for a second, \textit{The Libertarian Forum} (known as \textit{The Libertarian} until 15 June 1969), which he and Karl Hess began publishing in 1969 and which lasted until 1984.\textsuperscript{359}

Meyer’s inclusion of Hess as a “libertine” represented only one episode in his very public excommunication from Conservatism in 1969. The famed writer had served Goldwater loyally in his 1964 Presidential campaign, drafting his nomination acceptance address and other speeches. (That said, Goldwater credited the famed line, “[E]xtremism in the defense of liberty is no vice…moderation in the pursuit of liberty is no virtue,” to the Conservative and Professor of Government, Henry V. Jaffa). Hess also wrote a defense of the Goldwater campaign and libertarian conservatism in general in 1967, entitled \textit{In a Cause that Will Triumph}.\textsuperscript{360} Hess continued to advise Goldwater on policy, articles, and issues during the latter’s hiatus from the U.S. Senate from 1965 to 1969, pulling the former senator toward libertarianism and even respect for some members of the Antiwar Movement. It was to Hess that Goldwater first floated his conception of the Vietnam War as a double-pronged effort, with a military component that could easily be

\textsuperscript{360} Karl Hess, \textit{In a Cause that Will Triumph} (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1967).
won and a political side that required much greater care and planning. Goldwater also wrote Hess of his stunned reaction to a nationwide college speaking tour throughout 1967, when the Antidraft Movement reached a peak.

Completely contrary to what the press...would have the American adult believe; namely, that colleges are full of hippies and beatniks and dissenters, I have found...[that t]hey are not completely liberal nor completely conservative, but I will add that neither are they middle-of-the-road for they do carry definite ideas and they are not afraid to express these ideas to their elders. The dissenters, and I have run into a few of them, have been gentlemanly and lady like. They have expressed their dissent in well-thought out arguments; in other words, they have disagreed without being disagreeable.

Of course, Goldwater did not experience personally the more riotous events like those at Berkeley or Columbia. But his tour contradicted even the reports from Conservative media that the Antiwar Movement and American campuses were out of control, not to mention the Conservative tenet that antiwar dissent was traitorous or communist-inspired.

Even Goldwater, though, had limits as to how far he could tolerate Hess’s libertarianism. While teaching a seminar at the antiwar Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, Hess revealed his view that the North Vietnamese inevitably would win the war and renounced his identification as a Conservative. The Baltimore Sun even reported on 15 January 1969 that he had begun to call himself an anarchist with sympathies for the New Left. Hess mailed a clipping of the Sun article to the recently

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363 John Chamberlain, “No Real Turncoat,” Los Angeles Herald-Examiner (17 January 1969): A-14. Contrary to the claim made here, the Conservative Chamberlain denied that Hess’s revelation was a sign of his “defection” from the Conservative Movement. Rather, it merely symbolized the diversity of views that the Movement happily included, from libertarianism to “Tory.” Chamberlain clearly did not discuss this view with Frank Meyer, who insisted that Hess had left Conservatism for “libertinism.”
reelected Senator Goldwater, accompanied with a dramatic, contrite letter addressed warmly to “El Jefe.” “I would like to apologize,” Hess wrote, “to you and personally, for any embarrassment that I may have caused you…. I do have one grave personal regret and that is the suggestion I get that all of this somehow constitutes an act of disloyalty to you. I reject that out of hand.”\textsuperscript{365} It is unknown whether Goldwater drafted a response.

Even if Goldwater personally may not have taken it as an insult, Hess’s revelation incited Conservatives across the nation to voice their shock and revulsion through scores of letters to the senator’s office over the following years.\textsuperscript{366} At first, Goldwater responded politely if concisely to these letters, noting to one Phoenix woman simply that “Mr. Hess’ present views are not shared by me nor do they have any connection with me.”\textsuperscript{367} In time, though, Goldwater lost patience with Hess. “Karl is a very unusual man,” he replied to a concerned Montana man. “[He] is confused and this is his trouble. He calls himself a libertarian and tries to equate that with conservatism unsuccessfully,” for Hess had shifted “to a rather radical position on the left.”\textsuperscript{368} To some degree, Goldwater was correct in this latter assessment. By the late 1970s, even Hess’s formal correspondence had devolved in format, as if he had internalized libertarianism to such a degree that he considered such basic rules as capitalization and punctuation structures

that limited individual freedom. But the severance was complete, for Goldwater himself had expelled Hess from the Movement in an achingly personal way. Because he was a pragmatic Republican, Goldwater felt that Hess’s extreme libertarianism and support for the Antiwar Movement had crossed the line of what was politically viable.

The spread of “libertinism” throughout the Conservative Movement, though, did not stop with Rothbard or Hess. Buckley’s brainchild, the Young Americans for Freedom, endured a wrenching schism in the fall of 1969 as a result of the antiwar and antidraft debates. In 1965 and 1966, *National Review* and *The New Guard* trumpeted the unity and success of the YAF in its goal of mobilizing campus youth for Conservatism. By 1967, however, signs of discord erupted over whether libertarians possessed equal status with more Traditional Conservatives in the organization. *The New Guard* reported in April 1967 of a war among the Liberal, libertarian, and Conservative factions of the Yale Republicans, which illustrated the extent to which the GOP, or perhaps any organized institution, lacked unifying influence among youth as the draft debate raged. That October, the journal took a bold move and published an article by Grant W. Kuhns, billed as “an engineer by profession, and an enthusiastic surfer by avocation.” Kuhns, it turned out, opposed both the draft and the Vietnam War altogether, as a result of his

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369 See Karl Hess, letter to Tony Smith, July 1978; idem., letter to Tony Smith, August 1978; and idem., letter to Tony Smith, February 1980, Goldwater Papers, Personal, Box 52, Folder 25: Karl Hess, 1967-1994. The transformation of Hess’s writing style is remarkable and cannot be conveyed adequately here. For example, Hess wrote to Goldwater’s Congressional aide, Tony Smith, the following paragraph, as is: “the point is that conservatives often forget that truly big business has no objection to socialism so long as it is their socialism. the goal of managers at & t and at gm is the same as the goal of state managers in the soviet union—to preserve and extend power. burnham pointed out much of this in the managerial revolution. on the other hand, lefties insistently forget that socialism is a corporate form, a managerial monopoly!!!!!!” idem., letter to Tony Smith, August 1978; Goldwater Papers, Personal, Box 52, Folder 25: Karl Hess, 1967-1994.


commitment to the libertarian non-aggression principle; he demanded that Conservatives follow his lead.  

When the YAF’s national leadership met in St. Louis in August 1969, libertarian members demanded further debate over the war and draft issues, although they generally did so in a civil manner. Referred to by *National Review* as “an anarchist interloper,” one delegate from Virginia burned a Xerox copy of his draft card before the assembly, only to be “excommunicated” by the National Board. The group dissolved with the understanding that it would reconvene later in the fall to reconsider its basic positions on Vietnam. That meeting, however, ended with the vitriolic secession of the YAF’s New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and California delegations and the subsequent formation of a new, short-lived organization, the Student Libertarian Alliance. The SLA founded itself on the claim that the YAF had come to endorse “statist and socialist controls over the individual’s life” and the “takeover of the consumer-oriented enterprise by the ‘military-industrial complex,’ which is reminiscent of Nazi Germany’s and Soviet Russia’s forced marriage of the economy and the state.” The schism brought into full sight the once-dormant faults on which the Conservative alliance of Fusionism and Traditionalism stood.

The fathers of Conservatism, however, clearly articulated their opinions on the libertarian revolt among their youth. Some of the libertarian activists who would defect from the YAF were among many protesters from all political persuasions who organized the nationwide antiwar and antidraft event known as the Vietnam Moratorium on 15

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October 1969. Frank Meyer was not pleased. Driven by an anarchic, “violent mob,” the Moratorium was “a revolutionary attack upon constitutional government,” Meyer scathingly wrote, an “anticivilizational attack” that was “methodologically directed to the destruction” of the United States.\(^{375}\) Clarence Manion invited Congressman Donald E. “Buz” Lukens, Republican of Ohio, on his radio program to denounce the Moratorium as “hypocritical,” given its violent advocacy for peace in Vietnam.\(^{376}\) Nearly all Conservatives denounced the Moratorium as an event that employed improper modes of dissent to express its views rather than addressing the core issues that prompted it in the first place. Once more, they deferred on the antidraft (and, effectively, on the antiwar and civil rights) debates to instead seize upon the propriety of dissent; in so doing, Conservatives both shored up their reliance on the natural law tradition and expunged those who fundamentally disagreed from the Movement.

**Conclusion**

The double pressures of the Antiwar Movement and the 1968 elections forced the New Right Movement to trend away from libertarianism and toward a more robust Traditionalism. In their position on the draft, Conservatives emphasized their ideology’s libertarian aspects, which was mostly why the anti-libertarian Burnham, and perhaps Manion, ultimately disagreed with them. In sharp contrast, Conservatives rested more upon Traditionalism—specifically the preservation and integrity of natural law—when they denounced the Antiwar Movement, and the Leftist or libertarian elements within the

\(^{376}\) Clarence Manion and Ernest L. Wilkinson, “Now is the Time…,” *Manion Forum* Broadcast No. 788, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 9 November 1969, Manion Papers, Box 84, Folder 84-1.
Antidraft Movement. Because the Vietnam War was a good cause, Meyer and others argued, then those who questioned its virtues were not only misguided but also traitorous; Conservatives viewed the war as essential to preserving American and Western ways of life. The draft was simply a means, and an unjust one at that, to achieve the principled end of success in Vietnam, much like a total war strategy was a just means to that end. In a similar fashion, dissent that took a legislative form was a just means to oppose the draft, as it upheld the rule of law and preserved social order. Conversely, the “radical” means of more Leftist- or purely libertarian-inspired antidraft or antiwar protesters—whether they engaged in non-violent civil disobedience, the burning of draft cards, or riots—repudiated natural law in favor of more revolutionary modernist or Romantic ends. Conservatives believed these forms of dissent fundamentally rejected Conservative values. That said, they permitted, even mandated, legislative dissent in defense of those values. As such, the Antiwar Movement provoked Conservatism to attempt a Traditionalist-inspired Anti-Antiwar Movement, one whose basic purpose was to revive a politics of natural law.

