

**The Red Tandem: Conservative Republicans  
and Socialism in Contemporary America**

**By**

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## Declaration

I, Michael Espinoza, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has  
been indicated in the thesis.

Signed: 

Date: 11 April 2016

## Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of contemporary American political history, examining conservative Republican rhetoric as it relates to polarisation, four-party politics and a governing philosophy.

In particular, it analyses conservative Republican rhetoric and the strong emphasis associated with the socialist label, especially how the socialist label is employed as a critique against the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy – the modern American welfare state.

I compare the difference in how conservative Republicans employ the socialist label in the context of being the majority party, as well as of being the minority party. I utilise James MacGregor Burns' original four-party politics argument and reorganise it in order to best explain American domestic politics in the post-Cold War era – separating the Republican presidential party from its congressional party.

The thesis examines how conservative Republican rhetoric is strategic. It is effective at casting a negative light on the opposition, but creates a false impression of a conservative Republican governing philosophy.

Conservative Republican rhetoric is strongest when it opposes something, usually big government in some way, such as opposing national health care reform. On the other hand, once conservative Republicans are in a position of power, they have to scale back their anti-statist rhetoric so that it leads to lasting accomplishments, instead of railing against government and shirking the responsibilities of governing. This involves a combination of pragmatism and ideology – which becomes harder to achieve as the GOP moves further rightward.

Conservative Republican rhetoric has evolved over time from its original libertarian economic-centred argument against the New Deal. In the post-Cold War era, this rhetoric still draws on the “less government” economic argument, whilst also calling for more government intervention on socio-moral issues.

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I also want to thank my parents and the rest of my family (this also includes my in-laws) for listening to me (and Cait) talk about my thesis for the last four years.

And of course, any faults in this thesis are my own.

I would like dedicate this thesis to my daughter, Valentina Margaret Espinoza. I will love you forever.

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## Introduction – The Red Tandem

*Under the tousled boyish haircut [of JFK] it is still old Karl Marx – first launched a century ago. There is nothing new in the idea of government being Big Brother to us all. Hitler called his “State Socialism” and way before him it was “benevolent monarchy”.*

-Ronald Reagan<sup>1</sup>

*The America in which we grew up is vastly different from the America the secular-socialist Left want to create. And that's why saving America is the fundamental challenge of our time. The secular-socialist machine represents as great a threat to America as Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union once did.*

-Newt Gingrich<sup>2</sup>

In contemporary America, conservative Republicans have used the socialist label to smear and discredit Democrats in an attempt to portray the Republican Party as the defenders of American values, all whilst accusing Democrats of pursuing un-American goals that will undermine these ideals. They use specific rhetoric in order to construct their argument against Democrats, and to bolster their assertions that the terms Democrat, liberal and socialist are interchangeable.

The opening quotations by Gingrich and Reagan demonstrate the overall critique that conservative Republicans employ against liberal Democrats. They consider them to be socialists, whilst equating all socialists with Nazis. Both quotations reflect a longstanding belief that the “Red Fascism” of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia were similar forms of totalitarianism. Many Americans considered both the Nazis and the Soviets to be one and the same during the 1930s, whilst during World War II, Germany became the focus of American enmity, and in the Cold War-era the Soviet Union became the sole enemy.<sup>3</sup> A growing trend

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<sup>1</sup>Reagan wrote this remark in a letter to Richard Nixon on 15 July 1960. Taken from: Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan: A Life in Letters* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 705.

<sup>2</sup>Newt Gingrich, *To Save America: Stopping Obama's Secular-Socialist Machine* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2010), 4.

<sup>3</sup>For more, see: Les Adler and Thomas Paterson, “Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930's-1950's”, *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (April 1970): 1046-1064, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1852269> (accessed 24 September 2011).

in the post-Cold War era, however, has been to state that all Democrats are liberals – as well as being socialists. But why is this case?

According to political scientist Terence Ball, the use of the "socialist" label has intensified during the Obama presidency because "the 'L' word (liberal) has lost it[s] shock value".<sup>4</sup> Another view is that of conservative scholar Steven F. Hayward who asserts:

If we understand socialism in its strict definition — central economic planning and public ownership of the means of production — then the president [Obama] is obviously not a socialist (with a mild caveat for the auto bailouts, the banks, etc).

But if we step back a moment and consider "socialism" more broadly as a step increase in political control of or intervention in the economy — whether it be through a revival of Keynesian-style stimulus and things like "cash for clunkers" subsidies, or through a government semi-takeover of the health care sector — then the charge appears more salient.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, historian Andrew Hartman states: "In short, lumping socialism together with all things liberal has a long history. It's no surprise that such rhetoric has *not* gone the way of the cold war" [emphasis added].<sup>6</sup>

But what has changed in the post-Cold War era is the makeup of the political parties, transforming how the socialist label can be used against a Democratic Party that no longer has a conservative wing.

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<sup>4</sup>The quotation is from: David Crary, "Obama 'Socialist' Claim Persists On Right Despite Inaccuracies", *Associated Press*, 4 June 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/04/obama-socialist-claim-history\\_n\\_1568470.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/04/obama-socialist-claim-history_n_1568470.html) (accessed 4 March 2014).

<sup>5</sup>The quotation is from: The Editors, "What Is Socialism in 2009"? *New York Times* blog, 14 September 2009, <http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/14/what-is-socialism-in-2009/> (accessed 27 May 2014).

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* John White, however, argues the opposite – the rhetoric did go away because the end of the Cold War removed the fear of the red label. For more, consult: John Kenneth White, *Still Seeing Red: How the Cold War Shapes the New American Politics*, updated and expanded ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 199-285.



## **My Contribution to the Field**

The key question I set out to address is:

- Is the socialist label strategic rhetoric or is it merely part of conservative Republican vernacular?

I also examine two secondary questions, which are:

1. What is the relationship between rhetoric, polarisation and “four-party politics”?
2. Do conservative Republicans have a governing philosophy, or is their anti-statist rhetoric creating a misrepresentation of what can be accomplished versus an entrenched New Deal state?

My methodology comprises the use of both primary and secondary sources, and the unique aspect of this approach is its originality in analysing how the socialist label is important to conservative Republican rhetoric. Other scholars tend to overlook or downplay the significance of the label in its relation to conservative ideology, party politics and policy initiatives.

The answers to these questions will help address how conservative Republicans rely on rhetoric as a political strategy, one that produces two important outcomes. Firstly, it is effective at casting a negative light on the opposition. Secondly, it creates a false impression of a conservative Republican governing philosophy. In the post-Cold War era, conservative Republicans have consistently argued for *less* government on economic issues, but, increasingly, they also have argued for *more* government on socio-moral issues. The combination of free-market economics and moral traditionalism, at first glance, offer two differing interpretations on the role of government, but another rationale is also possible. The two views may seem to call for opposing government roles, but on the issues of limited government this is not as clear cut as it may seem. Limited government only refers to the

size of the federal government in relation to its tax base and revenue spending. The rise in importance of social issues does not necessarily relate to an increase in the size of government, but rather a shift in how a conservative-led GOP is attempting to defend what it believes is an attack against traditional moral values. This position is streamlined with the conservative Republican economic argument against the welfare state since the FDR presidency.

This thesis is a work of political history, and examines politics from a historical perspective. It is a long study particularly concerned about public rhetoric. The majority of the thesis analyses post-1994 GOP conservatism. However, the introduction, first chapter and second chapter also examine the pre-1994 history to provide insight into the changing nature of GOP politics. Public records, memoirs, diaries and interviews give sufficient patterns of political strategy and rhetoric. Archives would have been a pre-1990s set up, whereas the body of work is contemporary history, post-1990s archival records are not yet fully accessible.

What I add to the field is the following: how rhetoric is a key part of Republican political strategy to gain political power, and what is its utility for producing a Republican majority; and how historical study illuminates contemporary Republican conservatism. This study therefore addresses the evolution of conservative Republicanism from the 1930s through the 1980s as a prelude to its primary focus on post-1994 party reconfiguration.

How does this thesis relate to bigger issues and the broader historical and political science scholarship? Regarding history, many contemporary works focus on “the rise of

conservatism”.<sup>7</sup> My focus is on what conservatism can achieve politically in the aftermath of this rise. Works that form an important framework for this thesis include Donald Critchlow’s *The Conservative Ascendancy* and Gregory Schneider’s *The Conservative Century*, for their analysis of conservative Republicanism into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>8</sup> I also draw on James MacGregor Burns’ *The Deadlock of Democracy* for the concept of four-party politics.<sup>9</sup> The works of David Farber and Lee Edwards discuss how key individuals like Robert Taft, Barry Goldwater, William Buckley, Phyllis Schlafly, Ronald Reagan, Newt Gingrich and George W. Bush have shaped conservative Republicanism.<sup>10</sup> And lastly, Sean Wilentz’s *The Age of Reagan* provides an analysis on the lasting influence of Reagan in American politics from the 1970s into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, whilst Patrick Allitt’s *The Conservatives* shows in-depth research on American conservatism from the Early Republic (1780s) into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>11</sup>

On the subject of political science works, I want to contribute to understanding how polarisation can both embolden and impede conservatism, with a focus on the dynamic

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<sup>7</sup>For more, see: Julian E. Zelizer, “What Political Science Can Learn from the New Political History”, *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (May 2010): 28-29, <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.polsci.032708.120246>. For more of the ongoing debate within the field since 1994, refer to: Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism”, *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (April 1994): 409-429, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2167281>; Leo P. Ribuffo, “The Discovery and Rediscovery of American Conservatism Broadly Conceived”, *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 2 (January 2003): 5-10, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25163573>; Julian E. Zelizer, “Rethinking the History of American Conservatism”, *Reviews in American History* 38, no. 2 (June 2010): 367-392, [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/reviews\\_in\\_history/v038/38.2.zelizer.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/reviews_in_history/v038/38.2.zelizer.pdf); Kim Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism: A State of Field”, *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 3 (December 2011): 723-743, <http://jah.oxfordjournals.org/content/98/3/723.full.pdf+html>. All were accessed 7 February 2015.

<sup>8</sup>Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011); and Gregory L. Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

<sup>9</sup>James MacGregor Burns, *The Deadlock of Democracy: Four-Party Politics in America* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963).

<sup>10</sup>Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement that Remade America* (New York: Free Press, 1999); and David R. Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>11</sup>Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper, 2008); and Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

between political power, rhetoric and polarisation.<sup>12</sup> Two of the key works in the field that influence this thesis are Sean Theriault's *The Gingrich Senators*, and Kenneth Cosgrove's *Branded Conservatives*. Each highlights how the partisan rhetoric of conservative Republicanism greatly influences political debate, dominating discussion previously controlled by liberal Democrats.<sup>13</sup> Conservatism, on the other hand, can differ in the White House versus the Congress.

Reconfiguring four-party politics provides an alternative way to view Republican conservatism at the presidential and congressional levels, as well as how it relates to Democratic Party politics. Within the framework of four-party politics, it is evident that Republican conservatism is better geared to Congress and an anti-Washington message. It cannot be both a party of opposition and government. It has failed to recognise the success of Reagan's pragmatism, but has succeeded in following his implementation of the socialist label. The conservative socialist critique comes from a place of privilege, supporting individual values and ideals over collective interests. But before moving on to four-party politics in more detail, a definition of conservatism is now needed.

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<sup>12</sup>Some of the works on polarisation include: Nolan McCarthy, Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006); Arthur Paulson, *Electoral Realignment and the Outlook for American Democracy* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2007); Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein. *It's Even Worse than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*. New York: Basic Books, 2012; Sean M. Theriault, *Party Polarization in Congress* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Donald C. Baumer and Howard J. Gold, *Parties, Polarization, and Democracy in the United States* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2010); Barbara Sinclair, *Party Wars: Polarization and the Politics of National Policy Making* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Mark D. Brewer and Mack D. Mariani, *Diverging Parties: Social Change, Realignment, and Party Polarization* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003); as well as Scott A. Frisch and Sean Q. Kelley, eds., *Politics to the Extreme: American Political Institutions in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>13</sup>Sean M. Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators: The Roots of Partisan Warfare in Congress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Kenneth M. Cosgrove, *Branded Conservatives: How the Brand Brought the Right from the Fringes to the Center of American Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

## Defining Conservatism

Addressing what is conservatism and what it stands for is not a straightforward issue. Even the debate amongst conservative academics is far from unanimous – with varying perspectives that include political pragmatism, an anti-New Deal libertarian position, and southern traditionalism.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, how does one define conservative Republicanism, how does it differ in comparison to moderate Republicanism, and what is Democratic liberalism in comparison to GOP conservatism? These points are pivotal in attempting to comprehend and address what conservatism is, what it stands for, and what it opposes. Once this is covered in more detail, I will go on to conceptualise how conservative Republicanism defines and utilises the socialist label – as well as articulate how the two relate to what I term the New Deal legacy.

Conservatism as an ideology cannot solely be defined by what it stands for. What it is against must also be understood, especially in its opposition to liberalism.<sup>15</sup> As political scientists Charles Dunn and J David Woodward state: “Conservatism is about cultural traditions and values which defy simple definition. In America, the status quo which conservatism defends is a complex amalgamation of beliefs and values not easily summarized”.<sup>16</sup> They do, however, go on to “*define conservatism as a defense of the political, economic, religious, and social status quo from the forces of abrupt change, that is*

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<sup>14</sup>For more on these perspectives, consider: George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, Since 1945*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998), 300; Schneider, *The Conservative Century*, xiii; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 5; Paul Gottfried, *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), ix-x; and Thomas Fleming, “Old Right and the New Right”, in *The New Right Papers* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), ed. Robert W. Whitaker, 181-182.

<sup>15</sup>The differences between conservatives and liberals are also biological; for more, see: John R. Hibbing, Kevin B. Smith and John R. Alford, *Predisposed: Liberals, Conservatives, and the Biology of Political Differences* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>16</sup>Charles W. Dunn and J, David Woodard, *The Conservative Tradition in America*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 23.

*based on a belief that established customs, laws and traditions provide continuity and stability in the guidance of society*".<sup>17</sup> Although any attempt to explain in great detail what conservatism stands for in contemporary America is very complex, the best way to simplify this is to compare it to liberalism, for in the view of Dunn and Woodward: "Conservatism is best defined by examining its various types and their differences with liberalism".<sup>18</sup>

The meaning of conservatism is complex because as the ideology has evolved, so too has its meaning. And a direct link to this evolution has been the redefining of liberalism. As historian Gary Gerstle remarked, "[t]he liberalism of our time, with its emphasis on racial equality, minority rights, and expansive notions of individual freedom, differs substantially from the liberalism of the interwar years, which was focused on taming capitalism; further, both liberalisms differ from Progressivism. All three represents a substantial departure from the classical liberal program of limiting the government's right to interfere with the economic and political liberties of its citizens".<sup>19</sup> The strength of liberalism, according to Gerstle, was its "protean character", which was based on "three fundamental principles: emancipation, rationality, and progress", which allowed liberalism to take on a political ideology that kept it at the centre of politics from 1932 to the mid-1960s, when it was undone by White animosity to civil rights.<sup>20</sup> And since then, liberalism has been trying to recover the centre ground of politics ceded to conservatism.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>19</sup>Gary Gerstle, "The Protean Character of American Liberalism", *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 4 (October 1994): 1045, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2168769> (accessed 4 February 2015).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 1046, 1073. Although Doug McAdam and Karina Kloos argue that the civil rights moved both parties from the centre, Democrats to the left and Republicans to the right; Doug McAdam and Karina Kloos, *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 79-120.

<sup>21</sup>Arthur Schlesinger was one who considered New Deal liberalism to have formed the centre ground of politics heading into the post-war period; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (1949; repr., New York: De Capo Press, 1998). For more on how liberalism lost the centre of politics, refer to:

In support of this argument, journalist Sidney Blumenthal argues: “The conservatives are replacing the old party politics with an ideological politics in which the ideas order up the images. In their view, a party is only useful when it serves the ends of ideology”.<sup>22</sup> And as sociologist Jerome Himmelstein highlights, “the ideological strength of conservatism . . . [is] the capacity to picture a natural, spontaneous order (whether in American society or the world) and to blame the disruption of that order on liberal elites and their policies and ideas”. And until liberals regroup and offer an alternative message, the conservative narrative will remain the dominant message.<sup>23</sup> But as historian Patrick Allitt’s work on American conservatism brings to light, the enduring strength of conservatism is less reliant on a vibrant ideology than a robust “attitude” that outlines what it supports, as well as what it has opposed through American history.<sup>24</sup> Such a notion refutes the argument of political scientist Louis Hartz that the mainstream American political tradition was historically liberal, and had no legitimate alternative (such as conservatism and socialism).<sup>25</sup> In his words, “The ironic flaw in American liberalism lies in the fact that we have never had a real conservative tradition”. Such a perspective identified conservatism as emanating from feudalism a stage of societal development never experienced by America.<sup>26</sup> Although Allitt

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Jeffrey Bloodworth, *Losing the Center: The Decline of American Liberalism, 1968-1992* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013); and Iwan Morgan, *Beyond the Liberal Consensus: A Political History of the United States since 1965* (London: Hurst & Co., 1994). Race was a delicate issue for the New Deal coalition, but others included citizenship and benefits; for more, see: William H. Chafe, “Race in America: The Ultimate Test of Liberalism”, in *The Achievement of American Liberalism: The New Deal and Its Legacies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), ed. William H. Chafe, 161-179; and Suzanne Mettler, “Social Citizens of Separate Sovereignities: Governance in the New Deal Welfare State”, in *The New Deal and the Triumph of Liberalism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), eds. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, 231-271.

<sup>22</sup>Sydney Blumenthal, *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment: From Conservative Ideology to Political Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 313.

<sup>23</sup>Jerome Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 62, 210-211.

<sup>24</sup>Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 2, 278.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955).

<sup>26</sup>*ibid.*, 57.

considers Hartz's argument outdated,<sup>27</sup> it still remains influential.<sup>28</sup> Allitt's own view of conservatism as an "attitude" also neglect's its embodiment of a set ideals in relation to a single aim: power.

Political scientist Corey Robin, in *The Reactionary Mind*, examines how conservatism, both in America and Europe, is not solely reactionary, but is instead a mind-set intent on maintaining or regaining power at the elite level.<sup>29</sup> He highlights how opposition to liberalism, whilst important, is secondary to conservatism's primary concern of "defend[ing] particular orders – hierarchical, often private regimes of rule – on the assumption, in part, that hierarchy is order".<sup>30</sup> Moreover, conservatism's reaction to a threat has always been radical because it fears losing ascendancy to those empowered by liberals.<sup>31</sup> In his assessment, the enduring trait of conservatism has been how it evolves and responds to challenges and defeat. In this sense it is reactionary, but Robin maintains there is an underlying goal of "reconfiguration of the old and absorption of the new", which enables conservatives "to transform a tottering old regime into a dynamic, ideologically coherent movement of the masses".<sup>32</sup> This tactic, in his view, allows conservatism to branch out and

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<sup>27</sup>Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 280.

<sup>28</sup>Examples include: Mark Hulliung, eds., *The American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered: The Contested Legacy of Louis Hartz* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010); Michael Foley, *American Credo: The Place of Ideas in US Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3-4, 7, 203-204, 218-222, 229, 297-298, 302, 372-373, 390, 393-401, 407, 413, 431-432, 437; Bloodworth, *Losing the Center*, Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of the Republican Era* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 10, 23, 28, 30, 84-85, 123-124, 126-127; and James T. Kloppenberg, "In Retrospect: Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*", *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 3 (September 2001): 460-478, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30030991> (accessed 19 February 2015).

<sup>29</sup>Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). This differs from Schneider's argument that conservatism evolved from a reactionary response against the New Deal into a political revolution that has achieved and thus far maintained power, as well as from Nash's argument that conservatism shed this element in order to offer a practical alternative to liberalism.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 24

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 43.



engage with the masses “without disrupting the power of elites, or more precisely, to harness the energy of the mass[es] in order to reinforce or restore the power of elites”.<sup>33</sup>

Robin’s premise, however, also groups liberals, communists and socialists as part of the left, which is true in relation to conservatism, but also reveals how conservative Republicans can avow that liberalism is part of a leftist coalition against conservatism. This is of importance both rhetorically and ideologically for conservatives, but although liberalism is to the left of conservatism, it can also be placed to the right of socialism and communism and thus acts as a buffer ideology between left and right.

As political scientist Theodore Lowi argues in *The End of the Republican Era*, even though liberalism is to the left of conservatism, liberalism is in the center, not on the left, with conservatism on the right.<sup>34</sup> The left comprises of socialism and social democracy, whilst old and new liberalism is in the centre, whereas old and new conservatism is on the right.<sup>35</sup> Lowi considers that every American president from Franklin Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter was liberal, and the difference between the two was the gradual changing of old (classical) liberalism into new (modern) liberalism by the end of the 1960s. Also resulting from such a change was the birth of new (modern) conservatism. Lowi considers that new liberalism and new conservatism split the values of old liberalism, whilst new liberalism was influenced by the social equality stance of the New Left, new conservatism embraced all of old conservatism’s moral traditionalism. Of major importance to Lowi was how the ongoing Republican critique against the New Deal state from the 1950s to the 1980s helped them to succeed “miraculously well in their not-so-subtle redefinition of liberalism as Left and as

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<sup>33</sup>ibid., 55.

<sup>34</sup>Lowi, *The End of the Republican Era*.

<sup>35</sup>ibid., 19; table 1.3.

Socialism. As President Ronald Reagan himself put it, the Democrats are ‘so far Left, they’ve left America’”, and as a result liberal Democrats have disassociated themselves from the liberal label “which contributed further to the discrediting of liberalism”.<sup>36</sup> The lack of a vibrant socialist American movement helped Republicans brand liberalism, especially new liberalism, as socialism.

On the other hand, Lowi and Robin both highlight the statist mentality of conservatism to ensure socio-morals,<sup>37</sup> yet they present contradicting perspectives on moderates. Lowi considers Dwight Eisenhower to be an old liberal, whilst Richard Nixon was a new liberal.<sup>38</sup> Robin, on the other hand, regards Nixon as a conservative.<sup>39</sup> The two contradicting perspectives minimize the importance of moderates. Moderates do exist, but are more pragmatic and less committed to liberalism or conservatism, and are willing to stand in the middle and embrace the centre ground whilst dealing with the political realities at hand, acting sometimes out of necessity and other times by choice. The same is also true for liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. The importance of the ideological diversity within the political parties from 1933 to 1994 is that whilst they were ideologically incoherent, they could still be politically significant.<sup>40</sup> This was especially true for the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>37</sup>The importance conservatives place on culture can also be viewed as an ideology in itself. For more, see: Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (1973; repr., Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), 51-74.

<sup>38</sup>Lowi, *The End of the Republican Era*, 42, 89.

<sup>39</sup>Robin, *The Reactionary Mind*, 34.

<sup>40</sup>There are, however, some varying arguments amongst political scientists on the relationship between parties and ideologies. John Gerring regards the parties as two opposing ideological entities, on the other hand, Matt Grossmann and David Hopkins consider the GOP as the lone ideological party, whilst Hans Noel argues that political parties and ideologies work together to form coalitions. For more, refer to: John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Matt Grossman and David A. Hopkins, “Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats: The Asymmetry of American Party Politics”, *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 1 (March 2015): 119-139, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1537592714003168> (accessed 18 April 2015); and Hans Noel, *Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Democratic Party from 1930 to 1980, a fifty-year period of a diverse electoral coalition.<sup>41</sup>

However, the post-1994 four-party politics dynamic has put GOP moderation into near extinction at the national level.<sup>42</sup>

What distinguishes Republican conservatism from GOP centrism is the level of ideological commitment and practical rationalism. Whilst both position themselves against Democratic liberalism, the level of commitment is much greater for conservatives than for moderates. But where liberalism and conservatism can be viewed as part of the American fabric, it is much more difficult to place centrism in a similar regard.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon were no friends of Democratic liberalism,<sup>44</sup> but their centrism earned them many enemies within the Republican right.<sup>45</sup> Yet they were

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<sup>41</sup>Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). Economic liberalism was the driving force behind the rise of the New Deal coalition, and the change to social liberalism in the 1960s became its downfall. For more, refer to: *ibid.*, and Everett Carl Ladd, "The Shifting Party Coalitions – 1932-1976", in *Emerging Coalitions in American Politics* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1978), ed. Seymour Martin Lipset, 81-102.

<sup>42</sup>For more on the declining influence of Republican moderates, see: Geoffrey Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>43</sup>Moderation/centrism was not one the "compounds" that have dominated American political history in the same manner as capitalism, pluralism, liberalism, conservatism, populism or nationalism; for more, consult: Foley, *American Credo*, esp. part III. However, Gil Troy argues that there has been a strong and vibrant tradition of moderate presidents; Gil Troy, *Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents: George Washington to Barack Obama*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

<sup>44</sup>Moreover, both were not reluctant to use the socialist label to criticise liberal Democrats and policies that they disagreed with; for examples, see the next chapter and the section on how presidents respond to the socialist label. I also include examples of Nixon's rhetoric in 1946 and 1950 later on in this chapter. Although Eisenhower tended to be more critical of New Deal liberalism in private than he was in public; for an example see: Robert Griffith, "Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Corporate Commonwealth", *The American Historical Review* 87, no.1 (February 1982): 91-92, 98-99, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1863309> (accessed 16 January 2015).

<sup>45</sup>Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 39-40, 42-44, 77-103; David W. Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 121-128, 135-137, 138-142, 150-159, 219, 223-227; Schneider, *The Conservative Century*, 92-94, 98, 101, 122-127; and Lewis L. Gould, *The Republicans: A History of the Grand Old Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 237-241, 267-271.

determined to offer a challenge to the liberalism of the day, but such a challenge benefited them personally more so than the party at large.<sup>46</sup>

Even though there is a contrast between Republican centrism and Republican conservatism, the divergence between Democratic liberalism and conservatism is much greater. I now offer definitions for both conservatism and liberalism.<sup>47</sup> Based on the previous comments by Dunn and Woodward, Blumenthal, Himmelstein, Allitt, Robin and Lowi, I define conservatism as a set of ideals and values that form a base of an evolving political ideology – a major component of conservatism is its opposition to the “liberal” position. Based on works by Gerstle, Lowi and Robin, I define liberalism as a set of ideals and values that forms the base of an evolving political ideology that, in the absence of a strong socialist/communist presence in America, can also be labelled as left-wing. This perspective holds especially true for Post-Cold War conservatism, which this study demonstrates is on par with socialism in the eyes of the right.<sup>48</sup> I will go into more detail on how socialism is a key part of conservative rhetoric later in this introduction, but here I will add how linking liberalism with both socialism and big government is important to the conservative critique, giving it flexibility. Language and redefining the liberal label<sup>49</sup> has greatly helped

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<sup>46</sup>Alonzo L. Hamby, *Liberalism and Its Challengers: From F.D.R. to Bush*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 115-138, 298-338; Robert Mason, *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 148-181, 216-246; and Gould, *The Republicans*, 239-240, 267, 270, 272.

<sup>47</sup>Also see: Christopher Ellis and James A Stimson, *Ideology in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2-10.

<sup>48</sup>However, such a grouping can also produce opposing viewpoints. Historian Doug Rossinow argues that this is far from the case and is a mistake, whilst Historian Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones argues that such a grouping has its merits. For more, see: Doug Rossinow, “Partners for Progress? Liberals and Radical in the Long Twentieth Century”, in *Making Sense of American Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), eds. Jonathan Bell and Timothy Stanley, 17-37; and Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The American Left: Its Impact on Politics and Society since 1900* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

<sup>49</sup>Conservative Republicans, in the past, tried to claim the proper usage of the liberal label when it referred to classical liberalism. Franklin Roosevelt used the liberal label as a way to attract Republican voters to the liberal label and not the Democratic Party. Roosevelt elected to use the term liberal instead of socialism to attract voters instead of repelling them. Herbert Hoover used the socialist label against Roosevelt

conservatives and the GOP since 1980, and has also, in the process, reshaped Democratic politics.<sup>50</sup>

An essential part of modern/contemporary liberalism is the ongoing importance of the New Deal. As political scientist Michael Foley states: “The pivotal point in the development of American liberalism remains the New Deal. . . . The rise of the positive state and the redefinition of liberal values were prompted by the catastrophic collapse of the American economy during the Great Depression”.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, he affirms that “the nature of that liberalism is closely bound up with the character of the New Deal and of the society it brought into being”.<sup>52</sup> A core element of New Deal liberalism for Foley was the birth of the modern welfare state and its natural political legacy. The Great Society added to the liberalism of the New Deal tradition with pragmatic social welfare initiatives like Medicare, as well as others such as Medicaid and Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Throughout the thesis, I will refer to this as the New Deal legacy; a legacy started by the first New Deal in 1933 which has grown ever since with subsequent additions like the Great

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to attack Roosevelt’s policies in an effort to imply that Roosevelt’s policies were not liberal, in the true meaning of the word, but were instead a foreign concept that attacked freedom. However, the Great Society and the Vietnam War began the decline of popularity of the liberal label, and this was the time when conservative Republicans, such as Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, started to embrace the conservative label. For more, refer to: Ronald Rotunda, *The Politics of Language: Liberalism as Word and Symbol* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), 3-4, 10-17, 52-65, 72-73, 88-98. And for more on Reagan and political language, consider: David Green, *Shaping Political Consciousness: The Language of Politics in America from McKinley to Reagan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 256-259, 267-269.

<sup>50</sup>For more on this point, see: Kenneth S. Baer, *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2000); and William C. Berman, *America’s Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>51</sup>Foley, *American Credo*, 276.

<sup>52</sup>*ibid.*, 278.

Society;<sup>53</sup> a legacy that has also shaped the evolution of Republican conservatism since 1933.<sup>54</sup>

However, as conservatism has evolved so has its meaning, but this evolution has united conservatism under the GOP banner, making it a political force with enormous influence over the party. All of the changes have made Republican conservatism more powerful politically, but the increase in support also makes it challenging to accommodate a growing base when its supporters disagree. But in order to merge and join conservative Republicanism, a branch has to be willing to accept the viewpoints of the elements that preceded it. Of course that does not imply that each wing has to completely agree with the views of another, but a common cause must take precedent in order to maintain unity.

Enormous influence and party unity, however, are more complicated when the same party can be divided internally into competing factions. In his classic 1963 study *The Deadlock of Democracy*, James MacGregor Burns argued that on the national level, there are four-parties, instead of two, vying for power in the New Deal order: congressional Democrats, congressional Republicans, presidential Democrats and presidential Republicans. Their ideological breakdown, from most liberal to most conservative was as follows – presidential Democrats, presidential Republicans, congressional Democrats and congressional Republicans.<sup>55</sup>

The shift in the four-parties, from the conservative Republican perspective, is that their party has become more conservative whilst the Democrats have become more liberal.

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<sup>53</sup>Occasionally, however, I will refer to this as the New Deal/Great Society legacy when highlighting how the Great Society stands out from the New Deal, whether by differences in legislation, or how conservative Republicans like Ronald Reagan choose to focus his critique of the legacy towards the Great Society instead of the New Deal.

<sup>54</sup>For Foley's take on this, see pages 298-299 and 333-338 in *American Credo*.

<sup>55</sup>Burns, *The Deadlock of Democracy*, 195-203, 257-264.

Some, like political scientist Matthew Levendusky, argue that this party breakdown indicates that both parties, Republican and Democratic, are now polar opposites. Republicans are the conservative party and Democrats are the liberal party.<sup>56</sup> Another explanation, by way of political scientists Byron Shafer and William Claggett, is that the parties were further separated over economic, welfare, cultural and national differences. Each party benefits from the separate positions. Democrats have dominant liberal positions on economic and welfare issues, whilst Republicans have dominant conservative positions on cultural and national matters. Each of the party strengths is what makes the Democrats the liberal party and the Republicans the conservative party.<sup>57</sup> I agree that Democrats are the liberal party, whilst Republicans are the conservative party. Yet this is only when they are compared to each other.<sup>58</sup> Another argument, however, can offer an alternate perspective, one that illustrates the intra-party struggles of both parties.

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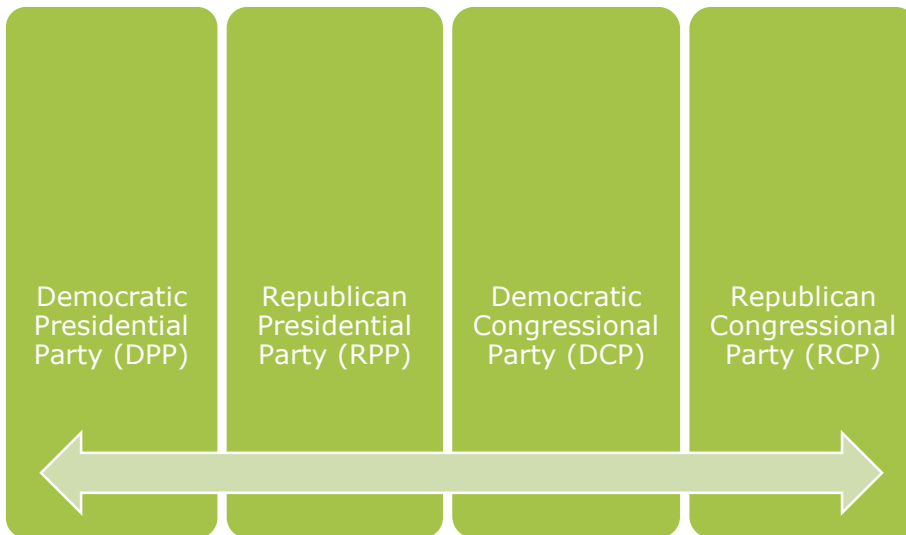
<sup>56</sup>Matthew Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>57</sup>Byron E. Shafer and William Claggett, *The Two Majorities: The Issue Context of Modern American Politics* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

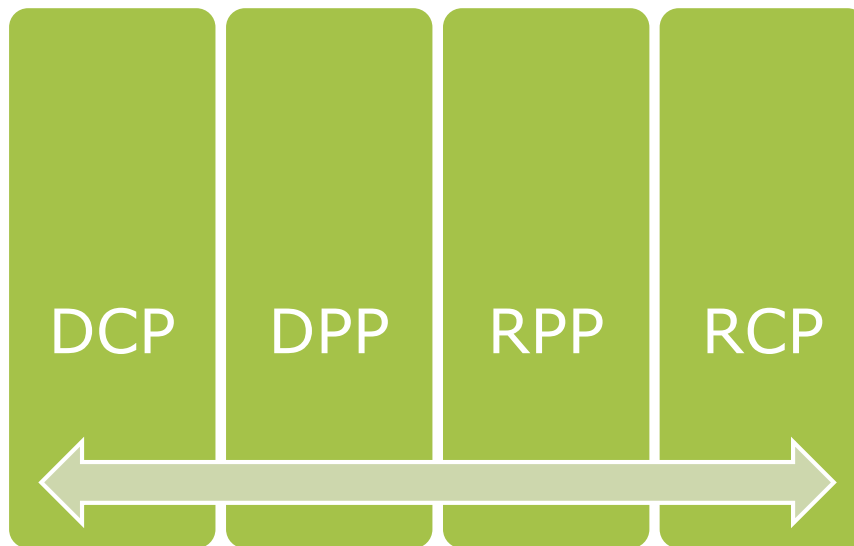
<sup>58</sup>Ellis and Stimson, *Ideology in America*.

*The evolution of “four-party politics”*

*Burns’ 1963/1964 framework*



*Post-1994 framework*



At first glance, it may seem that the alterations I have made to Burns’ original breakdown of the four-parties concur with Levendusky, and Shafer and Claggett. The changes I made have put the two Democratic parties, congressional and presidential, to the left and the two Republican parties, congressional and presidential, to the right. What I am adding to the discussion is that the change within each of the four-parties indicates there is



not a liberal Democratic Party versus a conservative Republican Party, but instead two sets of battles, one is a battle within each party, congressional versus presidential, and the other is a battle between the opposing parties, Democratic and Republican.<sup>59</sup> The outcome is that the congressional Republicans, presidential Democrats and presidential Republicans have become more conservative than when Burns' work was published. The congressional Democrats are also more liberal than they were in 1963.<sup>60</sup> Overall, the change in the four-parties has made the Democratic Party less liberal than before, whilst the Republican Party has become much more conservative.<sup>61</sup> Such a change did not happen overnight, but was instead gradual with the 1994 midterm elections acting as the decisive event. Yet what the shift also resulted in an increase in polarisation between Democrats and Republicans.<sup>62</sup>

### **Polarisation and Four-Party Politics**

Although polarisation is an issue, the importance political scientists place on it can result in misinterpreting how it affects the two main political parties. This is so in part

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<sup>59</sup>However, Earl Black and Merle Black (amongst others), consider the parties to have more "ideological purity" and thus the parties can be considered to be the liberal Democrats versus the conservative Republicans. For more, consult: Earl Black and Merle Black, *Divided America: The Ferocious Power Struggle in American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2008). I consider conservative Republicans to have more "ideological purity" because they have a great deal of influence within their party, whilst liberal Democrats and moderate Democrats have more intra-party battles, which indicates less of an "ideological purity" within the Democratic Party in comparison to the Republican Party.

<sup>60</sup>For an example of how House Democrats evolved and became more liberal, consider: Nelson W. Polsby, *How Congress Evolves: Social Bases of Institutional Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>61</sup>Two examples of this change in the Congress can be found in the South and the Northeast. The conservative leanings in the South have shifted from Democrats to Republicans, whilst liberals in the Northeast have changed their allegiance from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party. For more on the South, refer to: Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003). For more on the Northeast, see: Howard Reiter and Jeffrey Stonecash, *Counter Realignment: Political Change in the Northeastern United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>62</sup>For an analysis on how polarisation affects ideology and "party position change", see: David Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For possibilities on how polarisation effects rhetoric on policy issues, refer to: Rebekah E. Liscio and Jeffrey M. Stonecash, "Parties, Public Policy Differences, and Impact", in *New Directions in American Political Parties* (New York: Routledge, 2010), ed., Jeffrey M. Stonecash, 255-262.

because of how the parties are ideologically represented. The GOP is conservative-dominated and the Democratic Party is comprised of a mix of liberals and moderates. The loss of southern Democrats to the GOP occurred over time as the priorities of the parties changed, making them more distinct from one another, especially on race and social issues.<sup>63</sup>

More polarisation, however, does not necessarily result in equal polarisation amongst the two parties, for the Republican Party is much *more* polarized than the Democratic Party.<sup>64</sup> The main reason for this is the rise of southern conservatives within the GOP rank-and-file.<sup>65</sup> Theriault argues that the influx of southern conservatives are “extremists” when compared to the southern Democrats they replaced in the broader American polity.<sup>66</sup> Although polarisation is more prevalent in the GOP, it has moved the congressional parties to the left and right of their respective presidential parties. The post-1994 shift has also

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<sup>63</sup>Stonecash, Brewer and Mariani, *Diverging Parties: Social Change, Realignment, and Party Polarization*; Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center*, 85-86; David Lublin, *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Morris P. Fiorina, with Samuel J. Abrams, *Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation in American Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 99-121; Paulson, *Electoral Realignment and the Outlook for American Democracy*, 56-59, 63-88; as well as McAdam and Kloos, *Deeply Divided*.

<sup>64</sup>For more, see: Sean M. Theriault, “Party Polarization in the US Congress”, *Party Politics* 12, no. 4 (July 2006): 483-503, <http://ppq.sagepub.com/content/12/4/483.full.pdf+html> (accessed 16 March 2015); Thomas S. Langston, “Making Stale Debates Fresh Again: The Causes and Consequences of the Defense of Ideology as a Regime Imperative”, 20-24; a paper from the “Governing the U.S. in Polarized Times” conference, Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford, 17 April 2013, <http://www.rai.ox.ac.uk/sites/rai/files/Langston%20paper%20040313.pdf> (accessed 10 March 2014); Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It’s Even Worse than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 51-58; Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Off Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy*, with a new afterword (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 5-7, 118; as well as Nolan McCarthy, Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal and Chris Hare, “Polarization is Real (and Asymmetric)”, *The Monkey Cage* blog, 15 May 2012, <http://themonkeycage.org/2012/05/15/polarization-is-real-and-asymmetric/> (accessed 31 March 2015).

<sup>65</sup>Theriault, “Party Polarization in the US Congress”, 495-498; Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Off Center*, 116-118; and Sinclair, *Party Wars*, 14-20.

<sup>66</sup>Theriault, “Party Polarization in the US Congress”, 498.

decreased the presidential parties' success rates with the opposing congressional party whilst increasing their success rate with their own.<sup>67</sup>

The emergence of more ideologically-aligned parties benefits conservative Republicans. This is not to suggest that realignment of the parties has also polarised the American public.<sup>68</sup> My concern is to show that it is advantageous to the GOP far more than to Democrats (and liberals).<sup>69</sup> In most circumstances, the public has only the two main parties to choose from when voting, and left with only two alternatives, voting Republican becomes identifying.<sup>70</sup> This compels the voter to choose based on their perceived conservative identity, supporting a candidate who reflects this perception, regardless of the candidate's policy or ideology. If anything, voters would change their policy stance if their preferred candidate opposed it.<sup>71</sup> This view further supports the notion that conservative

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<sup>67</sup>Works that support this point, include: Sinclair, *Party Wars*, 355-361; Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 156-164; and George C. Edwards III, "Obama's Burden: Governing in Polarized Times", in *Obama's Washington: Political Leadership in a Partisan Era* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2014), ed. Clodagh Harrington, 56-60.

<sup>68</sup>For more on this point, refer to: Morris P. Fiorina, with Samuel J. Adams and Jeremy C. Pope, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Longman: Boston, 2011); Fiorina and Adams, *Disconnect*, 3-23. However, others like Alan Abramowitz, Marc Hetherington, and Jonathan Weiler argue the opposite; Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center*; Marc J. Hetherington and Jonathan D. Weiler, *Authoritarianism and Polarization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>69</sup>Nolan McCarthy, "The Policy Effects of Political Polarization", in *The Transformation of American Politics: Activist Government and the Rise of Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), eds. Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, 224.

<sup>70</sup>For more on this point, see: Gabriel S. Lenz, *Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); as well as Shanto Iyengar, Gaurav Sood and Yphtach Lelkes, "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization", *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 405-431, <http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/76/3/405.full.pdf+html> (accessed 26 March 2015).

<sup>71</sup>Lenz highlights how this reversal in policy position occurs in America, as well as in other Western Democracies; Lenz, *Follow the Leader*.

Republicans benefit from symbolic support, yet the support still empowers conservatism to continue with its tactical polarisation.<sup>72</sup>

Journalist Thomas Edsall contends that polarisation is a conservative Republican strategy to use anger as a divisive wedge where values politics are used to split and divide America.<sup>73</sup> This increasingly polarised environment is driven by the growing ideological divide between conservatism and liberalism.<sup>74</sup> However, this divide does not necessarily benefit conservative Republicans, because although the majority of Americans consider themselves to be conservative, many of them also fall into the “symbolic conservative” and “operational liberal” categories, which means they claim to be conservative but they also support government programmes. According to political scientists Christopher Ellis and James Stimson “A substantial majority of self-identified “conservatives” . . . hold preferences . . . that are inconsistent with their ideological identification”.<sup>75</sup> This internal conflict presents conservative Republicans with an opportunity to reform popular programmes like social security and Medicare, but it also limits them in what they can hope to achieve. Nonetheless, this will not stop conservative Republicans from attacking the New

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<sup>72</sup>The increase of economic inequality since the late 1970s can be linked to the increase of polarisation, with Democrats in favour of addressing growing inequality, whilst Republicans have taken the opposite tack. For more, refer to: McCarthy, Poole and Rosenthal, *Polarized America*.

<sup>73</sup>Thomas Byrne Edsall, *Building Red America: The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for Permanent Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 50-77.

<sup>74</sup>Ellis and Stimson, *Ideology in America*.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 97. Furthermore, this was no different from a previous study conducted in 1964; *ibid.*, 90-114. For the 1964 account, see: Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril, *The Political Beliefs of Americans: A Study of Public Opinion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1967). Ellis and Stimson also label “symbolic conservatives” as “conflicted conservatives”; James A. Stimson *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 90-95; Ellis and Stimson, *Ideology in America*, 111, 149-155, 169-174, 177-183.

Deal and its ongoing political legacy.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, as a result of the GOP becoming more conservative, conservative elite opinion has become more influential.

## The Conservative Elite

The conservative elite form the vanguard of the conservative Republican assault on liberalism.<sup>77</sup> The message begins at the top and works its way down through the rank and file.<sup>78</sup> The conservative elite is a combination of sources: the Republican Party leadership; conservative media outlets like Fox News, *National Review*, *Human Events*, *Washington Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial and op-ed columns, and Red State blog; conservative think tanks (the Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, Claremont Institute, and the American Enterprise Institute are but a few of them) and non-profit organizations (such as FreedomWorks).<sup>79</sup> The combination of these conservative elite influences dictates how the rest of the conservative voting base, along with swing voters, can be persuaded to vote for the conservative message – a feat that Levendusky highlights as “elite driven” sorting.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>And as a result of the 2008/2009 recession, US politics can be viewed as a war of austerity between Democrats and Republicans, with social security and Medicare being two of the major battle fronts. For more, refer to: Thomas Byrne Edsall, *The Age of Austerity: How Scarcity Will Remake American Politics* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012).

<sup>77</sup>For a general overview of American elitism, consult: Robert Lerner, Althea Nagai and Stanley Rothman, *American Elites* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); and C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 269-297. The elite is wealthy and influential, and has much more influence on public policy than the general public. For more, see: Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens”, *Perspective on Politics* 12, no. 3 (September 2014): 572-577, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1537592714001595> (accessed 18 April 2015).

<sup>78</sup>Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*, 35-37. However, Shafer and Claggett suggest that the party rank and file has more influence on the elite than either Levendusky or I believe is the case. For more on this view, refer to: Shafer and Claggett, *The Two Majorities*, 131-136.

<sup>79</sup>There are also others that I did not mention above, such as big business, the National Rifle Association and evangelical Christians. For more on who is the elite, consider: Lerner, Nagai and Rothman, *American Elites*, 8-17; for more on who is the conservative elite, consult: Hacker and Pierson, *Off Center*, 11-12, 32-34, 120, 135-162, 210.

<sup>80</sup>Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*, 3. According to Warren Miller and M. Kent Jennings, Democrats have an elite base that has a mixture of liberal and moderate views, whilst the Republican elite base is becoming more conservative. For more, refer to: Warren Miller and M. Kent Jennings, *Parties in Transition: A Longitudinal Study of Party Elites and Party Supporters* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986), 240-247. For an example of what the elite bases support, as well as the different factions, consider: John S. Jackson,

According to political scientist Gerald Pomper, half of a party's focus is based on its elite – whilst the other half is on the masses – which leads to the outward expression of ideological party goals.<sup>81</sup> Or, as political scientist Thomas Langston put it: “elites educate the masses to support the party line”.<sup>82</sup>

What is the aim of the conservative elite? According to political scientists Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, it wants “to tie together . . . [its] network of conservative activists and institutions and direct it toward nationally determined and carefully delimited ends”.<sup>83</sup> It wants to brand anything it opposes as big government liberalism, socialism, communism, totalitarianism, and/or fascism, all five terms considered interchangeable.

Conservative Republicans, as part of the conservative elite, want to shape public opinion.<sup>84</sup> It is difficult to control public opinion, but easy to control the conversation, steering it in a direction helpful to their cause, whilst at the same time damaging the opposition. Walter Lippmann considered public opinion to be a tool used to gauge what a particular polling sample thought in response to the questions asked, but believed those

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Nathan S. Bigelow and John C. Green, “The State of Party Elites: National Convention Delegates, 1992-2000”, in *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), eds. John C. Green and Rick Farmer, 59-78. There are, however, two competing ideologies within the conservative elite, which are an anti-government market principle and a pro-government morality philosophy. For more, refer to: Kenneth B. Hoover and Raymond Plant, *Conservative Capitalism in Britain and the United States: A Critical Appraisal* (London: Routledge, 1989), 76-83; David Edgar, “The Free or the Good”, in *The Ideology of the New Right* (Cambridge: Polity, 1986), ed. Ruth Levitas, 55-79; and Desmond King, *The New Right: Politics, Markets and Citizenship* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1987), 7-27.

<sup>81</sup>Gerald M. Pomper, *Passions and Interests: Political Party Concepts of American Democracy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 6-19.

<sup>82</sup>Langston made this remark at the conference on “Governing the U.S. in Polarized Times”, Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford, 17 April 2013.

<sup>83</sup>Hacker and Pierson, *Off Center*, 120. They, however, opted for a more limited focus in their analysis on “New [conservative] Power Brokers” to individuals, for example Tom DeLay and Grover Norquist, instead of a wider study on the conservative elite; *ibid.*, 11-12, 32-34, 120. For an analysis on elites in general, consider: Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites: And the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

<sup>84</sup>For more on the political shaping of public opinion, refer to: Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro, *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 47-54.

responses “should have no bearing upon whether it is sound public policy”.<sup>85</sup> Yet public opinion is a vital tool for conservative Republicans to claim that their positions on certain policy initiatives are in line with the public’s. Conservative Republicans use opinion polling as a means of persuasion, and occasionally propaganda.<sup>86</sup> The conservative Republican intent is to persuade the public that their argument is the valid one, rendering the liberal Democrat argument invalid. The frequency of hearing an argument may be linked to the likelihood of agreeing with it.<sup>87</sup>

As previously stated, the conservative media is one component of the conservative elite.<sup>88</sup> It wields an enormous amount of influence on public opinion,<sup>89</sup> and the rhetorical message it conveys is influential and can be conveyed through television, the internet, newspapers/magazines and talk radio.<sup>90</sup> One of the more established and well-regarded conservative media outlets is the *National Review*.<sup>91</sup> William Buckley founded the magazine

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<sup>85</sup>Walter Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), 41-42.

<sup>86</sup>For more on propaganda, persuasion and public opinion, see: Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 1, 27-35, 44-46. For more on just public opinion and propaganda, consult: Leonard Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948).

<sup>87</sup>For more, see: Stimson *Tides of Consent*, 16-21. Both parties, however, attempt to manipulate the public to support one alternative over another. For more, refer to: Paige and Shapiro, *Politicians Don’t Pander*, 366-382.