Meanwhile, the onset of the 1968 elections pressured Conservatives to choose a new national leader who could inject life into the weak Anti-Antiwar Movement. In an ironic twist, Conservatives chose Ronald Reagan, whose Traditionalist credentials lay more in his political rhetoric than genuine beliefs. Much as they had with Barry Goldwater, Conservatives saw in Reagan an ideal leader who contrasted starkly against the pragmatist who really governed California. Reagan’s moral leadership, his “style and charm,” more than his actual policy stances or lackluster achievements on campus unrest, proved more useful as a vehicle for the Conservative Movement and its drive to condemn
improper antiwar and antidraft dissent. Only the Republican Party’s heterogeneous membership, which Richard Nixon personified, limited Reagan’s ascension to the Republican nomination that Conservatives so desired. The GOP’s impurities, when combined with the elusive Nixon and the Right’s remnant libertarian fringe, propelled Conservatives to launch a second purge of their Movement that only increased their reliance upon Traditionalist logic.

By 1969, then, the firm Conservative Movement looked quite different than the diffuse New Right Movement a decade earlier. Although it coalesced around figures with a variety of intellectual influences—most prominently, right-wing libertarianism, ex-communist anti-communism, and natural law Traditionalism—it emerged under President Nixon primarily, if not entirely, a political force of Traditionalism. That unity would face one more test on the home front of the Vietnam War: Nixon himself.
Chapter 5

Dealing with the Devil

“The point is that we were trying to build a world in which you will not have to die for what you believe in, in which you are able to live for.”

Richard Nixon often relaxed to Rachmaninoff. One of his favorite composers, the Russian Romantic eased his sleeplessness whenever Nixon wandered the White House before dawn. As he glanced out the window one morning, 9 May 1970, he began to see students gather around the Reflecting Pool, in protest of his recent announcement to expand the Vietnam War into Cambodia. Inspired, he asked his valet, Manuel Sanchez, to escort him to the Lincoln Memorial and prohibited his nervous Secret Service agents from informing his staff or the press of his impromptu action. “They were not unfriendly,” Nixon wrote of the students in a memorandum to White House Chief of Staff Bob Haldeman. When the frustrated students respectfully pressed the president on the Vietnam War, as Nixon expected, he seized the opportunity “draw them out” and justify the moral basis for his war policy.

378 Ibid.
This verbal confrontation between Nixon and student protesters is well documented in the historical record, film, and lore.379 Rather than reveal an unscrupulous or feckless puppeteer of the American people and the Vietnam War, Nixon’s version of those events portrayed a man staunchly grounded upon moral commitment, not mired in existential nihilism. The idea that Nixon designed his foreign policies with an amoral calculus is one grounded more in politics than history. Indeed, to conceive of the realism or “realpolitik” that historians so often attribute to Nixon and his National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, as amoral is to misrepresent grossly, even ignore entirely, the moral stances deeply embedded in these policy outlooks. Insofar as commentators still espouse the myth that realism is amoral, idealists left and right have been victorious in their insistence that their own respective values must guide foreign policymaking. But robots do not craft foreign policy, nor do human beings act in a vacuum of time, space, history, or belief. All human actions carry with them moral bases, regardless of whether the agents are conscious of such influences.

The great significance of the moral Nixon, though, is not simply that he had a beating heart. In his predawn meeting with protestors on 9 May, as in his policies, Nixon revealed a set of values at direct variance with any given ideology, whether liberal, conservative, or otherwise. To Nixon, Vietnamization and its overarching policy structure of détente were resoundingly moral stances, not amoral ones. These policies valued power in its own right, a natural balancing of options, sensitivity to context, individual perspective—Romantic values that Nixon felt were both moral and deeply

379 To take but one example, Oliver Stone’s famous depiction of the student meeting, in the 1995 film Nixon, misses the historical mark by a wide margin. Stone’s poignant scene begins on solid historical ground but launches into a political statement against the tyranny of political and economic structures.
American. To a lesser extent, even Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan endorsed these political values with their indefatigable support for Nixon’s foreign policies. But these values threatened to destroy the natural law tradition that American Conservatives had only recently cemented as the foundation for their redefinition of the New Right. Conservatives like William F. Buckley, Jr., James Burnham, and Frank S. Meyer noted this gap between Nixon’s policymaking and their own beliefs, which led eventually to their repudiation of Nixon and the full emergence of Conservatism as a politics of natural law at the end of the American phase of the Vietnam War.

To grasp fully the intellectual and moral divergence between Nixon and Conservatives in the early 1970s, it is important to underscore the intellectual basis of the president’s foreign policy. It is not a coincidence that, in 1972, historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin penned perhaps the best depiction of Nixon’s morality, even if his essay never mentioned the president. That year Berlin published his famous essay, “The Originality of Machiavelli,” for the Florentine journal, Studies on Machiavelli. Berlin asked his readers to consider why Machiavelli so profoundly stirred the passions of critics left and right, from Karl Marx to Leo Strauss. He did so, Berlin argued, not because Machiavelli denounced morality itself, but because his “pagan” morality of power flew in the face of Western “moral universe” of Judeo-Christian natural law. “Machiavelli,” wrote Berlin, “does not so much as mention natural law, the basic category” in which Christians had long defined their philosophies. Instead, the Florentine espoused “a

380 The version of Berlin’s essay used here is from Isaiah Berlin, The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays, Hardy and Hausheer, eds., 269-325.
381 Strauss blames Machiavelli for the divergence of modernity from the natural law tradition and, therefore, all of the problems that ensued from modern thinking; Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
differentiation between two incompatible ideals of life,” what Berlin calls the “pagan” and the “Christian” moralities. A politician could not simultaneously govern a state well and espouse Christian ideals. That individual, in other words, had to choose between the values of the pagan world, which included “above all assertion of one’s proper claims and the knowledge and power needed to secure satisfaction”; and those of Christian morality, namely “belief in the salvation of the individual soul as being of incomparable value.”

It is, of course, far from novel to use the word “Machiavellian” with respect to Nixon. Likewise, to call Nixon “pagan” would be an indefensible stretch of terminology. In their misapplication of the tricky label of “Machiavellian,” however, historians and pundits usually castigate Nixon as unprincipled in the same way that, as Berlin argued, academics misinterpret Machiavelli. Neither Machiavelli nor Nixon were amoral—they simply held that the moral values that best supported rational governance were incommensurate with those of the natural law tradition. In his attempt to solve the Vietnam and Cold Wars, Nixon’s advocacy of Romantic (or, in a sense, what Berlin may call “neo-pagan”) values clashed with both New Deal Liberalism and, perhaps more importantly, natural law Conservatism.

This chapter will examine how Conservatives grew to consider Vietnamization as Nixon in part intended—a political maneuver to extricate the United States from Vietnam. That process began with Conservatives at National Review staunchly backing Nixon’s escalation of the war and repudiation of Kennedy and Johnson’s limited war strategies, even as they doubted Nixon’s dedication to Conservative orthodoxy. The

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glaring exception to this consensus was Clarence Manion, who revealed a notable skepticism of Nixon and Vietnamization as early as 1969, one grounded explicitly in a defense of natural law theory. Conservatives at National Review began to gravitate toward Manion’s staunch anti-Nixon position after the president’s public handling of the bombing of Cambodia and his subsequent efforts at rapprochement with China (not to mention his centrist domestic policies). By 1971 all of these Conservatives sought to displace Nixon as the Republican standard-bearer and turn not to Barry Goldwater, who they considered a has-been and as unreliable as Nixon, but to the malleable Ronald Reagan, who offered the same charismatic vessel for the Conservative message that Goldwater had offered in 1964.

Vietnamization and the Conservative Divide

Conservatives nationwide had harbored doubts about Richard Nixon since at least 1952, when allegations of illegal campaign funding led Nixon, then U.S. Senator from California, to deliver his famed Checkers speech. Their skepticism ran through 1960, when Clarence Manion, L. Brent Bozell, and other emerging Conservative voices trumpeted the principled Barry Goldwater over the oily Vice President for the Republican nomination. It was no surprise, then, that Conservatives were less elated about Nixon’s election in 1968 than the simple fact that Americans finally displaced from power the New Deal Liberals of the Kennedy-Johnson era. To be sure, Conservatives generally saw in Nixon a foreign policy ally. At least through 1969, those at National Review largely held a consensus on Nixon’s Vietnam policy, known as Vietnamization, which sought gradually to phase out American troops from Vietnam and replace them with American-
trained South Vietnamese. Far from casting the policy as surrender, these Conservatives initially lauded Vietnamization as a means to escalate the war without agitating China, bring American troops out of harm’s way, and—as they all advocated to a fault—actually bring the war to a successful conclusion. Nevertheless, Nixon and Conservatives remained mutually wary, at times even disdainful, of each other—a direct result of their dissimilar intellectual worldviews.