<sup>88</sup>For more, consult: Lerner, Nagai and Rothman, *American Elites*, 15. On the other hand, Levendusky does not consider the media to be part of the elite. For more, see: Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*, 18-21.

<sup>89</sup>For more, refer to: Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 163-175; Stimson, *Tides of Consent*, 17-19; Benjamin Paige and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans’ Policy Preferences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 319, 321-322, 331-332, 353-354; and William G. Mayer, *The Changing American Mind: How and Why American Public Opinion Changed between 1960 and 1988* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 277-298.

<sup>90</sup>Fox News, the internet and talk radio are influential media outlets that are helping to increase the influence of the conservative elite message.

<sup>91</sup>For more, see: Jeffrey Hart, *The Making of the American Conservative Mind: National Review and Its Times* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005); Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 40-41, 62, 64-74; Linda Bridges and John R. Coyne, Jr., *Strictly Right: William F. Buckley, Jr. and the American Conservative Movement* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 39-239; Rebecca E. Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 23, 41, 67, 69, 92, 237; and Paul Lyons, *New Left, New Right, and the Legacy of the Sixties* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 60-61, 135-136.

in 1955 to offer a voice to conservatives against the perceived domination in mainstream America by the “liberal media”.<sup>92</sup> The *National Review* is an important conservative media outlet that spreads its message via its own magazine and online (internet) publications, as well as opining through other conservative media outlets, such as Fox News and AM talk radio, and even on other media outlets such as CNN, NBC and ABC. Another outlet for the *National Review* is to have its editors and other contributors publish books expressing a conservative elite opinion.<sup>93</sup>

A further example of conservative elite influence, although more solely focused on business interests, is the US Chamber of Commerce. More recently, the Chamber has voiced its opposition against national health care reform and the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, it has a history of opposing more taxes, more oversight and the expansion of big government, claiming they are pathways to socialism.<sup>95</sup> This is part of the trend of big business from the mid-1930s throughout the 1950s.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>To understand why, in his own words, Buckley started the *National Review*, consult: Gregory Schneider, ed., *Conservatism in America Since 1930: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 195-205. For more on the notion of a liberal dominance of the media, see: S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman and Linda Lichter, *The Media Elite* (Bethesda: Adler and Adler, 1986), 20, 28-53, 293-301. For more on the conservative elite perspective on the “liberal media”, refer to: William Rusher, *The Coming Battle for the Media: Curbing the Power of the Media Elite* (New York: William Morrow, 1988); and Nick Thimmesch, ed., *A Liberal Media Elite?* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1985), 8-10, 36. The pages I have included from Thimmesch are comments that are made by Rupert Murdoch.

<sup>93</sup>Yet this does not imply that the conservative elite is always in agreement. The difference in opinion on Bush’s attempt to reform Medicare is one example where it was divided.

<sup>94</sup>For more on the Chamber’s views on the ACA, go to: <https://www.uschamber.com/health-care> (accessed 10 March 2014).

<sup>95</sup>Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America, Committee on Economic Policy, *Socialism in America* (Washington, DC: Chamber of Commerce, 1950), 3, 17, 22, 53-54, 60.

<sup>96</sup>For more, see: Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 161-164; and Robert M. Collins, *The Business Response to Keynes, 1929-1964* (New York: Columbia Press, 1981), 23-52, 106-112, 117-122, 158-170. And for more on business and its war against the New Deal, consult: Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).



Another example, during the Cold War era was business leader Lemuel Boulware of General Electric (GE) who proclaimed in 1949:

Our free markets and our free persons are at stake.

We don't like the proposals for further greatly enlarged government expenditures now being urged on the public by a combination of government and union officials.

The size of taxes – now proposed – is bad enough.

But the manner of their collection is disgracefully worse – is indefinitely more ominous for our whole future as well as for the future of any free market and any free person – for our taxes are now being based on political rather than economic considerations.<sup>97</sup>

Boulware went on to state that proceeding on the present course was “Our real danger . . . [and] that, while we are scared to death of communism, too many of us seemingly haven't come to fear socialism at all. . . . Let's keep in mind that communism and socialism have only recently – and erroneously – come to be thought of by the public as two different things. Communism is just a slight variant of socialism, as were fascism and Nazism”.<sup>98</sup>

Boulware's comments comprise the basic tenets of what became known as Boulwarism – a mixture of “economic understanding, moral fortitude and political sophistication”.<sup>99</sup> All of which became comprise part of Ronald Reagan's political education to conservative Republicanism during his time as a spokesman for GE from 1954-1962.<sup>100</sup> Historian Robert Griffith, for example, argues “the reform programs of the New Deal prompted nervous conservatives to again raise the specter of Communism. Anti-

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<sup>97</sup>This was part of Boulware's speech at Harvard University on 11 June 1949. Taken from: Thomas W. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 229-237; the text is from page 230.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 233-234.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 45. For more on Boulwarism, consider: *ibid.*, 37-56; and Lemuel R. Boulware, *The Truth About Boulwarism: Trying to do Right Voluntarily* (Washington, DC: Bureau of National Affairs, 1969). For more on Boulware and GE, refer to: Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 97-105, 107-111; and her article titled “American Counterrevolutionary: Lemuel Ricketts Boulware and General Electric, 1950-1960”, in *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), ed. Nelson Lichtenstein, 249-270.

<sup>100</sup>Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan*; and Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 111-114.

Communism, of course, was a traditional tactic of conservative opponents of social reform . . . . During the thirties it simply became sound conservative doctrine to attack the New Deal as the forerunner of an American bolshevism. ‘If Roosevelt is not a Communist today,’ charged Robert A. Taft of Ohio, ‘he is bound to become one’<sup>101</sup>.

Although conservative Republicans accuse “liberal” Democrats of advocating socialism, do they believe that such a strategy is necessary in order to win elections? Whilst I have not done an in-depth search on this particular question, there have been instances where this was indeed the case. Although Robert Taft adamantly believed the policies of liberal Democrats would lead to socialism, he also assumed that the GOP could be successful in the 1950 midterm elections by making socialism a vital theme. In a letter to John Foster Dulles on 23 December 1949, he plainly stated his belief for such a stance.

I do not find any grassroots support for the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Law, for the Brannan Plan, or for Socialized Medicine. I believe both the farmer and the working man are open to conviction on these issues, and that a campaign against the labor-socialistic form of government which is now being urged upon us will be successful.

Our problem is to reach the large population of voters who don’t really have any opinion on the subject and are, therefore, open to persuasion. In some ways, we may be better off in 1950 because I believe Truman will have to endorse the whole gamut of socialistic measures, so that the issue will be more clearly presented and more clearly understood than ever before.<sup>102</sup>

He was also part of the committee that helped to plot the GOP’s 1950 midterm domestic platform as “liberty against socialism”.<sup>103</sup> However, it was also common for moderate Republicans, as well as moderate and conservative Democrats to attack liberal Democrats in

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<sup>101</sup>Robert Griffith, “American Politics and the Origins of “McCarthyism”, in *The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: Viewpoints, 1974), eds. Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis, xvi-17. The quote is from page 7.

<sup>102</sup>Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., ed., *The Papers of Robert A. Taft: Volume 4, 1949-1953* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006), 117-118.

<sup>103</sup>“Socialism Called Good Issue by Taft”, *New York Times*, 5 March 1950. For text of the 1950 GOP platform, consider: “Text of Republican Party’s Statement of Principles and Objectives”, *New York Times*, 7 February 1950.

1950.<sup>104</sup> One notable (southern) liberal Democrat who was defeated in 1950 – by fellow Democrat George Smathers in the party primary election – was Senator Claude Pepper (FL).<sup>105</sup> Richard Nixon also successfully used this strategy in California in 1946 against Rep. Jerry Voorhis, and again in 1950 against Sen. Helen Douglas.<sup>106</sup>

The Republican National Committee (RNC) had also accused Democrats of adhering to socialism in 1952, big government collectivism in 1992, Democratic “socialized medicine” in 2008, and branded the entire party as “liberal Democrats” in 1988.<sup>107</sup> Other examples were in 1946 when the RNC chairman B. Carroll Reece declared the midterm elections as a “fight . . . between communism and republicanism”.<sup>108</sup> And in 2009, the RNC almost opted to call the Democratic Party the “Democratic Socialist Party”, but a compromise was made to *only* accuse Democrats of “the ‘march towards socialism’”.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>For more on the 1950 midterm elections, see: Jonathan Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial: The Cold War and American Politics in the Truman Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 198-237; Mason, *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan*, 112, 127-137; Michael Bowen, *The Roots of Modern Conservatism: Dewey, Taft, and the Battle for the Soul of the Republican Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 75-108; Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945*, 58-67; Sean J. Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 171-184; and White, *Still Seeing Red*, 69-74.

<sup>105</sup>For more, refer to: James C. Clark, “Claude Pepper and the Seeds of His 1950 Defeat, 1944-1948”, *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 1-22, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30148786> (accessed 1 March 2014); White, *Still Seeing Red*, 69-70; Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party*, 171-174; and Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial*, 221-233.

<sup>106</sup>White, *Still Seeing Red*, 42-44, 72-74; Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial*, 28-30, 32, 43, 173, 198-205; and Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party*, 99-101, 175-178. Also, consider the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) documentary on Nixon, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/nixon/player/> (accessed 27 May 2014); especially the sections on Nixon’s early career, interview with Roger Morris and programme transcript – where Nixon said, “Of course, I knew Jerry Voorhis wasn’t a Communist, but I had to win. That’s the thing you don’t understand. The important thing is to win”; as well as “People react to fear, not love. They don’t teach that in Sunday school, but it’s true”.

<sup>107</sup>The GOP platforms of 1952, 1988, 1992 and 2008 were accessed via *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/platforms.php> (accessed 27 May 2014).

<sup>108</sup>“Reece Calls Party to Defeat CIO-PAC”, *New York Times*, 29 May 1946; White, *Still Seeing Red*, 41. For more on the 1946 midterm elections, see: White, *Still Seeing Red*, 40-47; Bowen, *The Roots of Modern Conservatism*, 35-55; Mason, *The Republican Party*, 112-116; Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party*, 91-104; and Bell, *The Liberal State on Trial*, 25-45.

<sup>109</sup>John Nichols, *The “S” Word: A Short History of an American Tradition ... Socialism* (New York: Verso, 2011), 9-11. For more, consider: Roger Simon, “GOP, RNC to Rebrand Democrats as ‘Socialists’”, *Politico*, 13 May 2009, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0509/22445.html>; Adam Nagourney, “R.N.C.

This conforms to a rhetorical pattern evident throughout America's angst-ridden history, exemplified by the formation of the House Committee on un-American Activities (HUAC) before World War II,<sup>110</sup> the Red Scare of 1919-1920,<sup>111</sup> as well as before<sup>112</sup> and after<sup>113</sup> the Civil War. Well beyond the end of the Cold War, this rhetoric has remained intact.

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Votes Down the 'Democratic Socialist Party'", *New York Times* blog, 20 May 2009, <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/05/20/rnc-votes-down-the-democrat-socialist-party/>; and Jimmy Orr, "RNC Drops Resolution to Call Democrats 'Socialists'", *Christian Science Monitor* blog, 20 May 2009, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/The-Vote/2009/0520/rnc-drops-resolution-to-call-democrats-socialists>. For the actual resolution, see: "RNC Resolution Recognizing the Democrats' March Toward Socialism", 20 May 2009, [https://www.gop.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/SC09\\_Resolutions.pdf](https://www.gop.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/SC09_Resolutions.pdf). All links were accessed 27 May 2014.

<sup>110</sup>Some of the targets of HUAC included Hollywood, Alger Hiss and labour unions. For more on HUAC, consult: Susan Jacoby, *Alger Hiss and the Battle for History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); George Roukis, *American Labor and the Conservative Republicans, 1946-1948: A Study in Economic and Political Conflict* (London: Garland Publishing, 1988); John Gladchuk, *Hollywood and Anticommunism: HUAC and the Evolution of the Red Menace, 1935-1950* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1969).

<sup>111</sup>For more, consult: Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955); Peter H. Buckingham, *America Sees Red: Anti-Communism in America, 1870s to 1980s: A Guide to Issues and References* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1988), 1-29; Sidney Lens, *The Futile Crusade: Anti-Communism as American Credo* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 13-16; and Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, 293-302. For a more global perspective, see: Anthony Read, *The World on Fire: 1919 and the Battle with Bolshevism* (London: W.W. Norton, 2008).

<sup>112</sup>Some of the earlier socialists included the Shakers and Robert Owen. For more, see: Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 23-155; Michael Harrington, *Socialism* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972), 111-118; Howard H. Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), 3-6; and Richard Ely, *Recent American Socialism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1885), 239-243.

<sup>113</sup>Overall, socialism has never gained a national acceptance in America. For more on this point, consider: Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" *History Workshop*, no. 17 (Spring 1984): 57-80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288545> (accessed 1 March 2010); Irving Howe, *Socialism and America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 105-144; Harrington, *Socialism*, 109-133; Werner Sombart, *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?*, trans. by Patricia Hocking and C.T. Husbands (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 15-24; and Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, 78, 209-211, 228-255. Socialists, however, had some minor successes in Congress and at the state and local levels from the 1900s to 1940s. For more, consult: Nichols, *The "S" Word*, 102-126; Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970), 35; Howe, *Socialism and America*, 3, 63-68; and Harrington, *Socialism*, 109-133.

## The Power of Words: Conservative Rhetoric

Conservative rhetoric centres on key words that are part of a strategy to keep liberalism at bay and on the defensive.<sup>114</sup> Four key reoccurring themes in conservative rhetoric are freedom, individualism, socialism and un-American. All four help to establish a line of argument that fits into the broader ideological dogma. Political scientist William Riker, in *The Strategy of Rhetoric*, states: “we have very little knowledge about the rhetorical content of campaigns”, “That we fail to understand campaigns is not surprising. Campaigns are rhetorical exercises: attempts to persuade voters to view issues in the way the candidates wishes them to”.<sup>115</sup> Although the presidency has been analysed from the scope of a permanent campaign, what about the evolution of conservative Republicanism?<sup>116</sup> It has embarked on a permanent campaign against the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy.

According to Riker, one who uses rhetoric as a rational choice should: firstly, frame the opponents’ program in the most negative aspect possible; secondly, argue that the programme(s) would lead to disaster (even if one is very unlikely); and thirdly, as a

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<sup>114</sup>For more on other sources of rhetoric such as presidential, congressional, and other topics like the Cold War, intellect, and the founding fathers, consult: Andrew S. Trees, *The Founding Fathers and the Politics of Character* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Martin J. Medhurst and H.W. Brands, eds., *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000); Elvin T. Lim, *The Anti-Intellectual Presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Glenn A. Phelps and Timothy S. Boylan, “Discourses of War: The Landscape of Congressional Rhetoric”, *Arm Forces and Society* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 641-667, <http://afs.sagepub.com/content/28/4/641> (accessed 10 October 2013); Trevor Parry-Giles and Marouf A. Hasian Jr., “Necessity or None Old Men: The Congressional Debate over Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1937 Court-Packing Plan”, in *American Rhetoric in the New Deal Era, 1932-1945* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), ed. Thomas W. Benson, 245-278; as well as Justin S. Vaughn and Jennifer R. Mercieca, eds., *The Rhetoric of Heroic Expectations: Establishing the Obama Presidency* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

<sup>115</sup>William H. Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution*, ed. by Randall L. Calvert, John Mueller and Rick K. Wilson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>116</sup>For more on the permanent campaign, see: Sidney Blumenthal, *The Permanent Campaign*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); Greg Elmer, Ganaele Langlois and Fenwick McKelvey, *The Permanent Campaign: New Media, New Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); and Brendan J. Doherty, *The Rise of the Permanent Campaign* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

supporter, label all reforms of the status quo in a negative aspect, and as a reformer, offer an alternative programme to the status quo.<sup>117</sup> Riker's three-stage rhetorical argument – as a reformer – is how conservative Republicans critique the New Deal legacy.

However, political scientist Mark Smith's analysis, in *The Right Talk*,

departs from a purely rational-choice perspective by holding . . . that preferences are not simply functions of interest but also embody ideas. Because rhetoric plays a critical role in the processes of determining interests and developing ideas, and because the resulting preferences cannot be communicated to others until they are formalized through written, visual, or oral means, rhetoric's place in politics goes beyond the purely instrumental aspects deployed by political elites.<sup>118</sup>

He also “finds common ground with rational choice, however, in holding that *once their preferences have been formed*, political participants seek to defend them in the most persuasive manner”.<sup>119</sup>

Smith's view is similar to my own in that elites are the main driving force behind conservative rhetoric, but he only considers political elites, whereas I include those outside of office who also influence political debate. Although Smith does find other actors to be influential, such as think tanks and the *National Review*, he draws more of a separation between those inside and outside politics.<sup>120</sup>

Whilst I agree that conservative Republicans have modified their economic rhetoric, Smith overlooks the importance of how the property tax revolt greatly helped the popularity of the anti-tax message.<sup>121</sup> But this message was not new, Herbert Hoover, Robert Taft and Barry Goldwater all used similar rhetoric, and with a growing population in higher tax

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<sup>117</sup>Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric*, 68-69.

<sup>118</sup>Mark A. Smith, *The Right Talk: How Conservatives Transformed the Great Society into the Economic Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 27-28.

<sup>119</sup>*ibid.*, 28.

<sup>120</sup>*ibid.*, 73-122.

<sup>121</sup>*ibid.*, 112-115.

brackets this message started to gain more traction nationally. Another overlooked factor is how the Republican Party since the 1994 midterm election had become a conservative controlled party, and thus their economic message has also taken over the party at the congressional level and is very influential at the presidential level.

One important discrepancy that was evident in analysing Smith's work was the importance conservatives placed on the socialist label when attacking big government and taxes – which is contrary to Smith's claim of “the long-since abandoned practice of equating the New Deal with socialism”.<sup>122</sup> The practice has only evolved and intensified, and is at the core of the conservative Republican attack against the New Deal legacy.

## **Socialism**

Conservative rhetoric emphasises that the GOP delivers more freedom and less government, and conservative Republicans are able to make this bold claim because they control the means of debate. Having a dominant conservative message allows them to frame arguments that dictate what is more or less government, what is more or less freedom and what is and what is not socialist – a message that Langston views as “attack[ing] the state without reality”.<sup>123</sup> Yet in order to maintain control of the debate, conservative Republicans need to have a definition of socialism that can both attract support and be flexible enough to allow them a diversity of examples. Their definition of socialism has concrete examples and vague parameters, and is not limited to a basic definition of socialism, one which considers socialism to be controlling the means of production.<sup>124</sup> In the conservative Republican

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<sup>122</sup>The quote is from page 83. For the references, see pages 80, 83, 115-117.

<sup>123</sup>Langston made this remark at the conference on “Governing the U.S. in Polarized Times”, Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford, 17 April 2013.

<sup>124</sup>As described in the *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, s.v. socialism, <http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/socialism> (accessed 27 May 2014).

lexicon, it is much more complex, fitting a wide range of examples into their vague definition of socialism, one which considers socialism, communism, fascism, Nazism and American liberalism to be one and the same. As a result, they can all be used interchangeably.<sup>125</sup>

By associating liberalism with four alien ideologies, and socialism in particular, conservative Republicans aim to discredit the political agenda of liberal Democrats. Their intent is threefold: firstly, challenge the legitimacy of the program; secondly, offer an alternative option; and thirdly, abolish the existing program. They look to discredit the entire legacy of the New Deal, especially social security, Medicare and national health care via the Affordable Care Act.

Throughout this thesis, I will demonstrate how conservative Republicans use the socialist label to discredit any attempt to add onto the New Deal legacy. By attacking established and popular programs, such as Medicare and social security, they question the long-term credibility of the program and suggest the free-market offers the best solutions to save the programs. They must approach popular programs this way because claiming outright that these programs are socialist would diminish the effectiveness of their rhetoric. If they cannot undo the New Deal and its legacy all at once, they intend to chip away at the legacy until it crumbles.

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<sup>125</sup>For example, *Conservapedia* has a fourteen-page summary that defines how liberalism, communism, fascism and socialism are all part of a similar ideology. Barack Obama is included as a prime example. *Conservapedia*, s.v. "socialism", <http://conservapedia.com/socialism>. The *Conservapedia* definition of fascism even compares Franklin Roosevelt to Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini; <http://conservapedia.com/Fascist>. Both links were accessed 27 May 2014.



## Freedom

Aside from defining socialism, conservative rhetoric also seeks to craft a specific meaning for the word freedom.<sup>126</sup> According to Foley, “The most abiding and durable self-characterization of the United States is that of freedom. The concept of freedom lies at the heart of the American identity. It is at one and the same time a foundational ethic, a cultural reference point, a defining ideal, a controlling precept, a depiction of social reality, a medium of political explanation”.<sup>127</sup> Regarding politics and freedom, He states:

The matrix of American political argument . . . is characterized by a diversity of competing claims to represent the real essence of American freedom. . . . The shaping of issues and policy in the United States is strongly influenced by the interplay between the central status of freedom in American culture on the one hand and those values and conditions that have a distinctive meaning and an alternative significance in the realm of political ideas on the other hand.<sup>128</sup>

According to historian Eric Foner, “No *IDEA* is more fundamental to Americans’ sense of themselves and as a nation than freedom.<sup>129</sup> He also analyses “conservative freedom”, a meaning that varies from one branch of conservatism to the next – much like defining conservatism – but regrouped after World War II and during the conservative revival found common cause against big government liberalism by way of the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy, as well as other issues such as abortion and taxes.<sup>130</sup>

Similarly, historian David Fischer declares: “In every generation many different visions of liberty and freedom have flourished in America”.<sup>131</sup> He goes on to add how opposing visions have led to “many differences over the meaning of liberty and freedom

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<sup>126</sup>For Mark Smith’s take on conservatives, freedom, economic and non-economic uses, see: *Right Talk*, 97-104, 119-122, 135-139, 142-144, 212.

<sup>127</sup>Foley, *American Credo*, 19.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>129</sup>Foner also considers the words freedom and liberty to be almost interchangeable. For more, consult: Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), xiii.

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, 307-332.

<sup>131</sup>David Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 719.

[and] have been drivers of change in American history. Every major conflict inspired new visions of those old ideas. Most enlarged the meaning of liberty and freedom by combining them in highly inventive ways. The result was a long process of change and growth. Every generation without exception has expanded the meaning of liberty and freedom”.<sup>132</sup> He considers that Reagan-reconceptualised liberty and freedom in 1980 similar to what FDR had accomplished in 1932, as well as Lincoln in 1860. “In 1932,” he suggests, “this great revival had come from the left and centered on the leadership of Franklin Roosevelt. In 1860 it rose from the center and was led by Abraham Lincoln. In 1980, the revival came from the right and found its leader and symbol in Ronald Reagan”.<sup>133</sup>

According to linguistic scholar George Lakoff: “Ideas matter. Perhaps no idea has mattered more in American history than the idea of freedom”, but this had led to “two very different views of freedom in America today, arising from two very different moral and political worldviews dividing the country”.<sup>134</sup> His two opposing views are called progressive freedom and conservative freedom.<sup>135</sup> He considers progressive freedom to expand freedom, arguing what is good for society is also good for the individual.<sup>136</sup> This also includes government regulation, social security, Medicare, personal choice, the right to vote and collective bargaining rights. Lakoff argues that conservative freedom, on the other hand, is based on moral values, the free-market and individual responsibility.<sup>137</sup> He is of the notion that any progressive freedom such as social security, abortion rights, taxation and

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 721.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 681.

<sup>134</sup>George Lakoff, *Whose Freedom? The Battle Over America's Most Important Idea* (New York: Picador, 2006), 3.

<sup>135</sup>For an analysis on the differences and similarities of liberal freedom and Marxist-Leninist freedom during the early Cold War era, see: William A. Glaser, “The Semantics of the Cold War”, *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 20, no.4 (Winter 1956-1957): 691, 694-696, 699, 705-706, 709-716, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2746484> (accessed 1 March 2010).

<sup>136</sup>Lakoff, *Whose Freedom*, 74-77.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 95-110.

government regulation violates one of the three and are thus the antithesis of conservative freedom.<sup>138</sup>

Another linguist, Geoffrey Nunberg examines how conservatives control not only political rhetoric, they also control “ordinary language”.<sup>139</sup> Reagan’s presidential victory in 1980 signalled the shift where conservative rhetoric overtook liberal rhetoric as the dominant political language.<sup>140</sup> He considers conservative rhetoric to be “better suited to perorations than to specific policy proposals”, which is due to the notion that “People readily applaud calls for the reduction of government in the abstract . . . The misgivings arise when it comes to eliminating specific programs and services”.<sup>141</sup>

For conservative elite examples, W. James Antle, editor of the *Daily Caller* and senior editor of *The American Spectator*, in *Devouring Freedom* argues that threats to freedom include the Affordable Care Act. He is also critical of conservative Republicans such as Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) for supporting George W. Bush’s Prescription Drug Bill (Medicare Part D).<sup>142</sup> Another is Newt Gingrich who accuses “far-left radicals” in “the House, Senate, and Presidency” of undermining freedom, individualism and American exceptionalism via socialism.<sup>143</sup> Former South Carolina Senator and now Heritage Foundation president Jim DeMint argues that liberal/progressive socialists have hijacked freedom, because real freedom is the enemy of socialism.<sup>144</sup> DeMint additionally disdains

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 73-94.