From the start of the policy, Nixon believed that the purpose of Vietnamization was to enable the United States to win the Vietnam War politically, as he considered it nearly inconceivable to do so militarily. It would take time to change the minds of the military and bureaucracy toward his point of view, as he clearly noted the power of policy momentum. “I get the rather uneasy impression,” he informed Henry Kissinger in November 1969, “that the military are still thinking in terms of a long war and eventual military solution. I also have the impression that deep down they realize the war can’t be won militarily, even over the long haul.”383 Indeed, the president considered Vietnamization—and détente in general—not as means to retrench American military influence in the world, but to expand the nation’s credibility and political influence. The “theme” of the Nixon Doctrine, he argued, was to allow the United States “to play a role—and play it better, more effectively than if [America] assumed the policy in the past in which we assume such a dominant position.”384 This strategy, though, was little more than a political sleight of hand. Perhaps even more than his predecessors, Nixon believed


that American security required a preponderance of global power. The essence of détente, ultimately, was not to repudiate “universalism by the back door,” as John Lewis Gaddis described previous administrations’ containment schemes, but to persuade the world that American universalism, whether by the front or back door, was benign, even salutary.\footnote{See Leffler, \textit{A Preponderance of Power}, and Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 274. On this point, Henry Kissinger was less in agreement with his domineering boss, for Kissinger remained committed to the \textit{realkpolitik} vision of an anarchic global system and his calculus of foreign policy. This attitude may explain, in part, his reluctance to endorse Vietnamization wholeheartedly.}

To undervalue this conception of Nixon as a political animal, one committed above all to personal and national aggrandizement, is to misread not only his foreign policy but also his attitudes toward American Conservatives. To be sure, Nixon noted that many Conservatives were, at least in effect, supportive of his agenda. He asserted to Kissinger that men like “Goldwater, Buckley, RN [himself], et al” were the only reliable, pro-freedom forces in America, highlighting their defense of Israel in its War of Attrition with Egypt.\footnote{Nixon, memo to Henry Kissinger, 17 March 1970, Nixon Papers, White House Special Files, President’s Personal File, Memoranda from the President, 1969-74, Box 2—Memos—January 1970 to Memos—December 1970, Folder 3—Memos—March 1970.} That said, Nixon was not a Conservative himself, nor did he much respect the Conservative cause. His disdainful skepticism of Conservative youth, for one, cannot be understated. The Young Republicans, he complained to Bob Haldeman, were “worse than pathetic” and the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) “useless” in their attempted promotion of his “silent majority” campaign.\footnote{Idem., memo to Bob Haldeman, 2 March 1970, Nixon Papers, White House Special Files, President’s Personal File, Memoranda from the President, 1969-74, Box 2—Memos—January 1970 to Memos—December 1970, Folder 3—Memos—March 1970.} The former merely held meaningless annual conventions, whereas the latter had “too many nuts and second-raters in it.” But even the \textit{National Review} itself was not above his contempt. “Going down the road of
the *National Review,*” Nixon argued to Pat Buchanan, “is a dead end.” Like its youthful counterpart, the YAF, the journal was simply “irrelevant to our times,” even if its “principles are right (generally).”388 For one as politically astute as Nixon, this derision of Conservatism’s main vehicles was a surprising misperception of America’s pulse. Nonetheless, he clearly saw himself in disagreement with the *National Review*’s Conservative leadership, even if he was less clear on exactly why.

Conservatives, for their part, were much more supportive of the president than vice versa. William F. Buckley, Jr., led the charge at *National Review* in support of Nixon and Vietnization. Evoking the leadership of Churchill and calling the policy a “liberating decree,” Buckley drew upon his libertarian leanings to praise Vietnization, for it would promote the war’s end and support the free principle of voluntary (American) service.389 Another contributor to the *National Review* chose a different historical analogue—Abraham Lincoln—to define Nixon as a president capable of bold, inspiring shifts in policy.390 At the heart of *National Review*’s glowing support for Vietnization was its recognition of the policy’s sheer domestic political genius. A “strategy of paradox,” as the editors called it, Vietnization would “cool the domestic opposition, and isolate the hard Left,” allowing the United States to pursue “a ‘long-haul, low-cost’ protracted strategy.”391 Even though they criticized Nixon for his lack of charisma,

*National Review* called such calculated play against the Antiwar Movement a “virtuoso performance” of political skill.\(^{392}\)

Goldwater and Reagan also followed the president’s lead on Vietnamization. Although in public Goldwater gradually warmed to Vietnamization, he remarked in his private notes that it was a “wise” move. He much preferred a swift and decisive end to the war through negotiations at Paris, where he earthily remarked that Nixon should “either do it or get off the pot.” Without a diplomatic resolution, Goldwater believed the usefulness of Vietnamization would be minimal; only escalation, involving “a complete bombing of Haiphong and the opening of the Red River dikes,” would force the North Vietnamese back to the bargaining table.\(^{393}\) The newly re-elected Arizona senator visited Vietnam in late 1969, where he was elated by the progress of Vietnamization and the morale of those American troops he visited.\(^{394}\) Reagan did not stake out as clear a ground as Goldwater on Vietnam but continued his resounding support of Nixon’s policies. Decreased antiwar protests in California and nationwide, the governor noted, proved that Vietnamization was a success. The president had a plan that both promoted law and order at home and facilitated the war effort in Southeast Asia.\(^{395}\)

The glaring exceptions to the rule of Conservative support for Vietnamization were Clarence Manion and those Conservatives who began to rally to his increasingly more purified, natural law iteration of the ideology than that found among the editors of

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\(^{393}\) Barry Goldwater, notes for diary, 4 July 1969, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 14: Richard M. Nixon.

\(^{394}\) Goldwater remarked that the Vietnam War was “the best fed one I’ve ever seen. The boys at the front get hot meals and ice cream.” Idem., notes for diary and letter to Peggy Goldwater, 9 December 1969, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 26, Folder 8: Journals (Vietnam).

National Review. Whereas Manion subjected Vietnamization to withering attacks, he largely shied away from criticizing Nixon directly. Manion delivered a series of speeches in spring 1969 that fused his antipathy toward Vietnamization with his natural law beliefs. The “pragmatists” in charge of the policy (clearly Nixon and Kissinger, although he did not mention them by name) were “unprincipled” in their pursuit of power at the expense of national security against communism.\(^{396}\) In a more revealing speech in Los Angeles, Manion warned that “the directors of our foreign policy” were so “engrossed with plans for international peace at any price” that they have brought the United States into a “war against itself.” Manion castigated Vietnamization as a continuation of limited war, as opposed to a total war that would “wip[e] Hanoi and Haiphong off the map.” Such “restraint” in Vietnam, in his view, amounted to nothing less than a failed commitment to the holy trinity of America: “the Ten Commandments, the Constitution of the United States, and the institution of private property.”\(^{397}\) Manion rephrased this accusation in a later address, where he claimed that the lack of principled national leadership abroad and at home threatened the “time honored fundamental conjunction of God with the Government of the United States.”\(^{398}\)

Throughout 1969 and early 1970, Manion continued this traditionalist assault on Nixon’s Vietnam policy through *Manion Forum*. In a broadcast entitled “Must We Continue to ‘Retreat in Defeat’ in Viet Nam?,” Manion claimed that Nixon’s “difference with the marching mobilizers [of the Antiwar Movement]…appears to be only a matter of

\(^{396}\) Manion, excerpts of speech before the concluding banquet of the National Convention of the Citizens for Decent Literature, Part II, St. Louis, Missouri, 15 March 1969, Manion Papers, Box 112, Folder 112-3 (speeches).

\(^{397}\) Idem., speech before the Freedom Club, Los Angeles, California, 13 May 1969, Manion Papers, Box 112, Folder 112-3 (speeches).

\(^{398}\) Idem., excerpts of speech before the Chautauqua Lake Institute, Chautauqua, New York, 15 July 1969, Manion Papers, Box 112, Folder 112-3 (speeches).
timing.” The president, he told listeners, sought only to postpone the communist victory that would inevitably ensue from American withdrawal without a total war strategy. 399 Manion grew bolder in his criticism by March 1970. After he invoked Nixon’s formidable anti-communist credentials, Manion professed sheer frustration with Nixon’s eagerness to span the “gulf of ideology” that separated the First and Second Worlds. “To what purpose,” he demanded, “is President Nixon attempting to appease our Communist enemies?”400 He replied to this question in another broadcast two weeks later: an “obvious pull-out” of Vietnam and “encourag[ement of] the Communists” to win victory there and around the globe.401

The division of Conservatives between the pro-Nixon, pro-Vietnamization National Review contingent and the critical Manion Forum caucus was significant, if short lived. It marked continued instability within the fragile alliance, even after the cleansing purge of the Antidraft Movement. As traditionalism gained more prominence, many Conservatives increasingly sided with Manion in his growing doubts about Nixon’s intellectual and moral values. The fact that some Conservatives, such as the editors and contributors to National Review, granted Nixon and Vietnamization a temporary grace period may simply have resulted from their satisfaction that an ostensibly right-wing Republican now occupied the White House.

399 Idem., “Must We Continue to ‘Retreat in Defeat’ from Viet Nam?,” Manion Forum Broadcast No. 792, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 14 December 1969, Manion Papers, Box 84, Folder 84-1.
401 Idem. and Tsewang Jigme Tsarong, “’Lost Horizon’ is Found and Ravished by Reds,” Manion Forum Broadcast No. 810, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 19 April 1970, Manion Papers, Box 84, Folder 84-2.
Cambodia and the Hints of Conservative Realignment

Nevertheless, when the president contradicted his earlier public statements to announce the expansion of the war into officially neutral Cambodia in April 1970, he heralded the beginning of the end to Nixon-Conservative courtship on Vietnam. Most Conservatives, of course, strongly backed the policy on strategic grounds, as it represented a more aggressive war stance than Nixon had yet pursued. But Nixon’s enigmatic leadership, secretive decisionmaking, and confusing shift in policy made many activists uneasy. They did not understand how the Cambodia invasion logically ensued from Vietnamization and thus began to question whether the latter policy ever really rested on a sound intellectual foundation. This Conservative gravitation away from Vietnamization was by no means instantaneous—Nixon’s China policy later catalyzed the trend—but Cambodia served as a major stimulus for the reevaluation of the president and his values.

Nixon’s intention with the Cambodia gambit was foremost to gain the political advantage—both in Vietnam and the United States. “I think we need a bold move in Cambodia,” Nixon wrote to Kissinger in a top secret memo. “I feel this morning to show [sic] that we stand with [Cambodian Prime Minister] Lon Nol. I do not believe he is going to survive. There is, however, some chance that he might and in any event we must do something symbolic to help him survive.”