<sup>139</sup>Geoffrey Nunberg, *Talking Right: How Conservatives Turned Liberalism Into a Tax-Raising, Latte-Drinking, Sushi-Eating, Volvo-Driving, New York Times-Reading, Body-Piercing, Hollywood-Loving, Left-Wing Freak Show* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007), 1-5.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 123-124.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 124.

<sup>142</sup>W. James Antle, III, *Devouring Freedom: Can Big Government Ever Be Stopped?* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2013), 41-47, 109-126.

<sup>143</sup>Gingrich, *To Save America*.

<sup>144</sup>Jim DeMint, *Saving Freedom: We Can Stop America’s Slide into Socialism* (Nashville: Fidelis Books, 2009).

pragmatic conservative Republicanism –for example Medicare Part D – that does not stay true to the cause.<sup>145</sup>

His perspective on freedom, which adds validity to Lakoff’s argument, is: “There can be no freedom unless individuals have the capacity to succeed in a free society”.<sup>146</sup> He continues to state: “Freedom requires that individuals be treated equally based on their standing before God and society, but freedom will not work unless society has the right to discriminate between constructive and destructive behaviour – against what we as individuals consider good or bad. Without the freedom to discriminate between good or bad, our culture will decline and our society will deteriorate”.<sup>147</sup> Others, like RedState blog editor Eric Erickson and Lewis Uhler agree with the criticisms made against pragmatism by DeMint and Atlee, however, they also posit: “the real menace to our freedom . . . [is] Barack Obama and the Democrats”.<sup>148</sup>

## **Individualism**

Freedom is also defined in its relation to the individual. In the early 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville declared: “Americans believe their freedom to be the best instrument and surest safeguard of their welfare; they are attached to the one by the other”.<sup>149</sup> Yet they “are consistently excited by two conflicting passions: they want to be led, and they wish to

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid., 24-27.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>148</sup>Eric Erickson and Lewis K. Uhler, *Red State Uprising: How to Take Back America* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2010), 24-26. Tom DeLay and Dick Armey offer two more examples. I use DeLay’s examples in chapters two to four, and Armey’s examples in chapters two to five.

<sup>149</sup>Alexis de Tocqueville, “Individualism, Self-Interest, and Community”, in *American Political Ideals and Realities* (New York: Longman, 2000), eds. Peter Woll and Stephen J. Rockwell, 253.

remain free”, which leads them to “think they have done enough for the protection of individual freedom when they have surrendered it to the power of the nation at large”.<sup>150</sup>

According to Foley, “While freedom is only really comprehensible in terms of actions and thought of self-governing individuals, individuality is seen as meaningless without the attribute of freedom by which a person can be emancipated into the fullness of his or her potential”.<sup>151</sup> He also states: “the Bill of Rights . . . stands today as the chief monument to American individualism. . . . [which] includes the personal rights of free speech, free assembly, the free exercise of religion, and the free access to a fair trial. This inventory of rights represents the clearest statement of the American belief that freedom preserved *by* the state must always be qualified by guarantees of freedom *from* the state”.<sup>152</sup>

However, political scientist Barry Alan Shain disagrees: “it was not until aggressive nationalist public policies were adopted, after America’s entry into World War II and later the implementation of prominent Supreme Court decisions of the 1950s through the 1970s, that the individualist ethical vision and its adherents finally succeeded in supplanting the popular but often intolerant communalist ethical tradition”.<sup>153</sup>

In moving toward a more political scope, historian Richard Hofstadter in *The American Political Tradition* argued that the individualism promoted by Herbert Hoover, his “laissez-faire liberalism”, became an outdated belief “almost overnight” with the onset of the Great Depression.<sup>154</sup> Hofstadter also acknowledged that conservative Republicans never

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<sup>150</sup>*Ibid.*, 254. Both this and the previous footnote can also be found in Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, vols. I & II, intro. by Alan Ryan (London: David Campbell, 1994), vol. II, 142, 319.

<sup>151</sup>Foley, *American Credo*, 37.

<sup>152</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>153</sup>Barry Alan Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 323-324.

<sup>154</sup>Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, 286.

gave up on Hoover's strong belief in "efficiency, enterprise, individualism, substantial laissez-faire, personal success, [and] material welfare".<sup>155</sup> They did, however, struggle with how to ensure that the tenets of Hoover's beliefs could be recaptured under the banner of conservative Republicanism, which first had to battle for control of the GOP, and then devise a political rhetoric to gain the support of the American public – something not accomplished until Ronald Reagan did so in 1980.

In support of Hofstadter's view, sociologist David Riesman analysed how leading up to 1980, "the American character" was "changing" from a more outward looking society during colonial times to gradually becoming more concerned about oneself – the individual.<sup>156</sup> This sense of self, transforming from a view where government action benefited both the individual and wider society, to one where the individual was better off with a more limited and less active government, greatly assisted in resolving the crisis of Hoover's lost individualism to the benefit of conservatives, the GOP and especially Reagan in 1980. But as an overall ideology, historian Morton Keller contends that since the New Deal era: "Conservatives, in the eyes of conservatives, are *apostles of freedom and individualism, law and order, and Middle America*", which includes rhetoric that labels "government-run health care [as] *socialized medicine*".<sup>157</sup>

## **Un-American**

According to political scientist Everett Carl Ladd, "the American ideology" is based on an individualistic ideal that is a mix of economic and political values, the concept of

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid.

<sup>156</sup>David Riesman, "Egocentrism: Is the American Character Changing Again"? *Encounter* 55, nos. 2-3 (August-September 1980): 19-28.

<sup>157</sup>Morton Keller, *America's Three Regimes: A New Political History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 204.

freedom, as well as socio-moral values.<sup>158</sup> Historian Yehoshua Arieli also considered the American nationalistic impulse to be a key component – along with individualism – to measure American ideology; as well as analysing key differences which illustrate how what it means to be American can be both divisive and constantly evolving.<sup>159</sup>

What results is opposing viewpoints of what it means to be American. Foley examined nationalism from the perspectives of both liberalism and conservatism.<sup>160</sup> For him, an example of liberal nationalism was the North defeating the South during the Civil War, where the North “conclusively won the argument over the characteristics of the American union”.<sup>161</sup> Slavery was no longer a fabric of the American nation. Whereas with conservative nationalism, he argues that it “can be used to support, and at times to conceal, a more restrictive conception of American nationhood. This perspective draws upon a sense of the alien in defining America both in terms of what it is not and in relation to protect the republic from corrupting influence of those that are deemed to threaten its integrity”.<sup>162</sup> When conservative Republicans attack Democrats and liberals for having un-American, “alien” ideals, they do because at the core, conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats have opposing viewpoints on many issues.<sup>163</sup>

The conservative Republican assertion that both government regulation and the American welfare state are socialist is based on the rigid notion that any increase in

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<sup>158</sup>Everett Carl Ladd, *The American Ideology: An Exploration of the Origins, Meaning, and Role of American Political Ideas* (Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1994), 4-15.

<sup>159</sup>Yehoshua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

<sup>160</sup>For more on opposing views, consider: Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 37-45, 95-100.

<sup>161</sup>Foley, *American Credo*, 366.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>163</sup>For more on Americanism and un-Americanism, see: Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, 209-227, 231-252, 260-265; and Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 31, 207.

government power hampers the individual freedom of all Americans. They also argue that what liberal Democrats have already done via government regulation and the welfare state, and what they will propose in the future, not only limits individual freedom, but is also distinctly un-American. This is because what liberal Democrats propose is based on ideals that originated from other countries. Conservative Republicans assert that America is exceptional because of its own unique ideals that set it apart from every other country.<sup>164</sup>

They compare America to other countries because they want to convince the American public that granting more power to the federal government undermines individual freedom. Using foreign examples allows them to argue that individual freedom could be diluted if these changes were to take place in America.

It is not uncommon, however, for both sides to mirror each other's arguments. Just as conservative Republicans use foreign examples to provide rationale for their argument, so do liberal Democrats. Two of the more widely used examples by both sides are Europe (especially the United Kingdom) and Canada. Both countries have important ties to America. Amongst the various commonalities, the United Kingdom (UK) has historical ties via the original thirteen American colonies and the American Revolution; whilst Canada has a geographical significance by way of sharing a border with America. But both Canada and the UK also have socialised medicine.

America also has socialised medicine, and two of the most widely used examples are Medicare (for the elderly) and Medicaid (for the poor) – albeit they are not universal like the health care networks in the UK and Canada. Nevertheless, conservative Republicans have a

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<sup>164</sup>For more, refer to: Foley, *American Credo*; Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*; and Byron E. Shafer, *The Two Majorities and the Puzzle of Modern American Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 293-319.



more difficult time attacking a popular government program, such as Medicare, even if it implements socialized medicine. On the other hand, conservative Republicans have a much easier time vilifying Canada's and the UK's universal systems using specific rhetoric, which largely focuses on rationed medical care, government intervention in the doctor patient relationship and long waiting periods for surgery. The claims go back to the conservative Republican message of individual freedom, the free-market and opposition toward a powerful federal government, whereas liberal Democrats argue that Canada and the UK both have universal access that gives their citizens high quality medical care at much lower costs when compared to America's private health care system.

The contrasting philosophies of liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans centre on their opposing ideological views of government.<sup>165</sup> Liberal Democrats regard government as an element of good in society and conservative Republicans believe it to be the exact opposite. I am not suggesting that liberal Democrats believe that all government is good and conservative Republicans consider all government to be evil, but their ideologies are constructed from these opposing principles.<sup>166</sup> Conservative Republicans want to first

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<sup>165</sup>When it comes to the market, especially regulation and freedom, conservative Republicans support the premise of Milton Friedman. The economic leanings, amongst most conservative Republicans, along with Friedman and Hayek, are contrary to those of liberal Democrats, who tend to favour the economic philosophy of John Maynard Keynes. For more, refer to: Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); and John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment Interest and Money* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935). The conservative Republican support for Friedman is similar to what it is for Hayek. For more on the opposing economic views of Friedman and Hayek towards Keynesianism, consider: Nicholas Wapshott, *Keynes Hayek: The Clash That Defined Modern Economics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); Robert Leeson, *The Eclipse of Keynesianism: The Political Economy of the Chicago Counter-Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); and Desmond King, *The New Right: Politics, Markets and Citizenship* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1987), 28-48. For more on the economic philosophy of conservative Republicans, refer to: Hoover and Plant, *Conservative Capitalism in Britain and the United States*, 3-131; King, *The New Right*, 136-163.

<sup>166</sup>For more, see: Allen Guttman, *The Conservative Tradition in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 175-180; Dunn and Woodward, *The Conservative Tradition in America*; and Lowi, *The End of the Republican Era*.

link liberal Democrats to big government totalitarians, fascists and communists as a way to undermine their ideology before attacking their policies.

The intent of conservative Republicans is to portray their party as the party of American values, whilst labelling Democrats as the party of un-American values. One way conservatives intend to achieve this is through populism.<sup>167</sup> This portrayal has changed since the end of the Cold War, due in large part to how conservative Republicans have adapted their definition of socialism.<sup>168</sup> This modified definition now refers to anything related to big government, including fascism and totalitarianism, as a form of socialism. Attacking socialism in America is still popular and it has been this way for some time (since at least the Red Scare of 1917-1919). This is largely due to conservatives controlling the Republican Party, along with the party stance on limited government and individual freedom. By modifying their definition of socialism, conservative Republicans have flexibility to use the socialist label in their rhetoric.<sup>169</sup>

Their rhetoric also uses the socialist label to fight policies and programmes that they believe are too liberal for America. These usually centre on the notion that the federal government gains power at the expense of individual freedom (and the free-market). These topics serve as symbols for their rhetoric.<sup>170</sup> One example from 2010 was the Tea Party's use

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<sup>167</sup>For more, refer to: Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (London: Junction Books, 1981); George McKenna, ed., *American Populism* (New York: Putnam, 1974); and Bruce Palmer, *"Man Over Money": The Southern Populist Critique of American Capitalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). For the view that both parties are now populist, see: Keller, *America's Three Regimes*, 201-299.

<sup>168</sup>For more, consult: White, *Still Seeing Red*.

<sup>169</sup>This is discussed in greater detail in the first chapter.

<sup>170</sup>Murray Edelman argues that certain symbols (images and vocabulary) evoke emotions that help to define how the public perceives a policy. Political symbols bring out particular meanings and emotions, which members of a group create and reinforce. The language that is used can directly encourage behaviour contrary to people's interests; it is also possible that a recognized symbol can detract from the content of the argument to the point where no argument is needed because the symbol becomes the primary goal. For

of a billboard display to suggest that the socialism of Barack Obama is the same as the socialism of Hitler and Lenin.<sup>171</sup> The billboard's intent was to imply that Obama wanted to bring socialism to America, in the same way that Hitler brought it to Germany and Lenin produced it in Russia.

Conservative Republicans use the socialist label to reinforce distrust in the state. Those who agree with their rhetoric fear that giving more control to the state will take away from their individual freedom. The role of the socialist label is to evoke a hostility against that which is associated with the label, and in contrast, a feeling of patriotism for the status quo. Conservative Republicans rely on this antagonism in order to present their alternative, which is meant to evoke a positive response. They want the socialist symbol to be regarded as a credible threat to America, especially to the individual. One way to make this rhetoric "credible" is by employing data.<sup>172</sup>

Conservative Republicans use numerical data to make bold assertions that brand liberal Democrats as socialist and un-American because of the current political climate. However, the conservative Republican message has helped to set the parameters that the public follows. They have been redefining what makes the liberal Democratic agenda socialist for over three quarters of a century. Liberal Democrats desire the same political

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more, see: Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, with a new afterword (1964; repr., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

<sup>171</sup>Michael Winter, "Tea Party Billboard Comparing Obama to Hitler, Lenin Removed in Iowa", *USA Today*, 14 July 2010, <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2010/07/tea-party-billboard-comparing-obama-with-hitler-lenin-removed-in-iowa/1> (accessed 4 January 2011).

<sup>172</sup>Charles Seife argues that using numbers, no matter how accurate or inaccurate they might be, allows groups and individual to claim that the numbers they present offer validity to their claims. Two examples of this were McCarthy's communist claims during the early stages of the Cold War and the anti-government Tea Party protest in 2009. McCarthy was able to capitalise on America's fear of communism, whilst the Tea Party protest was aided by the right-wing media. The bigger or bolder a numerical claim the more valid the premise. The public does not follow up on the validity of the data, thus it becomes proof regardless of its level of accuracy. For more, consult: Charles Seife, *Proofiness: The Dark Arts of Mathematical Deception* (New York: Viking, 2010).

power but have a harder time convincing the public, especially when the argument is structured on a platform that favours conservative Republicans.

However, conservative Republicans are not as able to influence public opinion when it comes to the core strength of the New Deal legacy. As mentioned previously, the American public places great value on certain founding programmes, and on the foundation of the legacy itself. Conservative Republicans who desire to undo the legacy must first chip away at the outside before reaching the core. One of the ways they accomplish this is by narrowing their focus to particular policies, and not focusing on the ethos of liberal Democrats. The cause is a secondary concern to the policy at hand. I believe this to be so because if everything conservative Republicans opposed could be defeated by simply implying that it was part of the liberal Democratic (i.e. socialist) cause, giving them the advantage at all times, they would simply attack liberalism itself. Social security and Medicare, however, are considered part of the liberal Democratic order that controlled American politics for over three decades. The long-term credibility both programmes have established over decades is a powerful shield against conservative Republican accusations of socialism.

If conservative Republicans can change this perception amongst the public then the cause may well overtake the policy as the main focal point of their rhetoric. Until then, they must attack each separate issue by either defeating or undoing the policy before it becomes popular with the public, after which it becomes more difficult to combat (i.e. social security and Medicare). This, on the other hand, does not dissuade them from implying that the opposing policy will work to transform America into a country under the yoke of socialism.

## **Thesis structure**

The body of my thesis will follow the overall theme that conservative Republicans use the socialist label to combat what they believe is un-American. Within the body, there will be five chapters in chronological order. The next (first) chapter gives a historical outlook from the 1930s to the 1980s. This chapter will present the domestic strategy of conservative Republicans against liberal Democrats, both before and during the Cold War era. The second chapter will focus on health care politics during the first term of the Clinton presidency, the rise of Newt Gingrich and the Conservative Opportunity Society. The third chapter will examine how House conservative Republicans used the rhetoric of welfare reform to attack the New Deal itself. The fourth chapter analyses the middle four years of the George W. Bush presidency (2003-2006); how he attempted to build a new Republican majority, as well as reform social security and Medicare. The fifth chapter will focus on Obama's first term and 'Red Fascism', health care reform, the Tea Party and Jim DeMint's influence on conservative Republicanism. The conclusion will summarise how the GOP has become successful in critiquing big government, but has been unsuccessful in moving forward with a pragmatic approach that offers a governing philosophy.

I utilise the evolving four-party politics model to illustrate the debates, opportunities and quandaries that exist at a particular time. The lone constant is four-party politics, because as the political parties evolved and government control changed, the opportunity for reform had changed along the particular dynamic within four-party politics. Each dynamic was unique and different from the rest – which resulted in different policy expectations and outcomes that differed from one to the next.

The next chapter on conservative Republicans' evolution and adaptation of the socialist label and critique against liberalism forms the basis for the later chapters. Important events from 1933 to the 1980s helped to shape how conservative Republicans would confront the New Deal legacy. Conservative rhetoric played a vital role in first getting a conservative back into the White House, then offering an alternative narrative on the proper role of government – one that had its appeal in theory but was more difficult to achieve in practice.

The second chapter on Clinton's first term, four-party politics and the New Deal legacy closes the door on the end of the old four-party politics model and begins the post-1994 alignment. The rise of Newt Gingrich and GOP congressional conservatism was occurring at a similar time when the president also pursued major policy initiatives that put him at odds with his congressional party. After the 1994 midterm elections, congressional Republicans were in a powerful position to roll back the New Deal legacy of Medicare, but were unable to overcome Democratic opposition. The third chapter addresses how conservative Republicans were better able to offer a pragmatic response towards reforming welfare, and were able to achieve a historic reform victory against the New Deal legacy. They took advantage of Clinton's desire to highlight his moderate credentials leading up to the 1996 presidential election.

Chapter four on the Bush presidency illustrates how the GOP congressional party can be at odds with its presidential party. This does not imply that both parties disagreed on many issues, but Bush was more pragmatic than the Republican controlled Congress. His attempts to reform social security and Medicare looked to establish a legacy of historic conservative reforms to the New Deal legacy, yet congressional GOP conservatives were much more reluctant to support such measures. They were uncomfortable expanding

government domestic spending, and with social security, were unwilling to support the president at the expense of their political careers. Bush's attempt to embrace immigration reform, similar to Reagan, and expand minority support for the GOP garnered disdain from conservatives, many of whom viewed him as having betrayed Reagan's legacy.

Chapter five on Obama's first term, health care reform and the Tea Party highlights how the GOP congressional party failed to stop national health care reform. But after the 2010 midterm elections, congressional power was split between Democrats and Republicans, which tested the resolve of conservatives, especially the Tea Party. Anti-government rhetoric is less successful once in a position of power. Jim DeMint's influence over the Tea Party and the fact that he took over as president for the very influential conservative think tank, the Heritage Foundation signifies that he will influence conservative policy making for the foreseeable future – a viewpoint that supports polarisation and gridlock over bipartisanship and compromise.

The conclusion will critique how conservative rhetoric is both the GOP's best weapon, and a major obstacle in offering a pragmatic governing philosophy. The GOP is moving further rightward, and now reflects a conservatism that has more in common with traditional southern Democrats than the original anti-New Deal conservative Republicans. However, any concern of becoming too extreme for the public is unlikely to come about any time soon. The GOP controlled Congress after the 2014 midterm elections has the opportunity to either strive for (hyper) partisan gridlock or offer a version of pragmatic conservatism that will demonstrate the capacity to govern.

My goal is to add to the debate in American politics, regarding how conservative Republicans employ rhetoric in an attempt to dictate policy. Conservative Republicans have

enormous flexibility in how they use the socialist label, which is useful when attacking new government policies that have not yet built up credibility, as well as ones that are unpopular with the public. Established programs with public support have withstood the socialist label. However, conservative Republicans are determined to change this present reality.



## Honing Their Message: Conservative Republicans and the Socialist Label

*The average American is . . . working one-third of the time for government: a third of what he produces is not available for his own use but is confiscated and used by others who have not earned it. Let us note that by this measure the United States is already one-third “socialized”.*

–Barry Goldwater, 1960

Amongst conservative Republicans, there is a fear that socialism is overtaking capitalism in America. Their concern is that individual choice and opportunity will be replaced with government bureaucracy, controlling what an individual can or cannot do. This anxiety did not emerge purely as a response to the New Deal. However, the New Deal presented itself as the ideological lynchpin for conservatives to attack and ridicule. Many conservative Republicans argue that the New Deal began unravelling the American way of life because it unleashed socialism in the United States. However, in order to mount an effective critique against the New Deal legacy, conservative Republicans had to adapt their rhetoric to offer a compelling alternative narrative – one that is still vital to GOP politics, as well as very influential in American society.

Two key questions that will be addressed in this chapter are:

1. How was finding the proper socialist critique vital to any conservative Republican argument against the New Deal legacy?
2. How did the socialist label aid conservative Republicans in transforming the GOP?

Answering these questions will help to explain how the socialist label fits into conservative Republican rhetoric against big government. This approach is effective because many Americans view socialism as foreign born. In 1933, aside from socialism there were other “isms” that were also viewed as foreign and thus un-American. These other “isms” were fascism and communism. All three were considered totalitarian because under each system the government wielded too much control over individual freedom. Each “ism” also

had a face to go with its name. Socialism was linked to Adolf Hitler and German National Socialism, fascism was linked to Benito Mussolini and Italian Fascism, and communism was linked to Josef Stalin and Russian Communism. These three forms of government were vastly different to the American system. In America, citizens are guaranteed certain individual liberties. There are limits to the president's authority over the American people. Therefore, by using any or all three of the totalitarian examples, conservative Republicans would imply that the federal government was attempting to change America into one of the three foreign "isms", which made Americans uneasy. Support for any idea that had been labelled in this manner was limited. After World War II, Germany and Italy were defeated leaving only Russia, also known as the Soviet Union or the USSR, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Due to the word "socialist" in this acronym, and because the USSR was a communist bloc, mixing the "isms" allowed conservative Republicans to label anything with a foreign "ism" as a natural enemy in the onset of the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

Conservative Republican criticism of the New Deal and its legacy differed from that of Senator Joseph McCarthy's hostility in the post-World War II era. McCarthy's attacks have been labelled "McCarthyism" due his tactics of using communism to ignite a "Red Scare" in America. It is true that he used conservative Republican rhetoric to label communism as un-American, but so did many Republicans and Democrats. "McCarthyism" differed from conservative Republican rhetoric based on different agendas. McCarthy used communism to attack individuals, whom he believed to have had un-American and pro-communist sympathies, by accusing them of conspiring to bring America under the shadow of communism.<sup>1</sup> He did so without any proof of what he was insinuating, whereas

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<sup>1</sup>Some people have agreed with his overall anti-communist rhetoric, whilst others have not. However, it is hard to justify the extreme limits he took to state his cause. I have included some of the many scholarly works that have been written about McCarthy. Earl Latham, ed., *The Meaning of McCarthyism*, 2<sup>nd</sup>

conservative Republicans attacked the New Deal and later additions because they believed America was changing, from a society that fostered individual freedom to one where the government took more of a role in legislating an individual's freedom.

Conservative Republicans constructed their argument based on the way the New Deal changed America through a democratic process. This is not to say that they did not use their attacks on the New Deal to further their political aspiration.<sup>2</sup> They did, but they had some basis of a political philosophy to act as their guide, which was to maintain the uniquely American role between the people and government, a role they felt was altered by the New Deal.

The notion of America's exceptionalism is a cherished belief of its people in general and conservative Republicans in particular. Conservative exceptionalism supports the perception that America is unique to all other nations, and has been so since its founding.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, any (actual or implied) attempt to implement a "foreign born" creation such as socialism allows conservative Republicans to label it as un-American. This also allows them to tarnish something they do not approve of, most notably heavy involvement by the federal

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ed. (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1973); Albert Fried, ed., *McCarthyism: The Great American Red Scare: A Documented History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Richard M. Fried, *Men Against McCarthy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987); Edward Alwood, *Dark Days in the Newsroom: McCarthyism Aimed at the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); Arthur Herman, *Joseph McCarthy: Reexamining the Life and Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator* (New York: Free Press, 2000); John G. Adams, *Without Precedent: The Story of the Death of McCarthyism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983); and David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>One example is Robert Taft. There is more on Taft and his political aspirations in the next section.

<sup>3</sup>For more, consider: John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Why America Is Different* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 291-353.

government. The common conservative Republican belief is that it is up to the individual to do what is best for their own well-being.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will focus on how social security came to play a future role in the US health care debate, along with how conservative Republicans deployed the fear of socialism as their main political weapon against any national health care plan. There are other aspects of the New Deal that conservative Republicans oppose, but this approach will illustrate the evolution of their rhetoric, and how they consistently used the threat of socialism as a political weapon against a national health care plan.

Conservative Republicans are dead set against liberal Democratic health policies and are not much more accepting of moderate versions. The New Deal initiated by President Franklin Roosevelt forced conservative Republicans to calculate how best to counter this political legacy, a legacy that kept expanding, much to their dismay. At first, conservative Republicans tried to attach the label of socialism to every liberal Democratic idea they opposed, but this rationale failed because it alienated voters who valued some aspects of the New Deal. As a result, conservative Republicans made a political calculation to focus their energy on one key area where they could be effective – health care. They labelled all new health policies as socialist in an attempt to brand them as un-American. This improvement of conservative Republican strategy against the New Deal took place from 1933 to 1988.

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<sup>4</sup>This belief is known as equality of opportunity. Conservative Republicans believe that everyone should have an equal opportunity, however, the result, whether it is success or failure, relies on the effort of the individual. They are against government mandated quotas that seek to affirm equality at the expense of individual merit. For more, see: Charles Dunn and J. David Woodard, *The Conservative Tradition in America*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 23, 31, 35, 37, 56-58; David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2-4, 19-20, 187; and Paul Gottfried, *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 69-70.

This strategic improvement coincided with the social and economic fragmentation that erupted in America. During the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, the social and economic circumstances made it difficult for conservative Republicans to combat liberal Democrats (with the exception of national health care) due to the fact that liberal Democratic policies were largely focused on improving the lives of the middle class. But starting with the Great Society in 1964, the liberal Democratic effort to legislate equality for minorities began to fracture their coalition. The public fallout of the Vietnam War in the late 60s to the mid 70s, and the economic turmoil in the mid to late 70s, along with divisive social issues in the 1970s (abortion, equal rights, etc.) all helped to make many Americans consider the alternative solutions that conservative Republicans offered. During this time span (1933-1988), four conservative Republicans played a key role in this re-branding of the New Deal and its legacy.

### **The Four Horsemen**

President Herbert Hoover, Senators Robert Taft and Barry Goldwater, and President Ronald Reagan were four major figures in the conservative Republican fold from 1933 to 1988. These four men came from different backgrounds and from various parts of the country, but each developed a strong distrust towards liberal Democrats intent on expanding the New Deal. Hoover, Taft, Goldwater and Reagan stand out in representing an important shift in conservative Republican rhetoric through their use of socialism as a political weapon against liberal Democrats. This proved an important base for their attacks on liberal Democrats because conservative Republicans believed the New Deal attacked America's dedication to individual freedom, which they considered an essential American ideal.

Hoover was an early example of a conservative Republican who used the threat of socialism as a political weapon against liberals.<sup>5</sup> Initially, he was president at the onset of the Great Depression. He was unable to reverse the suffering that the Great Depression caused. Consequently, his defeat in 1932 to Franklin Roosevelt was due largely to the depression. It was a defeat that left him angry at Roosevelt's proposals to bring America out of the Great Depression. In his mind, Roosevelt was not up to the challenge, and only he could guide the country through the perils of the Depression.

Hoover did try to use government to help overcome the depression but he was unwilling to go as far as Roosevelt.<sup>6</sup> According to Hoover, "The recovery which began in July [1932] steadily increased over that summer, but not sufficiently to overcome that particular political opponent. I gave more attention to the campaign of 1932 than might be desirable, because I then accurately forecast that attempts would be made to revolutionize the American way of life."<sup>7</sup> The crux of his critique was that "the effort to crossbreed some features of Fascism and Socialism with our free system speedily developed in the Roosevelt administration."<sup>8</sup> He also contended that "in adapting the New Deal, most of the American people did not realize that they had departed from the road of free men."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>For more on how Hoover's response to the New Deal launched modern GOP conservatism, see: Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 144-147, 156-157; as well as Gordon Lloyd and David Davenport, *The New Deal and Modern American Conservatism: A Defining Rivalry* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2013), 1-17. Conservative intellectual Frank Meyer believed the post-war revival of conservatism was "a delayed reaction" to FDR and New Deal socialism; Frank S. Meyer, "Conservatism", in *Left, Right and Center: Essays on Liberalism and Conservatism in the United States* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1965), ed. Robert A. Goldwin, 3-4.

<sup>6</sup>For more, see: Harris Gaylord Warren, *Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959); Harold Wolfe, *Herbert Hoover: Public Servant and Leader of the Loyal Opposition* (New York: Exposition Press, 1956), 225-271; and Joan Hoff Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive* (1972; repr., Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1992), 122-167.

<sup>7</sup>Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Great Depression 1929-1941* (New York: MacMillan, 1952), vii.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 351.

Hoover's approach centred on how socialism affects America's overall economy, instead of focusing on how it affected the individual. He could not have targeted the individual because he assumed the American "people had never been conscious of ideological systems. They had simply lived and breathed our own American manner of life."<sup>10</sup> Hoover, on the other hand, did view individualism as an ideology. Historian Yehoshua Arieli considered him to be part of an elite who "considered individualism not only an ideology . . . but also a system of values which expressed the aspirations and the sense of identity of the American nation as a whole".<sup>11</sup> Part of Hoover's ideological critique of the New Deal focused on how its socialist tendencies hampered the effectiveness of the private enterprise and the free-market to bring the economy to a full recovery. In this regard, he avowed: "during Roosevelt's first eight years the guiding phases of the New Deal [were a] 'Planned Economy' . . . an attempt to cross-breed Socialism, Fascism, and Free Enterprise."<sup>12</sup> In addition, he charged that "Every collectivist revolution rides in on a Trojan horse of 'Emergency.' It was a tactic of Lenin, Hitler, and Mussolini."<sup>13</sup> He tried to imply that Roosevelt's use of emergency measures against the Great Depression was a ploy to change the American economy from one based on American individualism to a government-controlled economy.<sup>14</sup>

Hoover believed that freedom was based on what was best for America as a country, not the individual. In his credo, "The will-o'-the-wisp of all breeds of socialism is that they contemplate a motivation of human animals by altruism alone. It necessitates a bureaucracy

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<sup>10</sup>ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Yehoshua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 341.

<sup>12</sup>Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, 354.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., 357.

<sup>14</sup>Hoover also considered this an attack against individual liberty. For more, see: Herbert Hoover, *The Challenge to Liberty* (1934; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1973).

of the entire population.”<sup>15</sup> His position on American individualism centred on smart people doing what was right to keep America prosperous.<sup>16</sup> In his view, “Popular desires are no criteria to the real need; they can be determined only by deliberative consideration, by education, by constructive leadership.”<sup>17</sup> He considered the New Deal to be a liberal ploy that used socialism to win votes as opposed to ending the Great Depression. It was ultimately a successful ploy for he truly believed that America “voted for the New Deal”.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, he also believed Roosevelt’s public pandering undermined America’s best interests. The New Deal was a utopian mirage that failed to tackle the Great Depression and instead prolonged the misery.

One reason Hoover was unable to effectively exploit the New Deal was because he criticised Roosevelt on a personal basis. He wanted to undo Roosevelt’s popularity along with his policies, seeming more intent on a personal vendetta to ruin Roosevelt’s popular support. According to previous director of the Hoover presidential library, Timothy Walsh, and its senior archivist Dwight Miller, Hoover was upset with “Roosevelt’s casual use of the truth”. Furthermore, Roosevelt’s campaign

effectively attacked Hoover as the man responsible for the depression and the man who refused to respond to this economic collapse. Neither charge was true, but the public wanted someone to blame for their misery and Hoover was that man. . . .

The loss of the presidency was a bitter blow to Hoover . . . he soon learned how the American people could be manipulated by a master politician such as Roosevelt. Hoover never forgave him.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (1922; repr., New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 17.

<sup>16</sup>Hoover’s individualism had evolved during the later stages of World War I and the years directly afterwards. His view moving forward from this time constructed the basis of his views in *American Individualism*. For more on Hoover’s evolving stance on individualism, see: Gary Dean Best, *The Politics of American Individualism: Herbert Hoover in Transition, 1918-1921* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975).

<sup>17</sup>Hoover, *American Individualism*, 25.

<sup>18</sup>Taken from: Gary Dean Best, *The Postpresidential Years, 1933-1964*, vol. I, 1933-1945 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 8.

<sup>19</sup>Timothy Walsh and Dwight M. Miller, eds., *Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Documented History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 51-52.



Hoover went on to dedicate the rest of his public life to opposing Roosevelt as well as the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy.<sup>20</sup>

After the Second World War, Hoover tried to help conservative Republicans reassert their message. With the 1946 midterm elections imminent, he declared,

Today the great issue before the American people is free men against the tide of Statism which is sweeping three-quarters of the world – whether it be called Communism, Fascism, Socialism or the disguised American mixture of Fascism and Socialism called “Managed Economy” now being transformed into a further ambiguity, the “Welfare State.” This growth of statism has been nourished by the confusion of a great war. And it can grow still more by continued excessive taxation and by creeping inflation.<sup>21</sup>

He was still using this collective approach to combat socialism in America, but it continued to lack voter appeal. He did, however, give conservative Republicans the structure to imply that liberal Democrats would turn the New Deal “Managed Economy” into a “Welfare State” by means of taxation and inflation after World War II.<sup>22</sup> These political talking points would turn out to be very important to both conservative Republicans and their party. They possessed future ammunition that would help them, over time, voice a more effective political narrative against the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy.

Senator Republican Robert Taft (R-OH) continued Hoover’s strategy of condemning New Deal inspired policies for working against private enterprise and in favour of more government control. Taft favoured free market solutions because this was what he believed had made America great. As such, he regarded the New Deal as un-American in its

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 149-169; Best, *The Postpresidential Years*, vol. I; Gary Dean Best, *The Postpresidential Years, 1933-1964*, vol. II, 1946-1964 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983); Wolfe, *Herbert Hoover*, 358-46; and George H. Nash, ed., *The Crusade Years, 1933-1955: Herbert Hoover’s Lost Memoir of the New Deal Era and Its Aftermath* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 2013).

<sup>21</sup>Herbert Hoover, *Addresses upon the American Road, 1945-1948* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1949), 49.

<sup>22</sup>Aside from taxes and inflation, Hoover also focused on deficits. For examples of the three, see: Herbert Hoover, *Addresses upon the American Road, 1948-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951), 23-26; and Hoover, *Addresses upon the American Road, 1950-1955* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), 40-42, 119-121, 163-170.

embodiment of socialist collectivism. In his credo, “Socialism is the denial of everything for which America has stood in the past, individual opportunity, individual freedom, thrift, and above all unquestioned faith in the rule of the majority. Surely we are not about to abandon our heritage of centuries of democratic government.”<sup>23</sup> However, global events made it difficult for Taft’s war against the New Deal to take centre stage until the 1946 midterm elections.

To a large degree, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the American entry into the conflict on 8 December 1941 brought a pause to most domestic condemnation of the New Deal. However, the end of the war signalled a return to domestic politics.<sup>24</sup> With the country changing back to a peacetime economy, labour unrest in 1945 and 1946 and post-war tension with the Soviet Union all combined to make Americans anxious. On top of this, Roosevelt’s death in April 1945 made Harry Truman president. Taft realized the four events presented an opportunity for the GOP.<sup>25</sup> They could effectively use the threat of socialism as a political device to their advantage. His rationale was to elect a Republican Congress that could challenge Truman. He told audiences on the 1946 campaign trail that Truman “coveted the ‘support of . . . the communists in the November election,’ and sought a Congress ‘dominated by a policy of appeasing the Russians abroad and of fostering Communism at home’”.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., ed., *The Papers of Robert A. Taft: Volume 1, 1889-1938* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997), 481.

<sup>24</sup>Although Taft battled New Deal liberals on many domestic aspects, such as wartime government contracts throughout the war period; James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 255-267.

<sup>25</sup>Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 31-34; Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 302-314; and David W. Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 9-14.

<sup>26</sup>Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 313.

Taft also shifted the focus of his attacks away from the New Deal and onto how its long-term impact would expand government involvement in the public's everyday life. This shift made it possible for conservative Republicans to position themselves against the future ramifications of the New Deal.

This alteration was largely due to political necessity. Republicans wanted to defeat the Democrats and they needed to offer something that could appeal to the public. This change gave conservative Republicans an opportunity to present how they and their fellow Republicans could bring back American individualism. According to Taft, in an 11 September 1946 speech: "Only a Republican Congress can assure real and liberal progress through the restoration of freedom and individual opportunity". He went on to avow: "More progress can come from freedom than from all the planned economy in the Communist or New Deal handbook."<sup>27</sup> Instead of trying to imply the New Deal was bad for America, he focused on why expanding the New Deal policies would be harmful to America. And as highlighted in the previous chapter, Taft did not go back on this strategy during his 1950 midterm re-election campaign.

This shift in position allowed Taft to take a more individualistic approach toward combating the legacy of the New Deal. He was able to imply how this legacy would affect each individual American instead of America's collective identity. This was evident when he declared on 19 October 1945, "At home, liberty is the basis of success which we have achieved in building up the greatest and most powerful nation in the world. . . . Freedom of opportunity must be our goal rather than security"; for "[o]ur people are too much inclined to look to the government for the solution of every problem, and forget the great increase of

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<sup>27</sup>Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., ed., *The Papers of Robert A. Taft: Volume 3, 1945-1948* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2003), 177-178.

centralized power which the policy creates.”<sup>28</sup> Taft did not worry about past failures; instead he focused on the future ramifications of the New Deal legacy, which was how liberal Democrats wanted to unleash socialism in America.

As a result, Taft positioned the GOP as defending the freedom of opportunity that was the American way of life, versus the Democrats who would let the government control every aspect of life. His strategy enabled him to refrain from attacking popular elements of the New Deal like social security in order to fight against future expansions of the New Deal state, especially a national health care plan. In 1946, Taft also alleged “the Truman federal compulsory sickness insurance plan . . . would nationalize, federalize and socialize the entire field of medicine. . . . it would regulate the health activities of 95% of the people”.<sup>29</sup> Echoing an earlier 1945 statement that asserted the “socialization of medicine” could lead to a complete “socializing of the state”.<sup>30</sup> In a 7 October 1946 speech, he went on to cite the importance of taxes vis-à-vis socialized medicine. “But the fact is that this is not insurance. It is a plan for government administration of all medical care, supported by a tax on pay rolls. There is no difference between a pay roll tax and other tax. This can’t be insurance if a man has no option except to pay for it”.<sup>31</sup> His conviction did not waver after Truman’s 1948 re-election.<sup>32</sup> Much like Hoover, the subject of taxes allowed Taft and conservative Republicans to make the case that paying less in taxes helped to combat socialism.<sup>33</sup>

Taft’s death in 1953 allows for some debate on how he might have further evolved his approach to rhetoric surrounding the expansion of the New Deal legacy. For example, he

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 88, 90.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>32</sup>For more, see: Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., ed., *The Papers of Robert A. Taft: Volume 4, 1949-1953* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006), 37-42, 117-118, 148-149, 202-203.

<sup>33</sup>Due to World War II, the tax burden on families had substantially increased.

may have taken a tougher position on welfare similar to that of Hoover, or he may not have, given that he did favour using the power of the government to help the poor, most notably in regards to public housing.<sup>34</sup> In Taft's view, the welfare state was socialist, whereas providing aid to the poor was the duty of a humane society.<sup>35</sup> In January 1949 he wrote that government should provide *limited* social welfare assistance in areas like public housing and medical care to those who are in need, but that this was "not socialism". Furthermore, "Government aid should be given only to those who cannot pay for it. The aid so given cannot be so heavy as to burden unduly the other four-fifths of the people who pay the taxes to support it, nor must it be so high that men who do not work are better off than those who do".<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, even though Taft's tactics highlighted how conservative Republicans were determined to advocate for individual freedom against New Deal liberalism, he faced an uphill struggle to become the party presidential nominee. The intra-party struggles amongst liberals, moderates and conservatives proved to be an obstacle that he could not overcome – especially his ongoing battle with New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey from 1944 to 1952.<sup>37</sup> Taft's loss in 1952 to Dwight Eisenhower – whom Dewey supported – was initially difficult for him and other conservative Republicans to accept.<sup>38</sup> Hoover was one

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<sup>34</sup>For more, see: Richard O. Davies, "'Mr. Republican' Turns 'Socialist': Robert A. Taft and Public Housing", *Ohio History* 73, no. 3 [Summer 1964]: 135-143, 196-197.

<sup>35</sup>For more, refer to: Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 315-326; and Russell Kirk and James McClellan, *The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft* (New York: Fleet Press, 1967), 132-156; and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., *Robert A. Taft: Ideas, Tradition, and Party in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 115-118, 143-144.

<sup>36</sup>Wunderlin, *Papers of Robert A. Taft: Volume 4*, 68. Similar comments were made multiple times in this volume.

<sup>37</sup>For more, see: Michael Bowen, *The Roots of Modern Conservatism: Dewey, Taft, and the Battle for the Soul of the Republican Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Robert Mason, *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 117-135, 143-145.

<sup>38</sup>Mason, *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan*, 144-145.

who supported Taft because he did not have the “taint of ‘me-too-ism’”.<sup>39</sup> More Republicans, however, believed that Eisenhower was the best option to defeat the Democrats. And in the end, both Taft and Hoover supported Eisenhower because he would help their party win the presidential election for the first time since 1928, ending twenty consecutive years of a Democratic White House.<sup>40</sup>

Although Eisenhower moderate Republicanism displeased conservatives, he was fully committed to halting New Deal expansion to bring the country back from the slippery slope to socialism.<sup>41</sup> But the “middle way” of the Eisenhower presidency, to many conservative Republicans, still led America down the road to socialism – one such conservative was Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ).<sup>42</sup>

Following Taft’s lead, Goldwater built on the strategy of linking socialism to the diminishing freedom of the individual. His strategy was very simple and very personal from the beginning. He believed that “conservatism is *not* an economic theory, though it has economic implications.”<sup>43</sup> According to Goldwater, “conservatives wanted to free the country from Roosevelt’s economic, social, and political engineers”.<sup>44</sup> He also believed that “the Conservative looks upon politics as the art of achieving the maximum amount of freedom for individuals”, as well as supporting the notion that “for the American conservative there is no difficulty in identifying the day’s overriding political challenge: it is

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<sup>39</sup>Best, *Herbert Hoover*, vol. II, 358.

<sup>40</sup>Bowen, *The Roots of Modern Conservatism*, 148-161; Best, *Herbert Hoover*, vol. II, 358-364; and Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 555-578.

<sup>41</sup>For more on Eisenhower’s “middle way”, consider: Richard V. Damms, *The Eisenhower Presidency, 1953-1961* (London: Longman, 2002), 7-26; and Steven Wagner, *Eisenhower Republicanism: Pursuing the Middle Way* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).

<sup>42</sup>Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945*, 121-123, 129-158; Bowen, *The Roots of Modern Conservatism*, 173-200; and Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 39-40.

<sup>43</sup>Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (Shepherdsville, KY: Victor Publishing, 1960), 10.

<sup>44</sup>Barry Goldwater with Jack Casserly, *Goldwater* (New York: Double Day, 1988), 100.

*to preserve and extend freedom*".<sup>45</sup> He wanted to highlight how the New Deal agenda entailed steadily taking away individual freedom, resulting ultimately in socialism.

Goldwater carried on where Hoover and Taft left off, asserting socialism as freedom's nemesis.

Here is an indication of how taxation currently infringes on our freedom. A family man earning \$4,500 a year works, on the average, twenty-two days a month. Taxes, visible and invisible, take approximately 32% of his earnings. This means that one-third, or seven whole days, of his monthly labor goes for taxes. The average American is therefore working one-third of the time for government: a third of what he produces is not available for his own use but is confiscated and used by others who have not earned it. Let us note that by this measure the United States is already one-third "socialized".<sup>46</sup>

He wanted to make the case that paying less in taxes was good Americanism, whereas paying more in taxes supported un-American ideals. Socialism to Goldwater was an "encroachment of individual freedom by Big Government".<sup>47</sup> And upcoming battles would decide if the menace of big government was to be quelled or continue unopposed.

Goldwater had a clear goal in mind regarding the role conservative Republicans were to play in halting the expansion of the New Deal philosophy. However, he was not sure if he could entirely trust his own party in this endeavour. This was evident when he said, "I am here concerned not so much by the abandonment of States' Rights by the national Democratic Party –an event that occurred some years ago when that party was captured by the Socialist ideologues in and about the labor movement –as by the unmistakable tendency of the Republican Party to adopt the same course".<sup>48</sup> He was referring to how the 1932 Socialist Party platform, with regards to labour, was similar to the 1936 Democratic Party

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<sup>45</sup>Goldwater, *Conscience of a Conservative*, 13-14.

<sup>46</sup>*ibid.*, 60.

<sup>47</sup>*ibid.*, 25.

<sup>48</sup>*ibid.*, 24.

Platform,<sup>49</sup> along with his belief that Eisenhower and some congressional Republicans did not try to nationalise right-to-work laws that conservatives and business were pushing at state level.<sup>50</sup>

In response to the perceived lack of commitment by some in his party, Goldwater presented conservative Republicans with a clear vision of how to proceed against the expansion of New Deal social policies. In his 1988 memoir, he recalled how “We conservatives were determined to reverse the policies of ‘moderate’ Republicans who were little better than ‘Me Too’ Democrats”.<sup>51</sup> He also avowed: “Republican liberals had accepted many of the New Deal’s reforms of the 1930s and 1940s as permanent”. And this led him to conclude, “The Eastern GOP establishment was a pale imitation of the Democratic Party”.<sup>52</sup>

According to Goldwater, conservative Republicans needed to return to their core “economic, social and political practices based on the successes of the past.”<sup>53</sup> His core beliefs revolved around glorifying the days before Roosevelt, during Hoover’s presidency. Historian David Reinhard regarded Goldwater’s “political beliefs” as “unabashedly pre-New Deal”.<sup>54</sup> Even after he secured the 1964 GOP presidential nomination, the attack against the New Deal legacy continued with public comments expressing his support for privatising

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<sup>49</sup>For more information on the similarities of the Democratic Party and Socialist Party platforms, the Socialist Party platforms for 1932 and 1936 can be found in *National Party Platforms, Volume I, 1840-1956*, rev. ed., compiled by Donald Bruce Johnson (London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 351-354, 370-373. The 1932 and 1936 Democratic Party platforms are viewable via *The American Presidency Project* by John T. Woolley and Gerald Peters, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/platforms.php> (accessed 27 May 2014).

<sup>50</sup>For more, see: Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, “Origins of the Conservative Ascendancy: Barry Goldwater’s Early Senate Career and the De-legitimization of Organized Labor”, *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 3 (December 2008): 696-699, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27694376> (accessed 16 July 2014).

<sup>51</sup>Goldwater, *Goldwater*, 109.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>54</sup>Reinhard, *The Republican Right*, 162.



social security, selling off the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), as well as opposing Medicare and Civil Rights legislation.<sup>55</sup>

And although LBJ defeated Goldwater by a landslide in the 1964 presidential election, his opposition to 1964 Civil Rights legislation helped to secure the support of states from the deep South, as well as southern Democrats from the region such as Senator Strom Thurmond (SC) – who became a Republican in 1964 and was also the “Dixiecrat” presidential candidate in 1948.<sup>56</sup> In congressional terms, however, the South remained a Democratic stronghold until the 1994 midterm elections, but captured southern white majorities for the GOP in presidential elections.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Goldwater’s presidential campaign fanned the flames of conservative Republicans’ determination to challenge the New Deal legacy, as well as providing a national spotlight as part of Reagan’s rise within the GOP.

Reagan also took up the fight against the New Deal and its ongoing legacy, labelling it socialist and un-American. His contribution to the conservative Republican attack culminated with his two terms as president of the United States.

Reagan’s strong regard for the freedom of the individual led his charge against the New Deal legacy – especially the Great Society. His stance was unique because it combined

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 201; Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 189; Gregory L. Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 107; and Goldwater, *Goldwater*, 194-196.

<sup>56</sup>Joseph Crespino, *Strom Thurmond’s America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 61-85, 165-184; Nadine Cohodas, *Strom Thurmond & the Politics of Southern Change* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993), 175-193, 349-362; as well as Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 32-33, 115.

<sup>57</sup>Richard K. Scher, *Politics in the New South: Republicanism, Race and Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 100-117; as well as Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Vital South: How Presidents Are Elected* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 293-326. For more on the shift of southern conservatives to the GOP, consult: Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans*.

the overall approach of Hoover, Taft and Goldwater, with his excellent public speaking skills (along with the fact that he had abandoned the Democratic Party in favour of the GOP). These three advantages gave him the leeway to attack the previous and future ambitions of liberal Democrats.

Reagan's conversion from liberal Democrat to conservative Republican did not happen spontaneously, but instead gradually throughout the post-World War II and early Cold War period.<sup>58</sup> Stating in his presidential memoir: "I guess it was in 1960, the year Richard Nixon ran against John F. Kennedy for the presidency, that I completed my political journey from liberal Democrat to . . . [conservative] Republican".<sup>59</sup> His reason for changing parties in 1962 mirrored that of Strom Thurmond's in 1964 who, whilst campaigning for Goldwater, avowed: "I did not leave the Democratic Party. It left me!"<sup>60</sup> Reagan supported Roosevelt's expansion of government as temporary but vital to combat the Great Depression. "Many of the relief programs FDR instituted during the Depression were necessary measures during an emergency, but I remain convinced that it was never his intention – nor those of many of liberal supporters – to make giveaway programs that trapped families forever on a treadmill of dependency a permanent feature of our government", he said. In contrast, the proposed expansion of big government under Kennedy, then Johnson, was something he considered to be permanent "and impose a subtle kind of socialism".<sup>61</sup> He was adamant in his defence of Roosevelt and the New Deal, and condemnation of Johnson and the Great Society – writing in 1982: "The press is dying to

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<sup>58</sup>Edward M. Yager, *Ronald Reagan's Journey: Democrat to Republican* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006); and Jules Tygiel, *Ronald Reagan and the Triumph of American Conservatism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 81-98.