Nixon understood thoroughly that some segments of the American public—namely, the Left minority and the Antiwar

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Movement—might not consider this “symbolic” move a wise one. In an April 22 meeting with Cabinet officials, Nixon revealed his concerns of a possible “adverse reaction” among members of Congress and the people.\(^{403}\) The president carefully crafted his April 30 speech to the American people, in which he detailed his reasons for the move, so as to place the United States and Cambodia in the most sympathetic light. He blamed North Vietnam for violating Cambodian neutrality, refused to call the American incursion an “invasion,” and portrayed the strategy as integral to ending the war quickly.\(^{404}\)

That said, Nixon fully believed that the “silent majority” of Americans would support his efforts in Cambodia—and early polling suggested that they did. A week after his announcement, Nixon eagerly reported to Speaker of the House Gerald Ford how “the Gallup poll indicated that 51 percent to 35 percent of the American people favored our policy; that the CBS poll showed that 62% of the people favored the president’s move into Cambodia. The Chilton Research Poll, with over 1000 [sic] samples, taken immediately after the speech on Friday showed that 65% of the American people favored the action.” With one political strike, Nixon had attempted to quell two enemies: the North Vietnamese who threatened Lon Nol and the antiwar Left who threatened Nixon’s presidency. In turn, he fully expected that Conservatives would run to his support. After all, he instructed Ford to stick to talking points that struck many Conservative chords:


the lessons of Korea, the primacy of American strength vis-à-vis communism, the duty to protect the troops, the need to end the war swiftly.405

Yet the attempt to co-opt Conservatives—not inflame the antiwar Left—proved to be Nixon’s gravest political error in the entire Cambodia campaign. Of all Conservatives, William F. Buckley most commanded the president’s attention (which, to frame it negatively, meant that Nixon at best had lukewarm feelings for him). Buckley, however, led National Review to question Nixon’s designs in Southeast Asia in the lead up to the Cambodia announcement. Buckley was far more concerned with the president’s secretive decision making and elusive intentions than with either Nixon’s competence or his policy goals. “I am on the side of Senator Fulbright,” Buckley argued provocatively, sympathizing with one of his favorite antiwar whipping boys. “[I]t is our right to know what it is we are up to [where] we are making military commitments.”406 The president’s cryptic address of April 20, in which he affirmed progress with further troop withdrawals, only further alarmed Buckley and his colleagues at National Review. “The puzzling Cambodian events and non-events,” the editors argued, “may provide the first critical test of one side of the Vietnamization concept,” namely, the “fuller and fuller assumption by South Vietnam of responsibility for her own fate.” In the interest of extricating the United States from Southeast Asia, the editors asked, would the president deny South Vietnam the right to invade Cambodia if it so desired? And if Nixon took such an intrusive step, then “what is the meaning of ‘Vietnamization’?”407

National Review’s uncertainty over the backroom orchestration of the Cambodia policy was not quite enough to dislodge its support of escalation and reciprocal disdain for the newly enraged Antiwar Movement. On May 19, the editors published an editorial with a patriotic title: “Now is the Time for All Good Men to Come to the Aid of Their President.” Whereas the article did openly criticize Vietnamization, in the strongest terms to date, as “considerably short” of the total war strategy that Conservatives had long preferred, it ultimately sought to lift the spirits of the journal’s readers and praise the president’s actions.\(^\text{408}\) National Review took an unsurprisingly dismissive view of the wave of antiwar protests that followed Nixon’s announcement, including the Kent State Massacre. Its first impulse after Kent State was to crack a joke. “There’s at least one thing that the student rioting of the last couple weeks has accomplished: It’s killed the chances of the eighteen-year-old vote bill.”\(^\text{409}\) Buckley cited Nixon’s strong and improved approval polls to ask whether the Cambodia protesters suffered from “psychological masochism,” as they fell right into Nixon’s trap of making them look violent and irrational in the face of the silent majority.\(^\text{410}\) In a retrospective one year after Kent State, National Review blamed the four dead students for their own deaths, claiming that their antiwar rhetoric and actions provoked the Ohio National Guard.\(^\text{411}\) Contrary to its standing policies of criticizing New York Mayor John Lindsay and reporting on every

\(^{408}\) “Now is the Time for All Good Men to Come to the Aid of Their President” National Review 22:19 (May 19, 1970): 500-501.


prowar rally it could find, though, *National Review* did not publish a single article on the subsequent Hard Hat Riot.412

Conservatives largely held a consensus on the view that the Cambodia protests, like the Antiwar and Antidraft Movements of the late 1960s, represented nothing less than an existential battle for the soul of Western Civilization. In an article titled “The Real Constitutional Crisis,” which *National Review* published a month after Kent State, Frank S. Meyer argued that “the current jacqueries of the universities” formed “the mass army of a coherent, ideologically motivated attack upon the tradition and structure of our civilization and our Republic.” Far from exercising any Constitutional right to free speech, he continued, these activists pursued “functionally similar” means to the “conspiratorial, paramilitary fashion of the Communist and fascist totalitarians” in their attempt to “destroy America.”413 The editors echoed this philosophical defense of the Grand Tradition in their critique of the “political campus.” “Cambodia did not of course bring all [of the protests] about,” they argued. “Rather it brought suddenly into the open a deep and pervasive process long under way”—the rise of modern “critical” thought. Instead of seeking to “understand the world,” the modern university adopted “Marx’s view” to “change it,” through constant questioning of tradition and authority.414

Even as Conservatives stood in solidarity with his attempts to marginalize New Deal Liberalism, though, they became increasingly skeptical of Nixon’s motives and policies. Although he still considered Vietnamization a sound policy, Buckley criticized

Nixon’s failure to promote a strong military thrust to back up his masterful political campaign. By not pushing for enough logistical support of American and South Vietnamese troops, Nixon effectively risked victory in Vietnam for a dangerous political game. For his part, Meyer took a longer and wider, if equally skeptical, view of Nixon’s foreign policy and condemned détente directly. Vietnam, he wrote, was “no more or less than one battle in the third world war—a war now cold, now hot…. Instead of…presenting our engagement with the forces of communism, we are exhorted in the name of the interests of the Vietnamese people.” In Meyer’s mind, Nixon had taken his eyes off of the main goal—the utter destruction of the one, monolithic enemy of America and freedom—not only in Vietnam but over the entire globe.

Indeed, Buckley and Meyer began to sound notes similar to the more thoroughgoing Traditionalist, Clarence Manion, who had long decried Nixon’s intellectual background and the vices of détente. It was “ironical,” Manion claimed in a sermon to the Freedom Club on 5 May 1970, that the United States had entered the darkest existential period of its history under President Nixon, who Manion rather skeptically remarked was ostensibly a follower of God. A month later, Manion asked on his Forum whether “President Nixon [has] forgotten what happened to Vice President Nixon in Moscow in July, 1959.” Manion sought to invoke the Kitchen Debate, the two-sided ideological spat that erupted between Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev,

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to illustrate how détente failed to acknowledge the Manichean nature of the Cold War. In an interview in which he tied Vietnam directly to the politics of natural law, Manion spoke with Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, a Catholic, Austrian Conservative and the Continental-European Correspondent of National Review. According to Kuehnelt-Leddihn, America consisted of three generations: “believers,” or pious Christians; “good pagans,” or lapsed Christians; and “bad pagans,” those “rational” people who “have broken with Christian ethics.” The machinations of the latter group, he argued, accounted for the fact that Americans remained so ignorant about the Vietnam War. “The bad pagan creates this enormous and desperate unrest, because obviously a godless person is up in arms against the universe, against the constructive forces of existence.” After all, he remarked, “what on earth did the average American know about the military necessity of invading [Cambodia]? … Invasion was absolutely necessary.” Neither Manion nor Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn categorized Nixon explicitly into this typology of Christians and pagans. Nevertheless, Manion’s skepticism of Nixon’s faith revealed that he certainly did not consider the president a “believer” of the first order, no matter how supportive Manion was of escalation.

**China, Détente, and the Romantic Nixon**

Although Nixon was and remains famously enigmatic in regard to his personal thought and values, he did reveal telling hints of Romantic impulses and genuine

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independence from Conservatism. In a memo to Pat Buchanan, Nixon recounted a tale from his youth in response to press discussion over whether Nixon had been a New Dealer in the past. As a student in college and law school during the Depression, he wrote, he had been “progressive in [his] political thinking in the TR sense but definitely not new deal [sic] in the FDR sense.” A “strong streak of individualism…rooted in [his] family background” prevented Nixon from sympathizing with the collectivist overtones of the New Deal. Nixon, therefore, clearly saw himself as a man of the Right and rejected the influence of New Deal Liberalism, even if he cast it in caricature. But his Right leanings arose more from Romantic criticism of modern life than commitment to natural law Traditionalism. In March 1971, Nixon castigated Donald Rumsfeld, then a Counselor to the President, as “too program oriented.” The staffer was “part of the new, pragmatic, post-war college group who are no-nonsense types and frankly lack the basically idealistic and romantic attitude which is essential” in crafting Administration messaging. Two months later, the president talked about Conservatives in third person, as if their worldview was clearly separate and distinct from his own. Concerned foremost with his political positioning, Nixon posited to Bob Haldeman that “the least we should get from the conservatives is credit for a very strong, courageous and bold foreign

420 Richard Nixon, memo to Pat Buchanan, 10 February 1971, White House Special Files, President’s Personal File, Memoranda from the President, 1969-74, Box 3—RN Tapes: Memos, etc. 12/4/70-1/5/71 to Memos—April 1972, Folder 3 – Memos, February 1971.
policy,” even if those on the Right were “never going to be pleased” with the rest of his Administration’s policies.422

This non-Traditional foundation for Nixon’s thought may not have been publicly understood, even among those Conservatives who watched him keenly for decades. But if Cambodia ignited Conservatives’ already existing doubts about Nixon into a raging flame, then rapprochement with China poured gasoline over the bonfire. It was the prospect of peaceful relations with Communist China—an ominous specter in both the Vietnam War and larger Cold War—that provoked National Review writers to reexamine Nixon and the moral and philosophical foundations of détente. Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan—in their capacity as politicians, not pundits—remained supportive of Nixon in this most stunning of political maneuvers. Conservatives, though, viewed rapprochement as nothing less than the betrayal of the Grand Tradition, which simply could not abide co-habitation with communism.

In April 1971, James Burnham and Frank Meyer split vehemently with William Buckley, who continued to support Nixon’s overtures to China. The Cold War remained a two-party ideological struggle, Burnham exclaimed in the 4 May edition of National Review. Denouncing Nixon implicitly, he claimed that whereas “the Chinese have been in the power business a very long time,” and thus understood that “no basic changes in the power balance come overnight,” American foreign policymakers will fall prey to Chinese “brainwashing” out of their modern naïveté.423 Meyer concurred in the same issue, although he took a softer stance on Nixon’s apparent diplomatic misstep. To

weaken the Communist Bloc, Meyer conceded, Nixon might be wise to exploit the Sino-Soviet split through rapprochement. But that split did not mean that international communism was obsessed singularly with the destruction of the United States, nor did it merit any relaxation of aggressive containment. “The publicity show [of Ping-Pong Diplomacy],” Meyer continued, would add “to the euphoria in the public mood that has already been created (despite the Vietnam war) by the assumptions of Soviet and Chinese ‘mellowing’ that underlie the idea of ‘negotiation instead of confrontation.’” Despite the views of his National Review colleagues, Buckley came to the president’s defense that May. “[Nixon] does things to people,” Buckley remarked, “causing even very decent folk to behave quite incomprehensibly. Joe McCarthy had the same knack.” But rather than extol Nixon’s virtues, Buckley simply tore down two of his critics—Allard Lowenstein and Gary Wills. He did not take on friends Burnham and Meyer.