<sup>59</sup>Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), 132.

<sup>60</sup>Quoted in Schneider, *The Conservative Century*, 107.

<sup>61</sup>Reagan, *An American Life*, 134.

paint me as now trying to undo the New Deal. I remind them I voted for F.D.R. 4 times. I'm trying to undo the 'Great Society'. It was L.B.J.'s war on poverty that led to our present mess".<sup>62</sup>

But it is important to acknowledge that as he came to embrace and become a vital spokesman for conservative Republicanism, he also became more sceptical of the entirety of the New Deal legacy – examples include social security and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

Regarding social security, Reagan wrote in 1977 that "Most of you *with the present tax could* buy in the open insurance mkt. a retirement policy with life protection *paying far more* than present soc. security benefits".<sup>63</sup> He also made a similar comment in his "A Time for Choosing" speech in support of Goldwater in 1964, as well as during a television address in 1962.<sup>64</sup> His stance was not an outright condemnation of social security, but suggested that the free-market would present more opportunity for individual freedom than a plan under the control of the federal government. His support for privatising social security demonstrates how conservative Republicans can successfully use the financial incentives of unrestrained capitalism to combat the present state of social security.<sup>65</sup>

Regarding TVA, in the same 1962 television address, Reagan questioned the rationale of a planned economy, accusing liberal Democrats of failing to use government to

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<sup>62</sup>Douglas Brinkley, ed., *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 65.

<sup>63</sup>Kiron Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan, In His Own Hand* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 371.

<sup>64</sup>There are different versions of the speech. For one, see: Alfred A. Balitzer and Gerald M. Bonetto, eds., *A Time For Choosing: The Speeches of Ronald Reagan, 1961-1982* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 41-57; for another with reference to Goldwater and the Great Society, see: Ronald Reagan, "A Time for Choosing", 27 October 1964, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/timechoosing.html> (accessed 18 June 2014). The second version was mentioned in Reagan's *An American Life*, 141-143.

<sup>65</sup>But one that has so far remained unsuccessful, as was the case with George W. Bush's attempt to partially privatise social security.

spur economic growth and development. He was intent on asserting that the more this is done, the more individual freedom is put at risk, for the large amount of government spending in the region has failed to yield the desired results. “And yet in the 169 counties of that [TVA] area, in spite of all this spending, the Labor Department declares that more than 50% of those counties are permanent areas of poverty, distress and unemployment”, all of which is possible due to the increasing tax burden on the American people.<sup>66</sup> He made similar remarks against TVA in 1959.<sup>67</sup>

When it came to taxes and socialism, Reagan’s rhetoric was consistent with that of Hoover, Taft and Goldwater. “A basic point to remember is that none of these extensions of socialism can be effected without money. The fodder upon which our government has fed and grown beyond the consent of the governed is the fruit of the tax system whose only consistency is that a levy once imposed is seldom removed”.<sup>68</sup> He also claimed that income tax was a “progressive tax directly from Karl Marx who designed it as the prime essential of a socialist state. In the surtax brackets, the steepest rate of increase occurs through the middle income range where are to be found the bulk of our small businessmen, professional people, and supervisory personnel – the people Marx said should be taxed out of existence”.<sup>69</sup> He made both statements in 1961, when he was a closet conservative Republican – he also made similar remarks in 1958 and 1959.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, Reagan’s loose affiliation with Democrats, along with his previous two comments on socialism and

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<sup>66</sup>Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe, eds., *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 28-30, 32.

<sup>67</sup>Tygiel, *Ronald Reagan and the Triumph of American Conservatism*, 94.

<sup>68</sup>Balitzer and Bonetto, *A Time For Choosing*, 32.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>70</sup>Houck and Kiewe, *Actor, Ideologue, Politician*, 15, 23.

taxes, suggests that he believed the Democratic Party was morphing into an adversary, rather than realizing that the GOP was more in line with the beliefs he had held all along.

Besides Reagan's position on taxes and socialism, he also held a clear position regarding liberal Democrats, national health care and socialism. "Following the election that year (1960), I began to get more and more invitations from the Republicans to speak at their dinners and fundraisers and they more or less adopted me as one of their own even though I was still a Democrat. When a lot of the nation's most prominent Democrats got behind socialized medicine (the Kerr-Mills bill), I started speaking out against it".<sup>71</sup> In March 1961, he also said,

the liberal persuasion have used our sense of fair play – our willingness to compromise – and have perfected a technique of 'foot in the door' legislation. Get any part of a proposed program accepted, then with the principle of governmental participation in that field established, work for expansion, always aiming at the ultimate – a government that will someday be a big brother to us all.

Traditionally, one of the easiest first steps in imposing statism on a people has been government paid medicine.<sup>72</sup>

However, he had previously supported at least two "prominent Democrats" who supported a national health care plan, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. One might wonder why Reagan did not consider Roosevelt and Truman "prominent Democrats". It may have been that he liked Roosevelt and Truman enough to simply agree to disagree with both of them, whereas with Johnson and the Great Society he did not want to draw attention to his "socialist" past.

Reagan considered the Great Society's accomplishments to be what Hoover earlier deemed as "welfare". Regarding Medicare, in 1968 he questioned the government's role for providing health care benefits to senior citizens.

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<sup>71</sup>Reagan, *An American Life*, 135.

<sup>72</sup>Balitzer and Bonetto, *A Time For Choosing*, 25.

Any Medicare program will have a heavy influence on private sector health services. Therefore, in developing the programs we need, we must remember our obligation to preserve the voluntary hospital system, the private health insurance programs, and the integrity of doctors who have given this nation the best medical care in the world under the private enterprise system.

We have a responsibility to face up to the fact that those nations which have turned to nationalized programs or socialized medicine cannot match the quality of medical care that we have developed under a contrary system.<sup>73</sup>

It is evident that Reagan was not in favour of Medicare's socialist tendencies, which mandated that one individual had to pay for another's medical care.

Conservative Republicans consider this un-American because the individual has no freedom of choice in the matter; they are expected to pay taxes that will not be self-beneficial. This same rationale could also be used by conservative Republicans against social security, where the individual is paying taxes for the benefit of others. However, social security and Medicare are still deeply ingrained in American society.

Reagan's stance against liberalism can make it seem as though the views of Democrats changed, and he simply no longer agreed with them. It seems this way because he used this strategy to attack liberal Democrats for wanting to implement socialist policies for all Americans. He used his past experiences as a Democrat to serve as proof of the un-American beliefs liberals harbour against individual freedom. He wanted to warn America about its future if liberal Democrats were to completely socialise the country. To advocate his point, in the same March 1961 speech, he avowed:

the Founding Fathers – that little band of men so advanced beyond their time that the world has never seen their like since – evolved a government based on the idea that you and I have the God-given right and ability within ourselves to determine our own destiny. Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction – we didn't pass it on to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years

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<sup>73</sup>Ronald Reagan, *Ronald Reagan Talks to America* (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin Adair, 1983), 104.

telling our children and our children's children what it was like in the United States when men were free.<sup>74</sup>

Reagan's attempt to link himself with Roosevelt is the ultimate aspiration for conservative Republicans because they want to be able to use Reagan as a figurehead to attack the legacy of the New Deal. Quite simply, they want to brand liberal Democrats as socialists, thereby showing that conservative Republicans (and their party) will, according to Reagan, pursue Roosevelt's true legacy.<sup>75</sup> To emphasize this, in his 1990 memoir he stated:

FDR in many ways set in motion the forces that later sought to create big government and bring a form of veiled socialism to America. But I think that many people forgot Roosevelt ran for president on a platform dedicated to reducing waste and fat in government. He called for cutting federal spending by twenty-five percent, eliminating useless boards and commissions and returning to states and communities powers that had been wrongfully seized by the federal government. If he had not been distracted by war, I think he would have resisted the relentless expansion of the federal government that followed him.<sup>76</sup>

Reagan maintained this argument, but Hoover, Taft and Goldwater claimed that liberal Democrats embraced socialism before World War II. Unlike Reagan, they argued that Roosevelt was the start of it all, but he was determined to use Roosevelt's legacy to his (and his party's) advantage.<sup>77</sup>

Reagan's implication that the GOP would continue with Roosevelt's original intent was effective in his 1980 presidential victory. He made a point of attacking the size and the role of government, using the state of the US economy, especially with regards to inflation. During the 1980 presidential debate versus Jimmy Carter, Reagan criticized his opponent for pursuing big government economic policies that were damaging to the American people.

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<sup>74</sup>Balitzer and Bonetto, *A Time For Choosing*, 38.

<sup>75</sup>Post-Cold War conservative Republicans have embraced Reagan's claim in order to weaken liberal Democratic political power, especially with public sector labour unions.

<sup>76</sup>Reagan, *An American Life*, 66-67.

<sup>77</sup>William E. Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR: From Harry Truman to Barack Obama*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 209-235; and John W. Sloan, *FDR and Reagan: Transformative Presidents with Clashing Visions* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

[Carter] has blamed the people for inflation. . . . He has then accused people of living too well and said that we must share in scarcity, we must sacrifice and get used to doing with less. We don't have inflation because the people are living too well. We have inflation because the government is living too well. . . .

Yes, you can lick inflation by increasing productivity and by decreasing the cost of government to the point where we have balanced budgets and are no longer grinding out printing press money, flooding the market with it because the government is spending more than it takes in. And my plan calls for that. The President's economic plan calls for increasing the taxes to the point that we finally take so much money away from the people that we can balance the budget in that way. But we will have a very poor nation and a very sound economy if we follow that path.<sup>78</sup>

Whilst he offered a critical rebuke of Carter's stewardship of the economy, does his 1980 presidential victory demonstrate that the conservative Republican message had gained widespread public approval?<sup>79</sup> Regardless of whether Reagan's 1980 presidential election was an indication of the public's view on conservative Republican rhetoric, the government was no longer considered the saviour it had been during the Great Depression. Instead the public now perceived government to be the enemy, threatening individual freedom.<sup>80</sup>

Reagan's overall approach shows that whilst conservative Republicans may have adjusted their message, from defending the free-market to embracing the freedom of the individual within the free-market, Hoover's original disregard for the New Deal has never

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<sup>78</sup>Reagan, *Talks to America*, 117.

<sup>79</sup>This argument is advanced by Steven F. Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: The Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980* (Roseville, CA: Forum, 2001), 715-716; Andrew E. Busch, *Reagan's Victory: The Presidential Election of 1980 and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 141-144. For the view that it did not, refer to: Stanley, *Kennedy vs. Carter*, 5-8, 172, 187, 191, 204-205; and Larry Schwab, *The Illusion of a Reagan Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 3-15, 225-235.

<sup>80</sup>The Vietnam War and Watergate are two important factors that marred the public's trust in government. In an inadvertent way, Reagan was able to restore the public's trust in government. The public still favoured past government programs, like social security and Medicare, but it did not want further government assistance. For polling data samples on public trust in government, consult: George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971, Volume Three 1959-1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), 2043, 2154; George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1972-1977, Volume One 1972-1975* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1978), 308; George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1972-1977, Volume Two 1976-1977* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1978), 960; and Richard Auxier, "Reagan's Recession," 14 December 2010, Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2010/12/14/reagans-recession/> (accessed 28 November 2013).



wavered. Instead the message has improved,<sup>81</sup> and built upon a foundation of a rhetoric aimed at using socialism against opponents.

### **Presidential Responses to Socialism**

Every president from FDR to Reagan has commented on socialism. However, the presidential rhetoric can be broken down into two main themes; more government involvement is either desirable or undesirable. How presidents applied this rhetoric differed depending on their political views. By analysing their presidential records, their political views can be compared to the conservative Republican definition of socialist. Based on their presidential records, the presidents can be broken down into three different categories. The breakdown of the presidents is as follows: liberal Democrats - Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson; moderates - Eisenhower (Republican), Nixon (Republican), and Carter (Democrat); conservative Republicans - Ford and Reagan.

From the conservative Republican perspective, liberal Democrats, moderate Democrats and moderate Republicans all believed more government involvement was good; which meant that only conservative Republicans believed less government was better. The fact that moderate Democrats or moderate Republicans did not want as much government involvement as liberal Democrats was beside the point; they still wanted more government involvement than conservative Republicans felt was necessary.

The goal for liberal Democrats during this time was to eliminate the fear that their policies were socialist. In 1935, Roosevelt attempted to do so when he said,

It is time to make an effort to reverse that process of the concentration of power which has made most American citizens, once traditionally independent owners of their own businesses, helplessly dependent for their daily bread upon the favour of a

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<sup>81</sup>I am not implying that Hoover, Taft, Goldwater and Reagan were without differences, but all four shared an economic critique of the New Deal and its ongoing legacy.

very few, who by devices such as holding companies, have taken for themselves unwarranted economic power. I am against private socialism of concentrated power as thoroughly as I am against governmental socialism. The one is equally as dangerous as the other; and destruction of private socialism is utterly essential to avoid governmental socialism.<sup>82</sup>

His statement allowed him to claim that he was indeed standing up for individual freedom.

He was ensuring that this freedom was not crushed by either private enterprise nor by the government. Roosevelt started the political battle between liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans vis-à-vis which ideology truly represented individual freedom; whereas moderate Democrats and moderate Republicans were stuck battling both perspectives.

Social security and national health care were two objectives that liberal Democrats wanted to implement and conservative Republicans fought against. Roosevelt in 1934 stated his intent for

the agencies of government to assist in the establishment of means to provide sound and adequate protection against the vicissitudes of modern life – in other words, social insurance. . . . A few timid people who fear progress, will try to give you new and strange names for what we are doing. Sometimes they will call it “Fascism,” sometimes “Communism,” sometimes “Regimentation,” sometimes “Socialism.” But, in so doing, they are trying to make very complex and theoretical something that is really very simple and very practical.<sup>83</sup>

Considering that “social insurance” was the initiative that would lead to social security, conservative Republicans were the “few timid people” against it because, from their perspective, it was un-American. A great deal of conservative Republicans considered social security un-American because it made individuals dependent on the federal government for their well-being. In 1935, many conservatives, in both parties, spoke out against Roosevelt’s social security legislation. One such conservative Democrat viewed social security as a

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<sup>82</sup>*The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Volume IV, The Court Disapproves, 1935* (New York: Random House, 1938), 101.

<sup>83</sup>*The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Volume III, The Advance of Recovery and Reform, 1934* (New York: Random House, 1938), 316-317.

means for liberal Democrats “to centralize power . . . to socialize and federalize the Nation in all its affairs”, as well as “to concentrate in Washington all power and reduce the States to a system of vassalage, and to convert a free people, able to manage and conduct their own affairs, into humble supplicants for the crumbs and for the benefits which may fall from the national table”.<sup>84</sup> He was also hopeful that social security would be found unconstitutional because “the bill undertakes to impose a tax”, and furthermore:

the bill rights enforceable at law are granted to private citizens, irrespective of the character of their employment, irrespective of the character of the industry in which employed, in every State in the Union; and that, in my judgement, clearly shows that an effort is here made to establish a system which does not lie within the powers granted to the Congress, but under which have been definitely reserved to the states under the reserved rights and powers of the States.<sup>85</sup>

However, this was not the case; the Supreme Court ruled that Congress did have the power to enforce the right of individuals to have a government pension plan funded by federal payroll taxes.<sup>86</sup>

In 1935, Roosevelt not only wanted to establish social security, he wanted to achieve more for “social insurance”. He stated: “the . . . organizations and the . . . individuals who are now crying about the socialism involved in social security legislation, in bank deposit insurance, in farm credit, in the saving of homes, in the protection of investors and the regulation of public utilities. . . . must learn that many other social ills can be cured”.<sup>87</sup> One of the “other social ills” the president wanted to cure was to make health care more widely available.

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<sup>84</sup>The statement was made by the conservative Senator Walter F. George (D-GA). *Congressional Record* (18 June 1935): S 9518, <http://www.ssa.gov/history/senate35.html> (accessed 12 January 2011).

<sup>85</sup>*ibid.*, S 9514.

<sup>86</sup>*Helvering v. Davis*, 1937, <http://www.ssa.gov/history/supreme1.html>; <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/301/619/case.html> (both accessed 24 June 2014).

<sup>87</sup>*Roosevelt 1935*, 341.

Even though social security was signed into law by Roosevelt in 1935, national health care would still be a priority for all four of the liberal Democratic presidents.<sup>88</sup> The presidential records of Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy and Johnson signify they had all envisioned social security as the first step toward some version of a national health care plan because righting one “social ill” created the platform to take on another.

The liberal Democratic presidencies of FDR and Truman failed in making a national health care plan a reality. Their defeats were largely due to the charge of socialized medicine, which implied that a national health care plan would change how Americans received their medical care. Conservative Republicans were aided in their campaign of opposition by the American Medical Association (AMA) and southern congressional Democrats – especially the powerful Finance committee chair, Sen. Walter George (D-GA).<sup>89</sup> For Roosevelt, a strong show of public support was needed to win over southern Democrats.<sup>90</sup> However, in all likelihood, he would have had to further compromise to get any legislation passed, in a similar manner as with social security – by not challenging states’ rights.<sup>91</sup> But Roosevelt was hesitant to add health care to his growing list of battles. The birth of the New Deal state meant that he had to engage in one fight at a time, especially

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<sup>88</sup>Although for Roosevelt, national health care was not as important a priority as social security and other pressing needs as a result of the Great Depression. For more see: James Blumenthal and James A. Morone, *The Heart of Power: Health and Politics in the Oval Office* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 53-54; as well as Bryan D. Jones and Billy Hall, “Issue Expansion in the Early Clinton Administration: Health Care and Deficit Reduction”, in *The New American Politics: Reflections on Political Change and the Clinton Administration* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), ed. Byron D. Jones, 199-200.

<sup>89</sup>Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 46-47, 51-52, 54-55, 70.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 51-52.

<sup>91</sup>For more, see: Charles Noble, *Welfare as We Knew It: A Political History of the American Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 59-66, 71-73. In a larger perspective, the congressional ‘conservative coalition’ was able to restrain liberalism, even during the New Deal. For more, read: Barton J. Bernstein, “The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform”, in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), ed., Bernstein, 263-288; James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933-1939* (Westport, CT: Green Wood Press, 1981); and John F. Manley, “The Conservative Coalition in Congress”, *American Behavioral Scientist* 17, no. 2 (November/December 1973): 223-247, <http://abs.sagepub.com/content/17/2/223.full.pdf+html> (accessed 21 May 2015).

after his failed attempt to oust southern Democrats in the 1938 midterm elections. For if they were sceptical of supporting him beforehand, their opposition became more resolute afterwards.<sup>92</sup>

Roosevelt and Truman achieved greater success when they used New Deal (for Roosevelt) and Fair Deal (for Truman) liberalism via the “security” element. Some of these acts were: minimum wage, the forty hour work week, the GI Bill and social security. The public found it easy to identify with these initiatives. The outcomes were to increase the overall security of Americans. This was popular with the public and Congress was more inclined to support these measures. The difference with national health care was that it called for exchanging an established private health care system in favour of a government (public) health care system. How this change would affect the public was open to different interpretations.

Roosevelt made two failed attempts to combat the label of socialism surrounding his support for national health care in 1938 and 1939. In 1938 he said, “this plan contemplated no centralized and bureaucratic control or form of ‘socialized medicine,’ as frequently charged by some critics. Rather, it was simply a proposal to work out the problem of giving some assurance to wage earners of continuity of income through periods of disability due to sickness”.<sup>93</sup> After this setback, in 1939 he tried to further his goal by insisting that “there can be no substitute for the personal relationship between doctor and patient. . . . Neither the American people nor their government intends to socialize medical practice anymore than they plan to socialize industry. There is no basis for the charge of the opponents of the

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<sup>92</sup>For more on this point, see: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 31-56; and Jacob S. Hacker, *The Road to Nowhere: The Genesis of President Clinton’s Pan for Health Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 77-78.

<sup>93</sup>*The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Volume VII, The Continuing Struggle for Liberalism, 1938* (New York: MacMillan, 1941), 461.

national health program that it was designed to socialize medicine”.<sup>94</sup> FDR became preoccupied with war issues after this defeat, but Harry Truman would renew the health care debate.<sup>95</sup>

Truman was also unsuccessful in combating the charge of socialized medicine, but failed four times instead of Roosevelt’s two. He battled the socialist implication surrounding health care in 1945, 1948, 1951 and 1952. In 1945, he echoed Roosevelt’s 1939 attempt to argue that “people should remain free to choose their own physicians and hospitals.”<sup>96</sup> But unlike Roosevelt, his approach in 1945, 1948 and 1951 focused on making make health care affordable for all Americans.<sup>97</sup>

Truman’s last attempt in 1952 to combat the charge of socialized medicine emphasized that conservative Republicans’ disapproval of a national health care plan was part of their larger agenda to label the entire New Deal legacy with the threat of “creeping socialism”. “[Senator] Taft”, Truman remarked, “explained that the great issue in this campaign is ‘creeping socialism.’ Now that is the patented trademark of the special interests lobbies. Socialism is a scare word they have hurled at every advance in the last 20 years”. But such a campaign was really against the New Deal legacy. For when Taft argued for “Down with socialism”, “[w]hat he really means”, Truman decreed, “is ‘Down with

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<sup>94</sup>*The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Volume VIII, War and Neutrality, 1939* (New York: MacMillan, 1941), 99-100.

<sup>95</sup>Roosevelt planned to take up the call for health care reform in 1945, but died before he got the chance to do so. For more, see: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 52-53; as well as Jones and Hall, “Issue Expansion in the Early Clinton Administration”, 200.

<sup>96</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, April 12 to December 31, 1945* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1961), 487.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 486; *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1948* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1964), 804-805; and *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1951* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1965), 352-353.

Progress – down with Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal,’ and ‘down with Harry Truman’s Fair Deal’”.<sup>98</sup> This last statement suggests that Truman realized he may have lost the battle with conservative Republicans over health care, but was determined to support the legacy of the New Deal – especially when he considered shifting the focus on health care reform to the elderly.<sup>99</sup>

The liberal Democratic presidencies of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson carried on the work of Roosevelt and Truman. Both Kennedy and Johnson were responsible for expanding the New Deal legacy. Kennedy modified the plan of attack for liberals by focusing on senior citizens. “[T]here remains”, he said “a significant gap that denies to all but those with the highest incomes a full measure of security – the cost of ill health in old age”. And to address the problem, he went on to propose: “a health insurance program”, “for all persons aged 65 and over who are eligible for social security and railroad benefits”. In defence of his proposal, Kennedy was adamant that it was “not a program of socialized medicine. It is a program of prepayment of health costs with absolute freedom of choice guaranteed. Every person will choose his own doctor and hospital”.<sup>100</sup>

Using the popularity of social security, Kennedy’s strategy looked to outmanoeuvre GOP claims of socialised medicine. In 1961, 1962 and 1963 he employed Truman’s stance on affordability and the freedom of choice for patients to pick their own doctors.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1, 1952 to January 20, 1953* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1966), 781.

<sup>99</sup>Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 94-95.

<sup>100</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 20 to December 31, 1961* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1962), 78-79.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*; *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1962* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1963), 3; and *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F.*

Kennedy, however, implied that since seniors already had social security, health care benefits for seniors were a personal freedom and a right they deserved. “Three-fourths of older people have incomes of less than \$2,000 a year. Only half of them have any kind of hospital insurance, and I believe that this represents an opportunity to permit them through the Social Security System – which was once opposed in the thirties, but which is now a blessing – to participate in providing for their own security when they are older”, he said.<sup>102</sup> Yet just like Truman, conservative Republicans defeated him every time in his quest for health care.

Kennedy never did alter his approach toward his health care plan. He was wilful in his defence against conservative Republicans and (southern) Democrats. He thought the conviction of the New Deal social security legacy would rise above the conservative Republican labels of “welfare, socialism, and communism.”<sup>103</sup> When this failed, he declared “The fact of the matter is, since the loss in 1938, Franklin Roosevelt’s second term, when Democrats lost so many seats, there has been a balance of power in the House and the Senate which has made it very difficult to pass any legislation which involves important interests”.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, it would seem that Kennedy was issuing a challenge to the American people: if they wanted more of the popular New Deal they had better elect more liberal Democrats to Congress. He further reiterated this claim by saying “I hope that we will return in November a Congress that will support a program like Medical Care for the Aged, a program which has

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*Kennedy, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to November 22, 1963* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1964), 191, 193.

<sup>102</sup>*Kennedy 1962*, 3.

<sup>103</sup>*Kennedy 1961*, 735.

<sup>104</sup>*Kennedy 1962*, 415.



been fought by the American Medical Association and successfully defeated”<sup>105</sup> Since he died before his first term ended it is hard to say if his defiance towards conservative Republicans would have brought him success. However, Lyndon Johnson was able to continue the liberal Democrat’s fight against conservative Republican rhetoric.