Nixon’s further outreach to China in 1971 only granted Meyer and others more reason to see the president as anything but a Conservative. In arguably the most anti-Nixon article that National Review published to date, Meyer equated Nixon to Neville Chamberlain and rapprochement with appeasement. “It cannot be said that Mr. Nixon did not warn us,” Meyer ominously began. The president gradually promoted trade with the Communist Bloc, weakened American defenses vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and preferred negotiation to confrontation. Rapprochement with China, he argued, was nothing less than “a symbol of the liquidation of the anti-Communist stance of the American government. In a swipe at Henry Kissinger and détente, Meyer claimed that

“Metternichian games of attempting to play China against Russia” would do nothing to advance the Herculean struggle between civilization and barbarism. Meyer had come to the realization that Nixon did not see the world as he did, as a contest between good and evil.

Perhaps the only National Review writer who understood Nixon was Richard Brookheiser, a Conservative and infrequent contributor who would go on later to become an editor of the journal. A journalist by trade, Brookheiser wrote of the intellectual proclivities of the Founding Fathers before turning his attention to contemporary politics. “I have come to feel,” he wrote in the 24 September issue, “that Richard Nixon is a Romantic, and that his attitude toward China rises from a deep-seated Romantic vision of politics.” In Brookheiser’s conception, “the Romantic is held by a breathless vision” of human nature, more optimistic than original sin or the sterility of a scientific analysis. “He is struck by the unity, the harmony of the impression, by the glittering, sumptuous, splendiferous whole.” The “Romantic flint that lies deep in his soul” was what sparked Nixon’s fiery imagination concerning his role in the world. The possibility of rapprochement, of peace, between two great powers “has elements of greatness, it is something to win elections with, something to celebrate bicentennials with…. Surely history did not let him beat all the odds without laying out some destiny, some purpose.” Far from a natural law Conservative, Nixon was obsessed with making a superhuman mark upon history of his own, not conceding humbly before God his fallibility as a sinful, limited human being.

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Once *National Review* began to question Nixon’s philosophy and motivations regarding China, it was simply a short, logical leap to criticize the rationale that underpinned détente. As these Conservatives bailed on their support for the president, they increasingly relied more upon the Traditionalist elements within their ideology. Not ready to renounce the president, Buckley sought to defend him as trapped under the insurmountable weight of modern politics. “Mr. Nixon, as a political centrist, is inevitably influenced by the intellectuals’ emphasis upon negotiation, disarmament, détente, the disdain of nuclear superiority and of defensive missiles.” The real Nixon, he insisted, “unburdened by such pressures,” would not pursue such egregiously non-Conservative foreign policies as this president has done.\(^428\)

Frank Meyer argued in multiple essays his sustained commitment to victory in Vietnam. Yet everything else Nixon did, from his domestic policies to his attitudes toward Moscow and Beijing, betrayed Conservatism to its core. Meyer called upon readers to question whether détente weakened more than it defended the United States. Although not itself a policy of isolationism, it fostered within American public discourse such “confusion” over national means and ends that it effectively helped Fulbright and other antiwar voices make their insidious case to the people.\(^429\)

As with Vietnamization in general and the Cambodia invasion and Chinese rapprochement in particular, the two leading politicians within the Conservative Movement broke with these intellectual critics to stand resolutely with their president. In a letter to a Tucson constituent, Barry Goldwater echoed Nixon’s justifications almost


verbatim. These actions, “far from escalating the war, have accelerated the withdrawal of American troops and reduced the U.S. casualty rate to almost zero…. It’s moves like the President’s bombing of the North that will speed the day when we will rid of the Indo-China war with all its bloodshed and cost forever.” Speaking on behalf of self-identified Conservatives, Goldwater in March 1972 publicly defended Nixon’s prudence. Reagan was even more resoundingly supportive of Vietnamization, détente, and China. At a speech before the POW-MIA International in June 1971, he claimed Vietnamization was remarkably successful in its stated goals of bringing the war to a victorious end. Early in 1972, he urged California civic groups to pass declarations in support of the Paris Peace Accords and commended Nixon’s anti-communist credentials with praise for both détente and rapprochement. Contradicting Meyer, Reagan claimed that the president had “rejected the easy path of expediency and appeasement” with China and the North Vietnamese and instead executed an effective policy of peace through strength.

The Failure of Vietnamization

Despite their prominence in the Movement and praise of the president, though, Goldwater and Reagan could do little to corral Conservatives to endorse

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Vietnamization—or Nixon—in 1972. As the election year began, Conservatives were more in disarray than they had been since their division over the Antidraft Movement. Their apparent standard-bearer, in both his domestic and foreign policies, simply had broken too many promises that Conservatives thought he had made. Whereas Traditionalists like Clarence Manion consistently criticized Nixon, Conservatives at National Review remained ambivalent toward the Romantic president. In February, the editors repudiated James Burnham’s dark assessments of the peace talks and claimed they still supported, to some degree, Nixon’s “skilful [sic] operation” in Southeast Asia.435 Only two months later, though, they lambasted Nixon, détente, and Vietnamization. The president’s decision to visit Moscow in May for talks with Premier Leonid Brezhnev so infuriated the editors that it provoked them to change their tone. “A visit under the existing circumstances,” they protested, “surrounded by the inevitable sweet-talk of diplomacy and protocol, can only distort and confuse the truth about what is happening in Vietnam (and in the world), miseducate [sic] American public opinion, and condone Soviet actions.”436

Buckley sought to bring coherence to National Review’s vacillating attitudes; he did so, reluctantly, in opposition to the president. Although Buckley had questioned only Nixon’s execution of the sound policy of Vietnamization in the past, he began to disparage the principle of Vietnamization itself in February 1972. “Now Vietnamization is very nearly accomplished,” he wrote sadly, “[b]ut the feel is wrong, and one labors to understand why…. And if one is an American, one resists the conclusion that the problem is America. But with insurmountable difficulty.” That American problem,

Buckley admitted, was the “critical role of the United States” in sustaining a nation on life support. Vietnamization, and indeed the Nixon Doctrine, were impractical in light of the Cold War; Nixon would undoubtedly sell out South Vietnam to placate China, as zero-sum politics in a Manichean struggle require.437

By the summer, Buckley had all but given up hope that victory was possible in Vietnam, even as Nixon escalated the war with the bombing of North Vietnam. Buckley essentially declared Vietnamization dead in the recently mined water of Haiphong Harbor. “What we attempted to do,” he explained of Vietnamization, “was to substitute a sort of socio-political position for a military position. We refused, over the years, to neutralize the military threat. And so it rises again, and again; and will again, until it is put out of action.”438 A few weeks after Nixon delivered a speech on Southeast Asia on 20 April, Buckley explicitly noted that the political gambit of “Vietnamization is already and palpably a partial failure…. The doves are on the march, and Richard Nixon knows it.”439 As North Vietnam’s destructive Easter Offensive raged, a flabbergasted Buckley threw his arms up in a subsequent article, pleading, “Why have we misjudged so gravely? … Today the South Vietnamese are almost everywhere in tatters, the millions of pounds of bombs we continue to dump over North Vietnam and much of South Vietnam appear to be about as related to stopping the North Vietnamese offensive as underground atomic explosions in Amchitka.”440 The National Review editor then bitterly lashed back at the

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“gloaters,” or those antiwar advocates who long claimed the United States would lose in Vietnam, effectively conceding their point. 441

If Buckley at all held back in his criticism of Nixon, then James Burnham refused to contain his rage. His early 1972 writings condemned the president so harshly that Lyndon Johnson looked statesmanlike in comparison. Burnham proclaimed Vietnamization dead—and the war itself lost—as early as February. “There is a boom market in secrets this winter, and I have decided it is the right time to go public with one of mine,” he cryptically began. “The United States has lost the war in Indochina, has been defeated…. Richard Nixon was not going to try to win the Indochina war.”

Mocking the president, Burnham caustically opined, “[I]nstead of ‘retreat,’ we’ll agree to call it ‘Vietnamization,’ and we’ll pretend you can reach your objectives by running away from them.” 442 Over the next few months, Burnham continued his bombing campaign of Nixon’s reputation and policies, all while shoring up his sympathies with the Traditionalists who had turned from Nixon long ago. Nixon’s willingness to court China, Burnham frequently commented, illustrated his repudiation of the bedrock Conservative principle that the world consisted of Good and Evil. 443 The true Nixon, in Burnham’s mind, was so political that he sold out South Vietnam and thousands of American troops to win re-election. “Mr. Nixon’s commitment to…getting the U.S. out, has priority over his commitment to…an independent non-communist South Vietnamese government…. [T]here is no strategic difference between the President and Senator McGovern on the

Vietnam issue. The difference is tactical only, a question of methods and timing.” Of course, Burnham knew that Nixon and McGovern were indeed different political animals—yet his point remains salient. Whatever differences separated Romantics and New Deal Liberals, they both opposed the Conservative worldview, and thus could be lumped together as enemies of natural law.

Regardless of their tone, Buckley and Burnham did perceive Nixon as fundamentally political in nature, which is exactly how the president conceived of himself. In calculating when to strike Hanoi and Haiphong, Nixon’s overriding concern was to minimize political fallout—both domestically, given the election; and internationally, in light of Kissinger’s ongoing talks with the Soviets and North Vietnamese. As a Romantic, Nixon was concerned primarily with the big-picture view of the world and his place within it. He viewed all potential political constituencies as mere building blocks to be manipulated for the execution of his policies. To prevent a “massive right-wing revolt” against the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), a policy at the heart of détente, Nixon argued to Kissinger and Deputy National Security Advisor Alexander Haig that they tap the reliable, malleable Goldwater as a proxy advocate. In a memo to Pat Buchanan, Nixon mused on the nature of the American political spectrum and, in so doing, actually praised the Left:

Here we see the fundamental difference between the right wing extremists and the left wing extremists. The right wingers would rather lose than

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give up one iota as far as principle is concerned. The left wing’s primary motivation is power. They are always willing to compromise their principles in order to get power because they know that without power they cannot put their principles into effect.\textsuperscript{447}

Nixon won vindication for this Romantic conception of politics in a conversation with Lyndon Johnson in July 1972. The ex-president admitted that he agreed with most of Nixon’s policies, foreign and domestic, and even detested all of the Democratic challengers for the White House. That said, Johnson refused publicly to endorse Nixon.\textsuperscript{448}

To paraphrase the Prussian military theorist and Romantic, Carl von Clausewitz, Nixon deeply believed that war was the continuation of politics, and policy, by other means. The president conceived of his war strategy in Vietnam not as commander-in-chief, but as the leader of the Republican Party, domestically, and of the Free World, globally. He was a genuine Machiavellian, not because he was willing to make tough sacrifices and ruthless decisions, but because he repudiated the Conservative morality of natural law, as well as the New Deal Liberal morality of social rights, for a Romantic morality of power. His efforts, however, were in vain, precisely because he, unlike the “right wingers” of which he spoke, was too willing to sacrifice principle for the opportunity to exercise power. The political program of Vietnamization ultimately failed because it was alien to the politics of natural law, and as a result, could not win even the support of the Vietnam War’s most ardent supporters: American Conservatives.

\textsuperscript{447} Richard Nixon, memo to Pat Buchanan, 10 June 1972, White House Special Files, President’s Personal File, Memoranda from the President, 1969-74, Box 4—Memos-May 1972 to Memoranda-June 1974, Folder 2, June 1972.
The Independence of Conservatism

Conservatives, of course, had long been skeptical of and frustrated with Nixon, on domestic and foreign issues. Even before they renounced their support for Vietnamization, Conservatives had broken politically with the president out of concern that he was not an orthodox Conservative. The failure of Vietnamization simply proved their suspicions. While the election primary season unfolded, Conservatives began casting about for new, more loyal faces for their cause. As early as June, the American Conservative Union, a consortium of mostly National Review journalists and intellectuals (including William F. Buckley), announced that it would not endorse Nixon for President in 1972, nor would it explicitly back a specific candidate at the time. The editors of National Review hinted at their preference, though, as they reported in the same column that the Young Americans for Freedom would endorse Ronald Reagan, whereas more Left-leaning Republicans favored a variety of candidates, including the antiwar U.S. Representative from California, Paul “Pete” McCloskey. The ACU took out a full-page “Declaration” in the 10 August edition of National Review to confirm their repudiation of Nixon. “[D]omestic considerations,” the Declaration asserted, “important as they are, pale into insignificance alongside the tendency of the Administration in foreign policy.” Although the ad defended Nixon’s good intentions in Southeast Asia, it roundly condemned détente and Chinese rapprochement as destructive of America’s strength. In spite of these failures, the Conservatives at ACU still thought that Nixon harbored Conservative values; he had simply lost his moorings in the stress of the

Presidency. They concluded the ad with the claim that “Our defection is an act of loyalty to the Nixon we supported in 1968.”

Of all the potential successors to Nixon, Conservatives gravitated most toward the little-known John Ashbrook, a Conservative and U.S. Representative from Ohio. National Review first trumpeted the Ashbrook candidacy in January 1972. After taking more shots at Nixon’s apparent foreign policy blunders, the editors praised Ashbrook as their dream candidate, “one of an exceedingly rare breed in political life: a man at once of principle and of skill and experience in practical politics.” Ashbrook, National Review hoped, was the man who Conservatives long had sought, and who Goldwater and Nixon failed to become: a credible, loyal, and electable Conservative. As the New Hampshire Primary approached on 7 March, the journal spun Ashbrook’s dark horse shot against Nixon as realistic, for only Ashbrook had the backing of most New Hampshire Conservatives. To illustrate the pressure building for Ashbrook, National Review reported that Goldwater’s staff was infuriated that the press misquoted the senator, who apparently had called Ashbrook’s candidacy a “threat” to “the entire party, the entire nation, the entire free world and freedom itself” for its potential to topple Nixon. As Ashbrook sank in the New Hampshire pre-primary polls, National Review radically changed its tone from triumphant to defeatist. A week before the primary, the editors consoled their saddened readership with a message to keep the faith, claiming that “the primary vote will not measure [the] objective validity” of Conservatives’ “fundamental

and guiding beliefs.” \textsuperscript{453} Nixon, of course, went on to win the New Hampshire primary by a strong margin; the liberal McCloskey took second place over the Conservative Ashbrook, who finished a distant third. \textsuperscript{454} Four months later, Buckley reassured readers that John Ashbrook had been a worthy candidate, one in whom Conservatives wisely invested their hopes and pride. Buckley fell back only upon the whims of the era’s “zeitgeist,” which unfortunately favored centrists like Nixon, as an explanation for Ashbrook’s defeat. \textsuperscript{455} In its disappointment, \textit{National Review} even entertained for a time the candidacy of George Wallace, which it claimed had become more “respectable,” even if he was not a true Conservative but a “populist.” \textsuperscript{456}

Largely missing from these discussions over potential candidates was Barry Goldwater. The Arizona senator had realized long ago that he had lost the mantle of Conservatism and simply remained an icon of its purity. In a letter to Buckley in June 1969, Goldwater asked, “If I came out for the Republican candidate [for New York City Mayor, John Marchi], would it help him, hurt him, or degrade him?” Goldwater, the symbolic leader of the Conservative Movement, doubted whether his “open endorsement of their candidate would be of any value.” \textsuperscript{457} As it turned out, Marchi rejected Goldwater’s endorsement. \textsuperscript{458} In 1970, Goldwater argued in one of his more introspective writings that he disagreed with a host of Conservative social policies. On free love, he admitted that “[T]he older generation engaged it in probably just as much as the younger

\textsuperscript{457} Barry Goldwater, letter to William F. Buckley, Jr., 21 June 1969, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 3, Folder 1: William F. Buckley, Jr.
\textsuperscript{458} Bill Rusher, memo to Bill Buckley, 7 July 1969, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 3, Folder 1: William F. Buckley, Jr.
generation. The only difference is that we used to sneak around the barn where you do it openly and honestly.” He also thought it was likely that marijuana was “no worse than alcohol” but wanted scientific proof before publicly advocating legalization. He premised these views, as well as his support for desegregation and world peace, on the fundamental axiom that “change is constant”—the antithesis of immutable natural law.459

In private Goldwater not only expressed his doubts about his own Conservative credentials, but also found great fault with his mentor, President Nixon. In a letter to Ronald Reagan as early as May 1969, Goldwater floated the idea of supporting the California governor for President in 1972, simply because Nixon had made some questionable appointments to his new Administration.460 Nixon’s apparent ineptitude as an administrator, given the many press leaks in his White House, stunned and dismayed Goldwater.461 Writing to libertarian economist Milton Friedman, Goldwater revealed that “President Nixon’s economic [policy] has me hanging on ropes and, frankly, his casual observance of deficit spending leaves me very close to not being able to support him, but when I think of the alternatives it scares the living hell out of me.”462

Like most New Right figures, Goldwater found Nixon’s domestic policies to be nearly as tragic as the Great Society. But he steadfastly defended the president, both as a political figure and commander in Vietnam, as the best man for the job at the time. In his personal correspondence with Nixon, Goldwater remained very deferential, even praising

459 Barry Goldwater, letter to William Quinn, Jr., 30 November 1970, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 18, Folder 1: William W. Quinn, Jr.
462 Idem., letter to Milton Friedman, 4 February 1972, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 6, Folder 22: Milton Friedman.
Nixon as possibly the best president ever.\textsuperscript{463} The senator and his staff bristled every time Buckley and other contributors to \textit{National Review} censured Goldwater for blindly following Nixon.\textsuperscript{464} Not even the early waves of Watergate shook Goldwater’s admiration of Nixon. As allegations of Nixon’s wrongdoing circulated through the national media, Goldwater insisted that Nixon’s efforts in rehabilitating the Republican Party in the New Deal era were enough to make him one of the best presidents of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{465} For his defense of Nixon, a crime against Conservatism, Buckley disowned Goldwater in early 1972. Buckley had attributed to Goldwater the quotation that Ashbrook was a “threat” to American freedom. “No American conservative,” Buckley continued after trashing the senator, “can ever live long enough to requite the debt he feels to Barry Goldwater. But he taught us so well, we cannot now, agreeing with him that the world threat is apocalyptic, accept with continuing docility the policies responsible for leading us to the brink.”\textsuperscript{466} Buckley later reiterated his disdain for the Presidential candidate he had helped create in 1964. As Goldwater had apparently defected from the Conservative Movement to support Nixon, Buckley mockingly wrote that “the prospect of losing Barry Goldwater is insupportable, and terribly, shatteringly sad.”\textsuperscript{467}

\textsuperscript{463} Idem., notes for diary, 22 November 1971, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 14: Richard M. Nixon; and idem., letter to Richard Nixon, 1 December 1972, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 14: Richard M. Nixon.
\textsuperscript{464} Tony Smith, letter to William F. Buckley, Jr., 6 January 1972, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 3, Folder 2: William F. Buckley, Jr.
\textsuperscript{465} Barry Goldwater, letter to Richard Nixon, 16 April 1973, Goldwater Papers, Alpha Files, Box 15, Folder 14: Richard M. Nixon.
Unlike Goldwater, Ronald Reagan skillfully maintained his support of Nixon without drawing the ire of Buckley, *National Review*, or even Clarence Manion. One of Reagan’s greatest abilities, after all, was political messaging; he used it to evoke a moral, not political, stance in support of Vietnamization in an attempt to remain out of Buckley’s firing line. In a speech to the American Legion in June 1972, Reagan conceded that the Vietnam War was “seemingly endless.” But he continued to say that United States had a moral obligation to continue fighting. The “present Commander-in-Chief…deserves the assurance that 200 million Americans will do whatever has to be done” to clinch victory. Limited war strategies of previous administrations, not Nixon’s Vietnamization, were to blame for whatever errors America committed in the war.\(^{468}\) Two months before the presidential election, Reagan restated his optimistic message that Nixon was “keeping that promise” of peace in South Vietnam that he had made in 1968. To support his claim, Reagan cited troop withdrawal statistics and defended Vietnamization as “realistic,” for it was a strategy “built on peace, not war.”\(^{469}\) Even though Buckley and his Conservative colleagues had given up on Vietnamization months earlier, they could not begrudge the hopeful, positive attitude that kept Reagan afloat, in part because they hoped Reagan might one day achieve what Goldwater, Nixon, and Ashbrook all failed to do.