Johnson was able to use the conservative Republican aggression toward the New Deal legacy to his political advantage. Leading up to the 1964 presidential election, on 26 October 1964, he criticised Barry Goldwater’s comments on making social security voluntary. “The entire social security supported by every president of both parties has been threatened”. Johnson went on to say, “[a] voluntary plan would destroy social security as we know it”<sup>106</sup> The mere mention by conservative Republicans of making social security “voluntary” allowed him to claim that the New Deal was under attack. The remarks were similar to earlier comments he made on 8 October 1964: “the . . . issue is whether we are going to wipe out and throw away that program of 30 years under five presidents. . . . to go back, to repeal the present and to veto the future”<sup>107</sup> These statements allowed Johnson to maintain he was defending what Roosevelt had started, and that if this conservative Republican attack were successful, it could lead America back to the suffering that individuals endured during the Great Depression. In doing so, he reminded voters of Kennedy’s call to elect more liberal Democrats to move forward with the New Deal, and stated how conservative Republicans were not only fighting the New Deal legacy, they were now trying to dismantle it. Johnson’s new term in office followed with the passing and then the signing of the Medicare Bill on 30 July 1965. To mark this occasion, he said “perhaps no

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 561.

<sup>106</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book II, July 1 to December 31, 1964* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1965), 1436.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 1253.

single act in the entire administration of the beloved Franklin D. Roosevelt . . . did more to win him the illustrious place in history . . . as did the laying of that cornerstone [social security]. . . . And . . . this day will also be remembered for making the most important addition to that structure . . . in three decades.”<sup>108</sup>

Johnson’s new national health insurance plan for seniors, Medicare, was adored by liberal Democrats, but loathed by conservative Republicans because it expanded the legacy of the New Deal. Even though he did not take on the challenge of passing a national health care plan for all Americans, he did spend his remaining years as president defending himself (as well as the New Deal legacy) against the conservative Republican accusation that he had contributed to socialism in America.<sup>109</sup> On one occasion, in 1966, he said, “Once again they talked about socialism; about the destruction of the free enterprise”. And his reply was “[t]oday, social security and Medicare stand as two of the most historic programs ever enacted in Congress”.<sup>110</sup> Johnson successfully combated the socialist label by skilfully challenging conservative Republicans on the legacy of the New Deal and social security, whilst expanding its legacy with Medicare.<sup>111</sup>

Unfortunately, this victory for liberal Democrats only fortified the resolve of conservative Republicans to contain New Deal expansion, making it more difficult from

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<sup>108</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book II, June 1 to December 31, 1965* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1966), 813.

<sup>109</sup>For examples from 1966, consult the *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book I, January 1 to June 30, 1966* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1967), 1142-1143, 1148.

<sup>110</sup> *Johnson, Book I, 1966*, 1142-1143.

<sup>111</sup>On a side note, Johnson was the only liberal Democratic president that did not directly challenge the AMA regarding either a national health care plan or Medicare via presidential statements. For more on the battles they had with AMA and “the medical lobby”, see: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*; Monte M. Poen, *Harry S. Truman Versus the Medical Lobby: The Genesis of Medicare* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1979).

them on to implement a national health care bill for all Americans. Conservative Republicans were defeated not only in the Medicare battle by liberal Democrats; they were also defeated in the presidential election of 1964. The American people voted for the New Deal legacy over the conservative Republican alternative. Liberal Democrats seized the initiative in 1965, whilst conservative Republicans regrouped. Johnson's victory solidified the resolve of conservative Republicans to fight back against the legacy of the New Deal.

After the Johnson presidency, conservative Republicans were in a much better position to seek retribution, because there were no further liberal Democratic presidents. The battles the liberal Democratic presidents fought with conservative Republicans made it more difficult for moderate presidents of either party to achieve a national health care plan. Moderate Republicans Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon fared no better than Jimmy Carter, a moderate Democrat. All three favoured some type of national health care plan.<sup>112</sup> Yet all three failed to combat the conservative Republican rhetoric against any addition to the legacy of the New Deal, whilst liberal Democrats focused on pushing forward with a national health care plan under federal control. Consequently, any moderate compromise was attacked on both fronts. Conservative Republicans viewed a moderate health care plan as too similar to socialized medicine.

Eisenhower was the first moderate president to propose a national health care plan. In 1954, he first addressed socialism and his health care plan.

Some extremists of the bureaucratic type challenge the plan because it does not attempt to remove all local and individual responsibility for the care of the sick and the unfortunate. Our refusal to centralize all responsibility and authority in the Federal Government is deliberate; it is an expression of active conviction that though the central Government may aid and coordinate, local authority and private initiative must be supreme in the normal procedure of daily living, else freedom – unless this is so we all realize freedom and self-government will be lost.

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<sup>112</sup>For more, see: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 108-130, 224-247, 261-282.

Others – of the opposite extreme – oppose this legislation on the ground that it might become the entering wedge of socialized medicine. To that kind of service in America, my co-workers and I are emphatically opposed. But I hope that none of us confuse social progress with socialism.

. . . The program for voluntary health insurance . . . is the logical alternative to socialized medicine.<sup>113</sup>

His remarks exhibit his determination to propose a different health care plan than that of a liberal Democratic president. His statement also reveals the struggle within his own party, as conservative Republicans were not in favour of this plan. From the conservative Republican viewpoint, any kind of health care reform that increased the role of big government was socialist because it was still expanding the New Deal legacy. This was a no win situation for a moderate like Eisenhower.

In 1960, Eisenhower was asked this question: “what [is] your position and . . . your philosophy . . . toward what the Government should really do for senior citizens and what should they do on their own”? His response was “I have, from the time this subject was discussed with me very thoroughly and exhaustively way back in 1951 and `52, I have been against compulsory insurance as a very definitive step in socialized medicine. . . . I don’t believe in it, and I want none of it myself”. But he also acknowledged “I think we have got to develop a voluntary program”.<sup>114</sup> Although Eisenhower tried once more in 1960 to address health care reform via a more scaled down approach, this version of Medicare failed to gather very little congressional support and yet was still chastised by Goldwater as

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<sup>113</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1954* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1960), 940-941.

<sup>114</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1, 1960 to January 20, 1961* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1961), 324-325.

“socialized medicine”.<sup>115</sup> Eisenhower was not the only moderate Republican president to fend off accusations of socialism from the conservative branch of his own party.

Nixon was the following moderate Republican president who attempted to pass a health care plan. He also wanted a national health care plan for all Americans, and was not in favour of a liberal Democratic national health care plan, and rejected socialism. He viewed socialism as providing “equality of poverty”.<sup>116</sup> Nonetheless, in 1974 Nixon had to defend his health care plan against conservative Republican accusations of socialized medicine. He attempted to spin his plan to ward off conservative Republican criticism.

There has been a great deal of debate in recent years about health insurance legislation. And there are, naturally, divergent points of view on the question of how to provide the highest possible quality of health care for all Americans. Some believe that we should socialize our system of health care. Now, this might make health care more available to all, but it would diminish the quality of care available. . . . There are others who believe we should do nothing. This would mean that fewer and fewer Americans would have access to the kind of care we are capable of providing.

Neither course of action, is acceptable. What we must have is a creative relationship between government and our private health care system.<sup>117</sup>

His proposal acknowledged that both the federal government and private health care had roles to play. This middle ground approach was deemed un-American and socialist by conservative Republicans because they did not want the federal government to have any role whatsoever in health care; they wanted the private market to have complete control of national health care. Nixon fared no better with liberal Democratic support due to his belief that their idea of national health care “would diminish the quality of care available”.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 122-126.

<sup>116</sup>Richard M. Nixon, *In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat, and Renewal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 303.

<sup>117</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard M. Nixon, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1, to August 9, 1974* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1975), 445.

<sup>118</sup>For more on Nixon’s struggle to pass a national health care plan, see: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 224-247.

It is easy to suggest that Nixon may have attempted to compromise with conservative Republicans and/or liberal Democrats had he not resigned from office less than three months later.<sup>119</sup> However, it seems unlikely a compromise would have been reached, given how much his health care plan differed from both conservative Republican and liberal Democratic beliefs.

Carter was the first non-liberal Democrat president since the coming of the New Deal. As a moderate, it would seem unlikely that he would differ from Eisenhower or Nixon regarding the role of federal government in health care. Carter, however, was a Democrat and could not take a position against the legacy of the New Deal. Whilst none of the three moderates discussed rolling back the New Deal, Carter had more in common with the moderate Republican presidents than he did with his liberal Democratic predecessors. His non-liberal stance on national health care put him in a unique position amongst conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats.

Carter addressed national health care in 1978, 1979 and 1980. But during 1978 and 1979, he did not rise to defend himself directly against conservative Republicans. He took a somewhat different approach, focusing instead on the “Federal Government” and liberal Democrats. In 1978, he said, “Beginning with President Truman’s administration, there has been a growing interest and desire among the American people to have a far more reaching or comprehensive health plan for our Nation”. He went on to say:

I think that a much more effective program can be evolved than the one now. A step in the right direction was Medicaid and Medicare. . . .

I personally want to keep open the option of the insurance portion being administered by private insurance companies. I don’t want to see the Government take over this full responsibility. And I’m also committed to the proposition that

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<sup>119</sup>Although a late Democratic compromise attempt between liberal Senator Ted Kennedy (MA) and conservative Representative Wilbur Mills (AR) failed to gain enough Republican support to warrant a vote in the House. For more, refer to: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 242-246.

individual American citizens would continue to have the right to choose their own family physician. I don't want the Federal Government telling a patient you have to go to that particular physician to get your care.<sup>120</sup>

He was resolute that whilst he wanted a national health care plan, he would not support a liberal Democratic version that would give the federal government even more control of national health care at the expense of "private insurance". Afterwards, in 1979 he reiterated his stance against a liberal Democratic version for national health care. "I don't believe the Federal Government ought to do everything. I don't believe in establishing a whole big array of massive Federal Government spending programs to take care of the needs of our country".<sup>121</sup> Consequently, Carter was in the difficult position of praising the legacy of the New Deal (one example was Medicare), whilst at the same time preventing it from moving forward with a liberal Democratic health care plan.<sup>122</sup> However, 1980 presented him with an opportunity to join with liberal Democrats in defending the New Deal legacy.

In 1980, Carter faced a tough re-election against the conservative Republican Ronald Reagan. Their difference in views presented Carter with the opportunity to defend the New Deal legacy. He took full advantage of this opportunity, charging Reagan with attacking the legacy of the New Deal by making social security "voluntary," undoing what FDR started. This would then have grave consequences and "would destroy social security".<sup>123</sup> He also accused Reagan of "travelling around the country speaking against Medicare, calling it

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<sup>120</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book I, January 1 to June 30, 1978* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1979), 876-877.

<sup>121</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book II, June 23 to December 31, 1979* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1980), 2034.

<sup>122</sup>His main opposition during this time was Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA). For more, see: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 262-282. Kennedy later went on to challenge Carter for the 1980 Democratic presidential nomination; for more, refer to: Timothy Stanley, *Kennedy vs. Carter: The 1980 Battle for the Democratic Party's Soul* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010).

<sup>123</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book II, May 24 to September 26, 1980* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1982), 1632.

socialized medicine and the injection of socialism into the system of our country,” along with saying, “Ronald Reagan said Fascism was really the basis for the New Deal”.<sup>124</sup>

Carter’s hard-hitting approach against Reagan might have led some to believe that he was dedicated to the legacy of the New Deal, but this was not the case. Even though he said, “Republicans were against social security. They called it socialism or even communism,” he would still claim that “socialized medicine” was the wrong way to go because it could hamper the individual “freedom to choose one’s own physician.”<sup>125</sup> These statements are conflicting. On one hand he is defending the New Deal legacy and on the other he is challenging it.

Moderate Democrats, such as Carter, do not have the option of an outright rebuttal of the New Deal and its legacy. This is due to the political realities of the Democratic Party. An important cornerstone of the party since FDR has been the New Deal, and if any Democratic leader were to challenge this it would likely prove disastrous to the party. This is largely due to the rationale that if the New Deal (for example social security) itself comes into question then so do the later additions of its legacy (for example Medicare).

Consequently, Carter’s timid response to Reagan was due to the fact that, as a moderate Democrat, he disagreed with both the liberal Democratic and the conservative Republican positions. This made him seem unsure of his real message regarding the New Deal and its legacy. As a consequence, Reagan took a stronger stance on the legacy of the New Deal than Carter.<sup>126</sup> Where Carter and moderate presidents were stuck between the

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<sup>124</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book III, September 29, 1980 to January 20, 1981* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1982), 2548, 2554.

<sup>125</sup>*ibid.*, 2579; and *Carter, Book II 1980*, 1878.

<sup>126</sup>As stated in the previous section, the economic difficulties Carter faced made it easier for Reagan to attack both the president and the New Deal legacy.



conservative Republican and liberal Democratic positions on the legacy of the New Deal, conservative Republican presidents had no problem defining their position.

When it came to the New Deal, the conservative Republican presidencies of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan formed a clear plan; their goal was to stop the expansion of its legacy.<sup>127</sup> Ford and Reagan believed that the government had limited and defined responsibilities, and anything outside this sphere was left up to the guise of the free-market. Due to conservative Republican dislike for the New Deal, both Ford and Reagan may have preferred to reverse the legacy of the New Deal, but they first had to stop its growth before this could be achieved.

Ford took over the presidency after Nixon resigned from office. Nixon was a moderate Republican who believed the government played some role in national health care. Ford, however, had no belief in this whatsoever. He had inherited Nixon's national health insurance plan, but decided the government should not continue with this "costly" policy.<sup>128</sup> He displayed courtesy toward Nixon's plan, and did not label it socialist, but instead blamed the "current economic problems" for the reason the plan was dropped. Afterwards, he claimed he would consider such an idea, but only if it was affordable.<sup>129</sup> However, as a

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<sup>127</sup>Although Reagan compromised with a Democratic controlled Congress to sign the Medicare Catastrophic Act, it was paid for via an increase in Medicare rates and was repealed by Congress less than eighteen months later. For more, see: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 304-307, 309-315; Carl Huse, "Lesson Is Seen in Failure of Medicare in 1989", *New York Times*, 17 November 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/18/us/politics/lesson-is-seen-in-failure-of-1989-law-on-medicare.html> (accessed 10 January 2014); and Daniel Béland and Alex Waddan, *The Politics of Policy Change: Welfare, Medicare, and Social Security Reform in the United States* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 87-93.

<sup>128</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Gerald R. Ford, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book I, January 1 to July 17, 1975* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1977), 159.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*

conservative Republican, he believed the government was already too involved in citizens' lives.

Regarding "socialized medicine" Ford said, "I don't think . . . we should have a national health insurance with the Federal Government being the dictator", "I think any nationalized medical system, anything comparable to what they have in Great Britain and in a number of countries, won't work, and I would vigorously oppose it".<sup>130</sup> When he was specifically addressing the liberal Democratic health care proposal in Congress he stated that "We have had the Kennedy proposal, which up until this year was the Kennedy-Griffith proposal which would have encompassed a total federalization of the health delivery system of the United States. It would put the Federal Government in the patient-doctor relationship. . . . I am opposed to the program, period", as well as bluntly remarking: "the Kennedy bill, never".<sup>131</sup> Ford was against any future mention of a national health care plan associated with socialized medicine. This was his consistent position in 1976.

Ford was determined to stop the New Deal legacy from expanding. In his view, many government programmes were costly and ineffective – especially the Great Society – and provided an increased dependence on government instead of compassion.<sup>132</sup> His stance on a national health care plan is well documented. He attacked the liberal Democratic plan for national health care, labelling the proposal a "dictatorship" and "a total federalization of the health delivery system". A moderate like Eisenhower, Nixon or Carter would have suggested

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<sup>130</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Gerald R. Ford, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book I, January 1 to April 9, 1976* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1979), 639, 838.

<sup>131</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Gerald R. Ford, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book II, April 9 to July 9, 1976* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1979), 1103, 1455.

<sup>132</sup>Yanek Mieczowski, *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 74-78.

an alternative. Since Ford was a conservative Republican, he did not offer his own compromise. In fact, he was clear when he said, “I did not recommend to the Congress in the State of the Union message, nor do I intend to in 1976, any national health insurance plan”.<sup>133</sup>

I do not, however, intend to suggest that Ford was as conservative as Reagan.<sup>134</sup> Although both were conservative, there were differences between the two. Conservative author Craig Shirley states the differences as the following: “Reagan took the GOP from a [Ford] Tory style conservatism . . . to an American brand of conservatism”.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, Ford’s conservatism was closer to Robert Taft rather than that of the Christian Right.<sup>136</sup> However, regarding the expansion of the New Deal legacy, both supported the conservative Republican argument.<sup>137</sup>

Reagan was the second conservative Republican president between 1933 and 1988. He was unique in that he was president and a key conservative Republicans during this

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<sup>133</sup>Ford, *Book II, 1976*, 1088.

<sup>134</sup>Goldwater supported Ford over Reagan for the 1976 GOP presidential nomination, however, he considered both to be conservative; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 146; Goldwater, *Goldwater*, 29-30; Lee Edwards, *Goldwater: The Man Who Made a Revolution* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1995), 337, 368-369, 379, 404-406, 410-411, 413-414; and Craig Shirley, *Reagan’s Revolution: The Untold Story of the Campaign That Started It All* (Nashville: Nelson Current, 2005), 189, 197, 204-205, 239. Although some conservative academics view Ford as a moderate. For this outlook, consider: Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 124-130; Schneider, 131-133; and Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement that Remade America* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 183-185. On the other hand, others viewed Ford as a conservative. For more on this perspective, read: Busch, *Reagan’s Victory*, 55; Shirley, *Reagan’s Revolution*, xxvii-xxviii, 342-343; Hayward, *The Age of Reagan*, 386-387; as well as Dunn and Woodward, *The Conservative Tradition in America*, 40-41.

<sup>135</sup>Shirley, *Reagan’s Revolution*, 342.

<sup>136</sup>Dunn and Woodard, *The Conservative Tradition in America*, 40-41; and Jerome Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 98-105.

<sup>137</sup>What it means to be a conservative Republican has evolved from the time of Hoover to Reagan. One example is the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). This was supported by Robert Taft in the 1940s and by Ford in the 1970s. However, conservative Republicans, with help of some southern conservative Democrats, started to work with Phyllis Schlafly and mobilise against the ERA in the 1970s. For more, see: Farber, 139, 146-148; and Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 215-220, 232-235.

period. Of all the presidents covered, he was the one who most strongly opposed the New Deal legacy – especially the Great Society. He was a staunch supporter of the private sector, and thus sought to limit the role of government whenever possible. Regarding health care, in 1984 he stated, “Today, if you get sick in any place in the world, get sick here in this country. We have the greatest medical care of any country in the world. And those countries that have socialized medicine, the quality of care has declined, the waiting list is forever, and the cost is far greater than it is here”.<sup>138</sup> His statement demonstrates the conservative Republican core belief that the US health care system was the best in the world for relying on the free-market instead of “socialized medicine”.

In 1985, Reagan sought to brand the conservative Republican message as America’s future.

Ever since F.D.R. and the New Deal, the opposition party, and particular those of a liberal persuasion, have dominated the political debate. . . .

But in 1964 came . . . the great Barry Goldwater . . . a true-blue, undiluted conservative. He spoke from principle and offered vision. Freedom – he spoke of freedom: freedom from the Government’s increasing demands on the family purse, freedom from the Government’s increasing usurpation of individual rights and responsibilities, freedom from the leader is continued acquiescence to totalitarianism.

. . . The truth of the matter is, conservative thought is no longer over here on the right; it’s mainstream now.<sup>139</sup>

His statement reveals what conservative Republicans believe about liberal Democrats, that the legacy of the New Deal has compromised individual freedom. Using the conservative Republican rationale, Reagan implied that the best way forward for America was to stop any expansion of the New Deal legacy, and that the liberal Democratic agenda was un-American. Reagan, unlike Ford, was aggressive in attacking the liberal Democratic agenda.

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<sup>138</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book II, June 29 to December 31, 1984* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 1483.

<sup>139</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book I, January 1 to June 28, 1985* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1988), 226-227.

By doing so he laid the foundation for the use of conservative Republican rhetoric as a political weapon to put liberal Democrats on the defensive.

In 1988, Reagan renewed charges against the New Deal legacy.

Senator Kennedy has tried for years to pass an exorbitantly expensive program of socialized medicine, and it hasn't happened. So now he's proposing – and the expected Democratic nominee (Governor Michael Dukakis) has endorsed the plan – that the Government pass a law requiring private companies to directly pay for a federally mandated health insurance program . . .

. . . The fact that the liberals try to disguise their big government ideology inside a legislative Trojan horse is proof they haven't given up.<sup>140</sup>

His narrative asserted that the legacy of the New Deal would not stop until America was completely socialized. He implied that, if the liberal Democrats won the next presidential election, their health care plan could potentially be the next step toward a socialist society.

The conservative Republican political use of socialism to refer to social security and health care caused all of the presidents to react in certain ways. Liberal Democratic presidents fought back against the charges, moderate Republican and moderate Democratic presidents tried to deny the accusations, whilst conservative Republican presidents continued to agree with them and use them to their advantage.

I did not seek to compare the presidents in a chronological format, but instead used three separate and definitive presidencies to showcase the conservative Republican usage of socialism. However, it is worth mentioning that when listing the presidents in chronological order (from least to most recent) there is a notable trend toward conservatism. My approach best revealed the low opinion conservative Republicans held of the New Deal, with regard to the examples of social security and health care, and noted the contrast of liberal Democratic

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<sup>140</sup>*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, Book I, January 1 to July 1, 1988* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1990), 855.

presidents and conservative Republican presidents, along with how the moderate Democratic and moderate Republican presidents compared to both the liberal Democratic and conservative Republican presidencies. Overall, presidents who did combat the socialist label were not usually successful in their efforts. Roosevelt and Johnson were able to sign legislation into law that was labelled socialist (social security and Medicare) but they were the exceptions, and even Roosevelt suffered defeat at the hands of the socialist label (national health plan). In the end, the conservative Republicans gained a victory in that they played a large part in preventing a national health care plan. However, they could not stop the expansion of the New Deal legacy.

### **The Evolution of Conservative Republicanism**

The 1980 presidential election of Reagan marked a turning point for conservative Republicans. His election victory over Carter signified that a conservative Republican was now leading the GOP. This marked a significant change from the previous Republican presidencies of Eisenhower and Nixon (I am not counting Ford since he became president due to Nixon's resignation). Eisenhower and Nixon were Republican presidents but they were moderates, not conservatives. Moving forward to 1964, Goldwater's presidential bid marked the beginning of the conservative Republican movement to regain control of its party and the presidency.<sup>141</sup>

Throughout the conservative Republican revival of the party from the 1960s to 1980, conservatism was comprised of various factions within its wing of the GOP. Some of the conservative elements had been in the Republican fold since before the 1960s and some were added after the 1960s. Before the 1960s, conservatives were mainly comprised of free-

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<sup>141</sup>For an in-depth analysis on Republican Party politics from 1928 to 1989, see: Mason, *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan*.

market economics, anti-communism and cultural conservatism. After the 1960s, neo-conservatives were one faction to join the conservative Republican movement. They moved from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party, were largely anti-communist in their mantra and did not agree with the party shift amongst Democrats in the 1960s toward equality, civil rights and especially welfare. As a result, they began to feel estranged from the Democratic Party in the 1970s. By 1980, they played an important role in Reagan's presidential election.

Another post-1960 faction that joined the conservative movement was the New Right. The New Right railed against the 1960s' and 1970s' cultural liberalism taking place in America (examples include abortion, birth control and no school prayer). The Christian Right was another supporter of Reagan in 1980 and has since remained part of the Republican right.<sup>142</sup>

Prior to 1964, Robert Taft attempted four times to win the GOP presidential nomination, failing on each occasion (1940, 1944, 1948, 1952). His 1952 loss to Eisenhower was a devastating blow to conservative Republicans. Many felt that the Republican establishment had taken the nomination away from Taft and had given it to the safer or moderate candidate, Eisenhower, whom many conservative Republicans considered a "dime store New Dealer". They concluded that Eisenhower and, later, Nixon were not doing enough to challenge the expansion of government that started under FDR.

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<sup>142</sup>For more on the different sects of conservative Republicans and the conservative Republican movement, refer to: Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 158-190, 203-220; Sydney Blumenthal, *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment: From Conservative Ideology to Political Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*; Paul Edward Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, *The Conservative Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988); and Himmelstein, *To the Right*; Schneider, *The Conservative Century*.

However, there are differing perspectives regarding who deserves credit for the conservative revival within the Republican Party. Some credit the 1964 Goldwater presidential campaign for unifying conservative Republicans within the party, whilst differing opinions offer two counter perspectives that either believed Reagan's rise within the conservative Republican movement was the vital factor, or that it was a combination of equally strong figures within the conservative elite that both added to and moved along the cause.<sup>143</sup>

Regardless of what was the most important factor in the conservative Republican uprising, two important points stand out: firstly, certain hot button issues have helped the cause of conservative Republicans; and secondly, these hot button issues are also redefining what it means to be a conservative Republican. Some of the domestic issues that conservative Republicans attack (aside from the New Deal and its legacy) are economic, such as taxes, and socio-moral, such as birth control and abortion (i.e. women's rights).