By the time Reagan had come out publicly in support of Nixon, Conservatives from Buckley to Manion had realized that the president would be re-elected despite their best efforts. On 1 September, *National Review* published its official presidential

\(^{468}\) Ronald Reagan, speech at the American Legion Convention, 22 June 1972, Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P18 – Speeches, 8/68-12/72.

\(^{469}\) Ronald Reagan, speech at the American Legion Convention, 30 September 1972, Reagan Papers, Press Unit, Box P18 – Speeches, 8/68-12/72.
endorsement in the name of Richard Nixon, papering over the ACU’s bold refusal to do so a year prior. Nixon, the endorsement argued, was still not a Conservative, but Conservatives simply must hold their noses and vote against George McGovern for the interest of sheer American survival. Buckley later acknowledged the fact of Nixon’s overwhelming lead but nonetheless took the opportunity to praise Ronald Reagan as Conservatives’ next potential nominee. Clarence Manion, of course, was less enthusiastic. In a broadcast that he entitled “The November Dilemma,” Manion complained that Nixon’s Republican Party was not nearly Conservative enough to merit his endorsement. As National Review wrote of the spirit and tone of Nixon’s victory address, the best it could say was that it “was not Burke, but it was a long way from McGovern.”

Despite this apparent political defeat, Conservatives managed to keep alive their struggle for a military victory in Vietnam into the early days of Nixon’s second term. Manion lost little time resuming his attacks on the president. The fact that Nixon continued his limited strategy in Vietnam after the election, Manion and M. Stanton Evans argued in late November, illustrated that the president had been a centrist all along. In an ironic twist, James Burnham was highly critical of Nixon’s devastating Operation Linebacker II, or the Christmas Bombings of North Vietnam, in December 1972. Burnham, of course, did not take issue with the principle of escalation; he simply

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474 Clarence Manion and M. Stanton Evans, “The Second Time Around,” Manion Forum Broadcast No. 946 and 947, Mutual Broadcasting System, South Bend, IN, radio transcript, 26 November and 3 December 1972, Manion Papers, Box 84, Folder 84-4.
thought Linebacker II was too late in coming and illustrative of Nixon’s “Byzantine” style: “secretive, enigmatic, indirect, revolving more and more closely around the person of the ruler.” The president clearly was “drawing on his last political and moral reserves,” to the point where he was lashing out with somewhat irrational, over-the-top operations. Soon after Nixon ended offensive operations against North Vietnam on January 15, Buckley drew up a final assessment of Vietnamization. As America drove the war effort all along, and Nixon refused to train South Vietnamese troops and officials fully in the capacity to defend and rule their own nation, Buckley concluded that Nixon had failed to live up to his somewhat worthy plan. America’s heavy involvement in the Paris Conference alone illustrated the simple fact that Vietnamization had been a sham. Even after all parties signed the Accords, Conservatives refused to see an end to the Vietnam War.\footnote{“Meanwhile, in South Vietnam” \textit{National Review} 25:37 (14 September 1973): 984-985; James Burnham, “Back at the Same Old Stand?,” \textit{National Review} 25:49 (7 December 1973): 1346.} A separate peace with communist North Vietnam, after all, was not peace at all in the grand scheme of the Cold War.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Even before he assumed the Presidency, Richard Nixon posed a significant problem for Conservatives. Although they resoundingly supported him in the election of 1968, Conservatives did so with the hope that Nixon would reflect at least an element of their natural law philosophy in his foreign and domestic policies. They had reason to give him a chance, after all. One of his major campaign themes focused on the enforcement of “law and order” to save America from the disillusioning tumults of the Antiwar, Civil Rights, and Countercultural Movements. He also promised “peace with
“honor” in Vietnam, which to many Conservatives meant a full repudiation of the limited
war strategies of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Conservatives did not fully understand, however, just how divergent Nixon’s
intellectual tradition was from their own. Far from being amoral or simply pragmatic,
Nixon expressed with his foreign policy a clearly moral philosophy, illiberal yet also
distinctly opposed to the natural law tradition, that echoed the values of Romanticism and
an admiration for power. This difference was palpable to Conservatives, even if most of
them, save perhaps Richard Brookheiser, could not find the words to identify it. To
them, Nixon’s détente—including Vietnamization—represented a stark divergence from
their own vision of the Cold War as a Manichean struggle between light and dark,
capitalist and communist, natural law and evil. Like New Deal Liberals, Nixon blurred
these boundaries, even as they appeared all but immutable to the orthodox Conservative.
He did so, though, in ways that appeared outwardly Conservative. Vietnamization
promised a swift end to the war and the salvation of American troops. Nixon
aggressively pursued bombing, launched a bold incursion into Cambodia, fiercely
denounced the Antiwar Movement, and fluently articulated the rhetoric of total war. It
took Conservatives nearly two years to realize that they, too, not simply the Vietnamese,
were the targets of Vietnamization, a political campaign designed foremost to manage
American public opinion in support of Nixon. As soon as Conservatives realized that
Nixon’s support of ostensibly Conservative policies rested within what they considered
an erroneous, even dangerous, intellectual tradition, they had little choice but to abandon
him and every figure that defended him, including Barry Goldwater.
By the end of American involvement in Vietnam, Conservatives took control over the New Right, exiled even figures like Richard Nixon and Barry Goldwater, and produced a political philosophy based on natural law. Their efforts in reviving an intellectual tradition all but lost to American politics by the 1950s owed much to the Vietnam War. Unlike Nixon, or his Renaissance counterpart, Niccolò Machiavelli, Conservatives refused to sacrifice their classical, Judeo-Christian ideals in the pursuit of political gain, even if it meant losing a war in the process.
Conclusion

“This gentle man of tension, for whom history, and whose history, had been a fury of tension between God and man, now relaxed.”

The father of American Conservatism died on 1 April 1972. On Good Friday, the day prior, the cancer-stricken Frank S. Meyer sat upright in his bed to say goodbye to his dear friend and colleague, William F. Buckley. “Well, said Frank, he wanted to join the Church,” Buckley recounted. Years ago, Buckley continued, Meyer had believed that “if only he could figure out a way of taking the collectivism out of the Church...he would come into it.” Meyer had admitted on his deathbed that he still had reservations about the Catholicism’s stances on various issues. Yet he accepted baptism, renouncing his undefined Christianity as he had once renounced communism and Judaism. “Not a philosopher or a polemicist or a political general, but an historian,” as L. Brent Bozell eulogized Meyer, “his life was a battleground” of varied beliefs. Only after Marxism had led him to the “spiritual desert” did Meyer realize that “God had entered history,” and that “the war between heaven and hell was to be decided in his own soul.”

At the end of his life, Meyer conceded what his Catholic friends, Buckley and Bozell, had argued for decades: God and man were at war. Virtue ultimately outweighed

freedom in the balance of ultimate values. Absolute truth required the individual to defer his or her will to God. Conservatism, consequently, meant the preservation, the promotion, the politicization of this natural law. In a sublimely poetic way, Meyer’s final act, his conversion to Catholicism, symbolized the redefinition of the New Right Movement. A hodgepodge of various anti-New Deal ideas and inclinations, the movement stumbled haphazardly throughout the turbulent 1960s upon anti-communism and libertarianism, civil rights and tax policy, Goldwater and Nixon, Midwestern Republicans and Southern Democrats. If conservatives found relaxation in this tension, they did so only through recognition of the eternal conflict between God and man, and the Vietnam War as the searing manifestation of it. Conservatives articulated a collective conscience, an ideology of natural law, that redefined the New Right Movement as a crusade for the American way of life.

The road to ideology was neither easy nor visible to those Traditionalists who stood uneasily among the disordered ranks of New Right activists in the 1950s. Along with their classical conservative, libertarian, Fusionist, and populist kin, they did not know of the trials that the New Right would face as a result of the Vietnam War and the turbulent foreign policy debates that it sparked. Although generally in agreement about the dangers of domestic and foreign welfare policies, the rapid disintegration of anti-communist forces in Southeast Asia split conservatives on the practical necessity and moral consequences of foreign aid as a Cold War weapon. Despite their effective powerlessness in Washington, Traditionalists set the tone for the New Right on foreign aid, and foreign policy in general, with media campaigns from the Manion Forum to the publication of popular works like Conscience of a Conservative. Given that the
quintessential pragmatist, Barry Goldwater, appended his name to that Traditionalist bible, this early Traditionalist “victory” over other New Right schools was not without its great share of historical irony.

The ideology of Conservatism emerged as a direct result of another major foreign policy debate concerning Vietnam. The idea of total war served a dual purpose for Fusionists like Meyer and Traditionalists like Bozell. First, it literally denoted a military strategy without limits, one that demanded the complete mobilization of the American people and the unconditional surrender of the communist forces in Vietnam. With their unified voice, the new Conservative alliance declared that any end short of these absolute goals served not the liberal-capitalist West but international communism. Second, a strategy of total war inspired Conservatives to envision the New Right Movement itself as the home front of the Cold War. Classical conservatives promoted a glorified liberalism in their pursuit of incremental change and endorsement of pluralism. Libertarians offered strong critiques of communism, but their material interests contrasted sharply with the spiritual dictates of the Grand Tradition. Populists, with their eccentricities and appeals to the common man, could not generate the critical intellectual energy required to face down New Deal Liberalism. The new Conservatives synthesized a global vision of war by combining the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and the intellectual war between God and man into one coherent vision.

That vision, however, never remained static. The antidraft movement of the late 1960s prompted Conservatives further to reduce the influence of the libertarian elements in Fusionism in favor of a purer loyalty to natural law Traditionalism. What prompted this rebalancing of Conservatism was not the draft itself, for most New Right activists
generally agreed that the draft was a violation of basic freedoms. Rather, Conservatives noted with apprehension those forms of dissent—from civil disobedience of Martin Luther King, Jr., to the sit-ins and protests of the Students for a Democratic Society—that they believed undermined basic social order. Natural law, by definition, honored the rule of law everywhere, in every context, without exception. Only in the legislative arena, Conservatives argued, may dissenters voice their opposition to policy. Libertarians like Karl Hess dangerously risked law and order with their permissive, unbridled attitudes toward free speech, or even toward the rules of grammar. Conservatives’ resulting purge of libertarians sapped their alliance of much of its anti-collectivist energy, making it less an equal partnership of conservative schools than a natural law ideology that drew occasionally on libertarianism.

Conservatism trended even more toward Traditionalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to Richard Nixon and his policy of Vietnamization. The enigmatic Nixon never quite won over Traditionalists’ hearts, even if few of them realized exactly why they so disliked him. Perhaps only Richard Brookheiser correctly interpreted Nixon’s Romantic values. He drew a clear distinction between the president’s impassioned, individualistic pursuit for personal and national glory and the Traditionalist Conservatives’ intellectual submission of the individual to the rule of natural law. Nixon’s foreign policy, as a result, embraced a politics of realism and pragmatism that betrayed the sanctity of natural law. Far from respectful of America’s singular role as the standard-bearer of the Grand Tradition, Vietnamization entrusted American interests to the South Vietnamese and admitted the limits of American power. Détente likewise embraced pluralism through rapprochement with China and bilateral negotiations with
the North Vietnamese at Paris. As a result, Conservatives turned on the Republican president and his defenders, including “Mr. Conservative” himself, Barry Goldwater. Their choice was a fateful one: ideological purity, at the cost of incremental achievements, would remain a central goal of the New Right to the present day.

Even if Traditionalists in the 1950s could have foreseen American involvement in the Vietnam War, few would have predicted, let alone desired, their eventual articulation of a distinctive ideology to rival New Deal Liberalism or communism. Indeed, their consistent embrace of the anti-ideological theorist, Leo Strauss, as an intellectual influence belied the reality of Conservatives’ most enduring achievement. After Strauss’s death in October 1973, *National Review* ran a series of articles on his legacy and influence upon the New Right Movement. One of Strauss’s most prominent Conservative students, Harry V. Jaffa, reminded readers that Conservatism, by dint of its ancient origins, transcended the original sin that Machiavelli had committed when he gave birth to modernity. “The great political philosophers after Machiavelli,” including Locke, Rousseau, and Marx, all “attempted in their doctrines to guarantee the actualization of a certain kind of just or legitimate regime, by taking their bearings, not by that regime which is everywhere best, but by what all men actually everywhere are.”479 The hubris of liberals and communists led them to build societies based on the law of men, not on the law of nature and God. As a revival of this Grand Tradition, Conservatism was not a creation of man, and therefore an instrument of man’s tyranny over other men, but a creation of God, and thus the one, perfect guide to moral belief and action.

Conservatism, though, was a modern ideology. Like New Deal Liberalism, it was a creation of man, a subjective interpretation of man’s place in history, an articulation of specific, Western values for mass political consumption. Despite their denials and appeals to universal truth, Conservatives were as guilty of Machiavelli’s “sin” as Liberals. Both groups reduced the complexity of human nature into instruments of power to wield against domestic and foreign foes. Although contemporary adherents would deny the analogy flatly, Conservatives redirected the New Right in the 1960s in a similar manner as the Bolsheviks redirected the Russian Social Democratic Party of 1900s and 1910s. A minority faction in their political movement, Conservatives gradually ousted ideological rivals like libertarians and classical conservatives to gain dominance, just as the Bolsheviks whittled down the influence of Mensheviks through successive party congresses and local soviets. Regardless of whether Conservatives attributed their ideas to God or natural law, they remained ineluctably human in their interpretation and use of those ideas for political and social ends.

Whereas the Paris Peace negotiations of 1972 and early 1973 gradually brought the Vietnam War to a close, the war between God and man in the New Right only just had begun. The acolytes of the new Conservative orthodoxy had not succeeded entirely in their campaign to excommunicate every non-conformist. Only a month after Meyer’s death, the classical conservative and sociologist, Peter Berger, critiqued two fatal

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“paradoxes” of the Conservatism in an attempt to resurrect his exiled school. First, the Conservative ideology was “antiliberal” despite its attachment to a “liberal society,” a trait that granted it “a certain air of negativism and even petulance.” To resolve their monist critique of a pluralist nation, he argued, Conservatives must “withdraw from political participation” and cede the public sphere to more “practical” (in other words, classical) conservatives. Second, Conservatives suffered from a “selective humanism.” They held to a clear double standard in their moral condemnation of brutal communist regimes yet simultaneous defense of equally brutal anti-communist ones. This hypocrisy would vanish, he claimed, when Conservatives remember that theirs is a “perennial humanism” as much as a “perennial philosophy.” Like Peter Viereck before him, Berger sought to reeducate conservatives with the true tradition—the temperamental, practical humanism—that they had lost. Instead of going back centuries, though, conservatives had only to look back a few decades, before the articulation of the Conservative ideology.

Although they published Berger’s heterodox tract, the editors of National Review clearly signaled readers that they did not condone his views. In fact, they tellingly revealed Berger’s place in the new hierarchy of the New Right with the publication of two sharp, Conservative responses from Jeffrey Hart and James Burnham, who, in the editors’ words, “most respectfully, register their dissent” against Berger’s call to a renewed classical conservatism. Hart and Burnham effectively ignored Berger’s

483 Ibid.

At least for the time being, Conservatism, and by extension, natural law Traditionalism, had achieved preeminence within the New Right. Over the 1970s and beyond, Conservatives worked tirelessly to apply their new faith to policies other than Vietnam, from abortion and sexuality to taxation and housing. Whereas Conservatives for the first time generally agreed on intellectual issues and policy, however, their distinctively moral approach to such policies began to have an unanticipated, adverse effect. The Traditionalist Gerhart Niemeyer, a professor of government at Notre Dame (and, like Meyer, late-in-life convert to Catholicism), noted with unease the rise of “moral overscrupulousness” in the 1970s,

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  albeit not with regard to our own actions but rather to the social system as a whole. There we insist on standards of absolute perfection. We go to ridiculous lengths in having an appointee to high office prove himself clean of any past flaw. We feel that the President should be impeached for even the suspicion of wrongdoing…. This excessive moralism in condemning the whole puts each judging individual on the throne of instant righteousness, as all blame is laid on ‘the system,’ the ‘sick society,’ ‘capitalism,’ ‘imperialism,’ ‘the Establishment’—all of them epithets, you will note—while the blaming person glows in the halo of moral purity.\footnote{Gerhard Niemeyer, “What Happened to Morality?” \textit{National Review} 25:47 (23 November 1973): 1300.}
\end{quote}

Niemeyer clearly laid blame for this “excessive moralism” at the feet of liberals. His references to the use of terms like “the system” as “epithets” alluded not so subtlety to figures like Tom Hayden, groups like the Students for a Democratic Society, and the New Left in general. But Conservatism, too, played as important a role in infusing American politics of the 1970s with moral language, as this dissertation has shown exhaustively.
The larger phenomenon that Niemeyer decried—the individual’s assertion of a subjective morality as absolute—also resulted as much from Liberal ideology as from Conservatism. On this point, Conservatives’ own Leo Strauss was instructive. Strauss concluded that postmodernity, “the wave that bears us today,” was undeniably Nietzschean, in the sense that many individuals no longer conceived of the universe as abiding an absolute law. According to Strauss, Nietzsche believed that “Nature has ceased to appear as lawful and merciful. The fundamental experience of existence is therefore the experience, not of bliss, but of suffering, of emptiness, of an abyss. Nietzsche’s creative call to creativity was addressed to individuals who should revolutionize their own lives, not to society or to his nation.” In other words, when postmodern individuals acknowledged that absolute truth was either nonexistent or unattainable, they in turn created subjective, self-serving moralities justified in universal terms, whether conservative or liberal. This paradox of postmodernity, in part, drove Strauss to one of the key ideas of his own thought: morality should be grounded in the Grand Tradition of Western philosophy, which, even if incorrect, has nevertheless promoted stability and prosperity for two millennia. Strauss’s choice of the Grand Tradition was not arbitrary in the sense that was without reason. That said, he did concede the postmodern claim that human beings must approach any worldview with ultimate skepticism, even agnosticism.486

486 Leo Strauss, “What is Political Philosophy?” in What is Political Philosophy and Other Studies (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 54. He first published this essay in 1959. I use the term “postmodernity” for clarification, as Strauss more accurately called the contemporary period as the “third wave of modernity.” Strauss asserted similarly anti-ideological ideas, all contrary to Conservatism, in The City and Man (Chicago: Chicago, 1964), Thoughts on Machiavelli, and On Tyranny, Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth, eds. (New York: Free Press, 1991). The Straussian theorists Catherine and Michael Zuckert even went to far as to call Strauss himself a “postmodern thinker.” See The Truth about Leo Strauss, 80-114.
In short, the articulation of Conservatism as an ideology has contributed as much as Liberalism to the postmodern malaise that Niemeyer portrayed as dangerous to the American social order. The Conservative Movement of the 2000s has endured tempestuous debates and fractures that historians of future generations, having access to documentary evidence currently inaccessible, will interpret on their own terms. That said, it is clear that groups like the Republican Party, the Tea Party, Americans for Tax Reform, Americans for Prosperity, and other right-wing institutions are once again fighting for control over the Conservative ideology. As they reinterpret it, they face the challenge of articulating an irreducible, universal truth in reductionist, human terms—a challenge which Strauss believed only will generate ideologies of and for men, not of God for men. When Conservatives articulated an ideology to fight a modern war (whether in Vietnam or, more recently, in Iraq), they ironically joined Liberals, communists, and other ideologues the same practice that drove conservatives to oppose these modernists in the first place.

History, as the conservative Henry Adams argued, is a dynamic process. Its end is not nigh. Ideas are constantly in flux, changing shape and definition with every generation’s reinterpretation of its past. Consequently, the task for historians of conservatism at present remains, perhaps not coincidentally, a rather Straussian one. As Lawrence Veysey asserted in 1979, scholars must operate “under the paradoxical working assumption that all ideas are false but important.”487 Whether this potential truth can underwrite a political and social movement remains a task for the politician and activist, not the historian.

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