Taxes is one subject that coincides with the conservative Republican attack against the New Deal legacy. They argue that the more one pays in taxes the greater the loss of individual freedom. Their message on taxation gained support due to the increase of taxes on the middle class. The amount of taxes paid by the middle class almost doubled from the

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<sup>143</sup>For more on the importance of Goldwater's 1964 campaign, see: Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 92, 114; Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution*, 140-141; and Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 6-7. For more on the importance of Reagan's 1980 election, refer to: Jonathan Kolkey, *The New Right, 1960-1968 with Epilogue, 1969-1980* (Washington, DC: University of America Press, 1983), 14-15, 341-342, 347; Mary Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 5, 128; Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper, 2008), 1-4; Busch, *Reagan's Victory*, 141-144; and Hayward, *The Age of Reagan*, 715-716. For more on some key figures of the conservative elite, who added to and progressed the conservative Republican message, consult: Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 66-183; and Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 4, 257-258.



1950s to the 1970s.<sup>144</sup> The passage of California's Proposition 13 in 1978 sought to limit the amount of property taxes (and as a result, decrease this tax) that are to be paid to the state government in Sacramento.<sup>145</sup> This act was the start of the tax revolt that reverberated across America from 1978 to the mid 1980s.<sup>146</sup>

At this point, it is important to question the main emphasis behind Proposition 13. Was it that the public was demanding less government, whilst at the same time wanting more individual freedom from government (by way of paying less taxes), or was it something else? According to Everett Carl Ladd, et al., the public opinion polling data gave a clear message, one that said, "the message Americans are giving on the issues of taxing and spending is clear: Reduce taxes; maintain "big government"; end the waste and inefficiency of big government. This is an important message, to be sure. It is not an easy one to respond to, however. And it is by no means clear whether liberals or conservatives – in their many varieties – should be more heartened by it".<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>For more, refer to: Everett Carl Ladd, with Marilyn Potter, Linda Basilick, Sally Daniels and Dana Suszkiw, "The Polls: Taxing and Spending", *Public Opinion Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 126-135, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2748417> (accessed 25 March 2011); and Hayward, *The Age of Reagan*, 524-525.

<sup>145</sup>For more, see: Ladd, et al., "The Polls"; Clarence Lo, *Small Property Versus Big Government: Social Origins of the Property Tax Revolt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); David Sears and Jack Citrin, *Tax Revolt: Something for Nothing in California* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Issac Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt: How the Property Tax Transformed American Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 98-125; Heyward, *The Age of Reagan*, 527-528; Arthur O'Sullivan, Terri Sexton and Steven Sheffrin, *Property Taxes and Tax Revolts: The Legacy of Proposition 13* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-7, 32; and Jack Citrin and Frank Levy, "From 13 to 4 and Beyond: The Political Meaning of the Ongoing Tax Revolt in California", in *The Property Tax Revolt: The Case of Proposition 13* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing, 1981), eds. George G. Kaufman and Kenneth T. Rosen, 1-26.

<sup>146</sup>Another example that succeeded after Proposition 13 was Massachusetts's Proposition 2 ½ that was passed in 1980. For more on Proposition 2 ½, consult: O'Sullivan, Sexton and Sheffrin, *Property Taxes and Tax Revolts*, 3-4, 32, 95-97; Lo, *Small Property Versus Big Government*, 2-4; Hayward, *The Age of Reagan*, 527-528; and Jack Citrin, "Introduction: The Legacy of Proposition 13", in *California and the American Tax Revolt: Proposition 13 Five Years Later* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), ed. Terry Schwadron, 43-51.

<sup>147</sup>Ladd, et al., "The Polls", 135.

In California, the drive for the Proposition 13 ballot measure had very little support amongst the state Republican Party. Even the future Republican Governor of California, George Deukmejian “opposed Proposition 13” before it passed. However, “one [notable] exception was Ronald Reagan”, he supported the initiative and also tried for a similar plan when he was Governor of California.<sup>148</sup> According to sociologist Issac Martin, “The tax revolt transformed American politics by popularizing a new public policy – tax limitation – that helped to place tax cuts permanently on the policy agenda”.<sup>149</sup>

As a result, the mantra of tax cuts placed the rhetoric of conservative Republicans onto centre stage. As previously mentioned, Reagan (along with Hoover, Taft and Goldwater) railed against taxes because they hampered individual freedom. Consequently, the increase in taxes paid by the middle class from the 1950s to the 1970s made the public more perceptive to this message. The public, however, did not want less government, it wanted a more efficient government,<sup>150</sup> but the conservative Republican argument vilifying increased taxation and calling for a reduction in taxes became increasingly popular. As a result, it further transformed the GOP to support conservative Republican rhetoric.<sup>151</sup>

Aside from taxes, moral issues have further altered what it means to be a conservative Republican. Whereas conservative Republicans have consistently favoured less government regarding taxes, they now favour a pro-government attitude regarding moral

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<sup>148</sup>Lo, *Small Property Versus Big Government*, 23. For more on Reagan’s Proposition 1 and his support for Proposition 13, see: Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 42-44.

<sup>149</sup>Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt*, 23.

<sup>150</sup>Ellis and Stimson, *Ideology in America*, 191-193; Stimson, *Tides of Consent*, 84-91; and Ladd, et al., “The Polls”.

<sup>151</sup>For more on how the tax revolt and how it changed the Republican Party, refer to: Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt*, 126-145; Hayward, *The Age of Reagan*, 527-531; as well as Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 134-136.

values. However, this has not always been the case. Goldwater is one example, demonstrating how this stance has changed from one of individual choice to one of government-mandated morality.<sup>152</sup> The shift in the conservative Republican position on morality, especially in the 1970s, was due to what they perceived as the liberal Democratic shift toward social liberal positions on issues such as abortion, divorce and gay rights.<sup>153</sup> Examples of other issues that helped to foster the social moral shift amongst conservative Republicans were the Supreme Court decisions regarding *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), *Abington School District v. Schempp* and *Murray v. Curlett* (both in 1963), all of which led to the banning of school prayer, whilst *Roe v. Wade* (1973) gave women the legal right to an abortion.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>For more on how Goldwater's view on morality differs from the current conservative Republican position, consult: Goldwater, *Goldwater*, 384-388; John W. Dean and Barry M. Goldwater, Jr., *Pure Goldwater* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 346-348; Robert Alan Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 116, 284-285, 300-301, 315-316; and William A. Link, "Time is an Elusive Companion: Jesse Helms, Barry Goldwater, and the Dynamic of Modern Conservatism", in *Barry Goldwater and the Remaking of the American Political Landscape* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), ed. Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, 247-255.

<sup>153</sup>This shift has affected both parties. But even other issues like gun control has also affected party change amongst the parties. For more on how abortion and gun control have become staples of party politics, refer to: David Karol, *Party Position Change in American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 56-101.

<sup>154</sup>For more on moral values and the conservative Republican movement, see: Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 106-107, 127-142, 173-176; Sarah Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 135-136; Michael Schaller and George Rising, *The Republican Ascendancy: American Politics, 1968-2001* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2002), 62-68, 71-73; Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 83-84; Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 225-237; Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 309-398; and Schneider, 133-139. For more on the ongoing cultural war during the Reagan presidency, consult: Collins, *Transforming America*, 171-192; James Farney, *Social Conservatives and Party Politics in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 52-57; Andrew Preston, *Shield of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 578-583; and Allan J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008), 355-370, 375-377, 386-394.

There are some notable figures that have propelled the conservative Republican shift on social-moral issues. One such figure is Phyllis Schlafly.<sup>155</sup> Her contribution is important because she has been a loyal conservative Republican for over sixty years. She not only helped to mobilise grassroots support for Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign, she also helped to rally a grassroots movement against the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s and early 1980s. Additionally, she is a staunch supporter of traditional moral values (i.e. anti-abortion, anti-gay rights and anti-feminism).<sup>156</sup> Her efforts toward the cause illustrate the usefulness of grassroots movements to conservative Republicans.<sup>157</sup>

Similar to Schlafly, William F. Buckley has also helped to advance the conservative Republican movement. Historian David Farber considers both Schlafly and Buckley to be vital to the movement. Buckley was important due to the role that he played after the death of Taft in 1953 and until Goldwater came on to the national scene during the 1964 presidential election.<sup>158</sup> Farber also concludes that after Goldwater's defeat in the 1964 presidential election to Johnson, Schlafly "helped bring back conservatism from its political dead end . . . she made sure that the politics of gender and sexuality became central to the conservative movement".<sup>159</sup> According to Farber, as president, Reagan was then able to use

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<sup>155</sup>Some other figures are Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. Robertson and Falwell are important figures amongst conservative Christians and both helped to solidify the Religious Right in the 1970s and 1980s as a core support group for conservative Republicans.

<sup>156</sup>For more on Schlafly's impact to the conservative Republican cause, refer to: Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 215-216; Collins, *Transforming America*, 47; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 93-95; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 119-157; Schaller and Rising, *The Republican Ascendancy*, 72; Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 167, 169-170; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 135-136, 233; Rebecca E. Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 22-23, 50, 60-61, 98, 125, 128, 130, 134-137, 140, 143-145; and Self, *All in the Family*, 304-305, 311, 313-316, 320, 334.

<sup>157</sup>For more on the conservative Republican movement and the grassroots movement, see: McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 111-186.

<sup>158</sup>Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 257-258.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, 258.

the contributions of the previous conservative elite figures (Taft, Buckley, Goldwater and Schlafly) to help him further the movement.

Buckley's most significant achievement for the conservative Republican movement has been his magazine, the *National Review*.<sup>160</sup> He launched the *National Review* in 1955 to offer a conservative voice to counter the message of the "liberal media".<sup>161</sup> I consider Buckley an important figure within the conservative elite for his view towards liberal Democrats.<sup>162</sup> His magazine is a source of influence that the conservative elite use to help conservative Republicans attack both the legacy of the New Deal and anyone they perceive to be a liberal Democrat and/or a socialist. According to Farber, Buckley wanted to combat the liberal Democratic New Deal legacy in a manner which established "that liberalism was cousin to socialism and atheistic communism", and he did so because "he believed he could move Americans to acknowledge the moral and spiritual superiority of conservative principles".<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>Buckley also helped to foster the grassroots movement Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) in the 1960s. For more, consult: John A. Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 54-64.; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 59-60; Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 115; and William F. Buckley, "Young Americans for Freedom", 226-228, and "The Sharon Statement", 229-230, both are in *Conservatism In America since 1930: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), ed. Gregory L. Schneider.

<sup>161</sup>For more on Buckley and the *National Review*, see: Jeffrey Hart, *The Making of the American Conservative Mind: National Review and Its Times* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 1-14; Carl Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011); Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 39-76; Linda Bridges and John R. Coyne, Jr., *Strictly Right: William F. Buckley, Jr. and the American Conservative Movement* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 39-239; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 63, 95, 128-130, 218-219; and David Burner and Thomas West, *Column Right: Conservative Journalists in the Service of Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 39-64.

<sup>162</sup>Another journalist that has made an impact, as a neo-conservative, is Irving Kristol. For more on Kristol and neo-conservatism, refer to: Burner and West, *Column Right*, 65-84; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 105, 107-112, 114-116; Gottfried and Fleming, *The Conservative Movement*, 64-70; Allitt, *The Conservatives*, 203-204; Gary Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture, and the War of Ideology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 68-132; and Mark Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1997), 4, 7-9, 21-25, 352-353.

<sup>163</sup>Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 257.

Farber's statement is vital in understanding the evolution of conservative Republican rhetoric. They now use religion in an attempt to claim similar values and ideals to the founding fathers (especially George Washington, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson) which include: limited government, states' rights, strong moral values and a non-regulated free-market. On the other hand, they argue that liberal Democrats stand for the exact opposite, consisting of: a powerful national government at the expense of states' rights, weak (no) moral values and an overregulated free-market.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment the conservative Republican movement became a tour de force, it did attain a great amount of influence within the GOP, by at least 1980, if not sooner. Of all conservative Republicans, Reagan benefited the most from the movement. His political career in the Republican Party started, officially, in the early 1960s and progressed along with the movement. He suffered personal setbacks much like the movement, but after his 1968 and 1976 defeats for the Republican presidential nomination, he regrouped and ultimately prevailed in 1980 (and again in 1984). Eventually, they achieved their goal of shifting the GOP away from its liberal/moderate party power structure into one that was conservative.<sup>164</sup> And as a result of this shift, according to politics professor Kenneth Cosgrove, "We should not underestimate the extent to which the former party of Lincoln has, in fact, become the party of Reagan".<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>For more on this point, refer to: Walter J. Stone, Ronald B. Rapoport and Alan I. Abramowitz, "Party Polarization: The Reagan Revolution and Beyond", in *The Parties Respond: Changes in American Parties and Campaigns*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), ed. L. Sandy Maisel, 69-99.

<sup>165</sup>Which is part of Cosgrove's chapter on "Reagan as a Marketer and as a Brand for Conservative Movement"; for more, see: Kenneth M. Cosgrove, *Branded Conservatives: How the Brand Brought the Right from the Fringes to the Center of American Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 71-92. The quote is on page 92.

## Conclusion

Conservative Republicans, from Hoover to Reagan, had to decide whether or not to ape the New Deal legacy, or present an alternative narrative (such as *A Choice Not an Echo*<sup>166</sup>). This narrative would also be useful to fight the GOP divide between the moderate and conservative wings, moving beyond a “conservative coalition” to form a more long-lasting union. As illustrated in the next chapter, this choice became fruitful, as the GOP won control of Congress and southern conservatives broke their allegiance to the Democratic Party.

Conservative Republicans have altered their position over time, from a more generic use of socialism to a more specific one. Moving to a more specific definition of socialism gave them a clearer and more concise message. This change allowed their meaning to have the political flexibility necessary to frame an issue to their advantage.

This chapter addresses how conservative Republican rhetoric improved from the 1930s to 1980s. First came Hoover’s ineffective message, which Taft transformed, then Goldwater’s fervour, and finally Reagan’s vision (making him arguably the most popular conservative Republican of all). Overall, the conservative Republican message has not radically changed when attacking socialism; it has simply improved over time. However, conservative Republicanism evolved from Hoover to Reagan – from wanting the government out of the economic and social-moral activities of America, to aspiring for the government to play an active role in the maintaining America’s morality, whilst at the same time still refraining from any government regulation of the free-market.

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<sup>166</sup>Schlafly’s book was in defence of Goldwater becoming the 1964 GOP candidate over a more moderate Republican; Phyllis Schlafly, *A Choice Not an Echo* (Alton, IL: Pere Marquette Press, 1964).

Chapters two through five analyse how conservative Republicans attempt to carry on the battle against the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy in the post-Cold War era. Whilst doing so, they will continue to evolve, ultimately winning control of the party away from moderate Republicans – giving them future opportunities to battle against the New Deal legacy.

Although Reagan was influential in honing a conservative message that could offer an alternative to liberalism, he was, however, constrained with what he could accomplish without a conservative GOP Congress. Reagan popularised the ideal of less government, especially tax cuts, but his legacy did not offer the GOP any clarity on how to govern as a conservative. His legacy was one of pragmatism, a strong socialist critique against liberals, and most importantly, a lasting myth of his presidency. And as the remaining chapters illustrate, conservative Republicans would use their rhetoric successfully to gain power, but would find less success in framing a governing philosophy.



## **The New Deal Legacy at a Standstill? Clashing Narratives on Big Government**

*Fifty years ago unionists and New Dealers proudly avowed their Socialist creed. During the Great Society we had “Social Democracy” – meaning “capitalism, but....” Then came the managed-decliners of the Carter era. And finally, after Reagan, we got the vague “New Democrat” – the “I’m not like those other folks the public has come to despise” types. But these were verbal equivocations only, new labels for old reactionary nostrums.*

-Dick Armey<sup>1</sup>

Dick Armey’s statement exemplifies how many conservative Republicans viewed so-called New Democrat Bill Clinton as yet another Democratic adherent to the “Socialist creed” of big government liberalism. These words were written shortly after the GOP had bested Clinton on health care reform, but just before he turned the tables on them over Medicare reform. Although four-party politics was altering the political dynamic of Democrats and Republicans, this chapter will illustrate that this particular dynamic was better established to defend the status quo of the New Deal legacy instead of dismantling it.

Health care policy during Clinton’s first term (1993-1996) – the failed attempt at national health care reform and his defence of Medicare versus a Republican dominated Congress – highlights how the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy presented difficult challenges when attempting bold initiatives. Conservative Republican rhetoric against the “liberal welfare state” was successful in fighting off an expansion of the legacy, but was unsuccessful in its attempt to roll it back via Medicare reform. Conservatives struggled with moving from a congressional minority party to the majority party. Winning control of Congress put them in a position of power, but with power came responsibility as well as having to govern with a Democratic President.

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<sup>1</sup>Dick Armey, *The Freedom Revolution: The New Republican House Majority Leader Tells Why Big Government Failed, Why Freedom Works, and How We Will Rebuild America* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1995), 76.

Conservative Republicans like New Gingrich and Armev sought to replace a “liberal welfare state” with a conservative one, but this was easier said than done. As the struggle for national health care has shown, they garnered success against the liberal Democratic desire for national health care, but they also suffered major setbacks over Medicare and Medicaid. Leading up to the 1990s, they were in the midst of a two-front political war against liberal Democrats and “me-too” Republicans. Conservative Republicans, especially in the House of Representatives, were determined to build upon Ronald Reagan’s 1980 presidential election win by further expanding the influence of their faction within Congress. Bill Clinton’s push for national health care reform presented them with the perfect opportunity to achieve their goal.

Three questions that will be addressed in this chapter are:

1. How did the Conservative Opportunity Society’s rhetoric shape the conservative Republican critique against the New Deal Legacy?
2. What is the impact of the GOP socialist criticism towards health care reform?
3. To what extent did Gingrich contribute to the evolution of GOP rhetoric and its use of the socialist label?

The above questions will illuminate conservative Republicans’ attempts to undo the New Deal and its ongoing legacy within the framework of the political realities they faced. In the House, Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) and the Conservative Opportunity Society formulated a strategy that had the potential to achieve such a feat.

### **Plotting Their Path to Power: The Conservative Opportunity Society**

At its inception in 1983, the Conservative Opportunity Society (COS) was a group of individuals dedicated to the goal of winning a conservative Republican majority in the

House of Representatives.<sup>2</sup> The main architect of COS was Newt Gingrich. He wanted COS to take over as the main influence within the GOP House because he believed that the party's moderate leadership was too comfortable in its permanent minority, and even worse, was too accommodating towards the opposition.<sup>3</sup> To achieve this goal, the Republican Party had to take a more confrontational stance against the Democratic Party. Some early COS members, aside from Gingrich, were: Dan Coates (IN), Phil Crane (IL), Judd Gregg (NH), Duncan Hunter (CA), Dan Lungren (CA), Connie Mack (FL), Vin Weber (MN) and Robert Walker (PA).<sup>4</sup> Early on, this organisation used C-SPAN as a tool to help bring their message to the American public, and attack Democrats without them being present to respond to the accusations.<sup>5</sup> House Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-MA) believed that those engaged in this strategy "did their best to undermine the dignity of the House".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For more on the COS from a non-conservative perspective, consult: Robert Remini, *The House: The History of the House of Representatives* (New York: Smithsonian Books: Collins, 2006), 462-477; Julian Zelizer, *Governing America: The Revival of American Political History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 270-275; Judith Warner and Max Berley, *Newt Gingrich: Speaker to America* (New York: Signet, 1995), 92-112; Eleanor Clift and Tom Brazaitis, *War Without Bloodshed: The Art of Politics* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 227-237; and Sean M. Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators: The Roots of Partisan Warfare in Congress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 19-31. For more on COS from the conservative perspective, refer to: Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement That Remade America* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 270-282; and Mel Steely, *The Gentleman From Georgia: The Biography of Newt Gingrich* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), 140-145, 150, 160, 165-166, 174-178, 189.

<sup>3</sup>For more on the permanent minority, refer to: William F. Connelly, Jr. and John J. Pitney, Jr., *Congress' Permanent Minority? : Republicans in the U.S. House* (Lanham, MD: Littlefield Adams Quality Paperbacks, 1994).

<sup>4</sup>Remini, *The House*, 462; Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution*, 271; Werner and Berley, *Newt Gingrich*, 92-93; and Steely, *The Gentlemen From Georgia*, 142-143.

<sup>5</sup>For the view of the former House Speaker, Tip O'Neill (D-MA), on the actions of Gingrich, COS and their usage of C-SPAN, see: Tip O'Neill with William Novak, *Man of the House* (New York: Random House, 1987), 352-355.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 353.

Although COS was hostile towards Democrats, it was also aggressive towards its own party, with Gingrich, Armev (R-TX) and Tom DeLay (R-TX) challenging moderates for House leadership positions.<sup>7</sup>

The main problem with COS's rhetoric was that it was best employed by the minority party, making it more difficult to govern than when using a bipartisan approach. One notable example is from 1984 when Gingrich publicly condemned Ronald Reagan for compromising with Democrats.<sup>8</sup> He accused the president of "feeding the liberal welfare state instead of changing it".<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, being part of the House minority allowed greater freedom to challenge those who governed. The problem once conservative Republicans seized power, which Gingrich faced during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, was that the public expected those in power to actually govern, not to figuratively blow-up government, or shut it down.<sup>10</sup>

However, when Gingrich bemoaned Reagan's record on challenging "the liberal welfare state" he demonstrated that COS was even more conservative than Reagan.<sup>11</sup> Reagan was willing to be a conservative who worked within the existing political structure whilst Gingrich was determined to change the present state to one which best suited COS's ideals.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>For more on this point, see: Douglas L. Koopman, *Hostile Takeover: The House Republican Party, 1980-1995* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996), 11-26.

<sup>8</sup>Zelizer, *Governing America*, 272.

<sup>9</sup>The quote was taken from: *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>This will be discussed in more detail later on in the chapter.

<sup>11</sup>For more on this point, see: Nicol C. Rae, *Conservative Reformers: The Republican Freshmen and the Lessons of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 33-34.

<sup>12</sup>For more on this point, consider: Richard E. Cohen, "Frustrated House Republicans Seek More Aggressive Strategy for 1984 and Beyond", *National Journal* 9, no. 16 (3 March 1984): 413, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis> (accessed 16 November 2012); Evan Thomas, Laurence I. Barrett and Joseph N. Boyce, "Struggling for a Party's Soul", *Time* 124, no. 10 (3 September 1984): 38, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 22 November 2012); and Zelizer, *Governing America*, 272.

According to Vin Weber, the main goal of COS was to offer “an attractive alternative to the liberal welfare state”.<sup>13</sup> In his assessment, Gingrich aimed to change “the political dynamic that was put in motion at the time of the New Deal. He believes that to triumph politically you have to smash ‘tax-and-spend liberalism,’ which has dominated our domestic politics for sixty years. It is an alignment in the sense that it’s discrediting a way of problem solving. He puts it in terms of the ‘welfare state,’ ‘bureaucracy’ – it can be defined more objectively. He wants to change the way people think about government.”<sup>14</sup> What these two statements illustrate is that Gingrich wanted to challenge the ongoing liberal Democratic New Deal legacy and replace it with a conservative Republican equivalent. He had also described the legacy he was fighting against as “the baroque phase of liberalism: the Soviet Union as puzzling and benign, no growth, rationing.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, what Weber, Gingrich and other COS members were combating was a way of life they considered un-American.

Weber, in an interview, was asked to “differentiate a conservative approach to the welfare state from a liberal approach”. His response was the following: “The first principle is that government should reinforce traditional values such as family and work, instead of undermining them. . . . Second, government policy should be market-sensitive, not market-destructive. . . . Third, the conservative welfare state should be fiscally [conservative]. . . . Finally, local control and decentralization should be central to our agenda”.<sup>16</sup> He went on to articulate how he believed that COS’s message would allow for “a Republican majority in the House in the next 10 years. . . . Democrats have yet to get their act together on terms of

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<sup>13</sup>Adam Meyerson, “Wedges and Magnets”, *Policy Review* 52 (Spring 1990): 38, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 21 May 2012).

<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth Drew, *Showdown: The Struggle Between the Gingrich Congress and the Clinton White House* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 26-27.

<sup>15</sup>The quote is from: Nicholas Lemann, “Conservative Opportunity Society”, *The Atlantic*, May 1985, 36.

<sup>16</sup>Meyerson, “Wedges and Magnets”, 39.

moving back to the mainstream. Their party is increasingly controlled by left-wing activists. . . . I don't see moderates and conservatives coming back to the Democratic Party".<sup>17</sup> As it turned out, his prediction was partially correct, the GOP won a majority in both Houses of Congress four years later.

Conservative historian Lee Edwards is another who asserts that all Democrats have become liberals. He also implies that the leftist tendencies of Democrats indicate that they champion socialist ideals.

[M]odern liberals have shown that they cannot govern wisely, wed as they are to the socialist ideal. So convinced they were in the 1930s that government, and only government, could save the nation that they proposed a radical break with American tradition – nothing less than a new contract between the government and the governed. Their model was not the American Revolution, rational and grounded in the law, but the French Revolution, utopian and guided by the impulse of the moment.<sup>18</sup>

What he conceived to be an un-American ideal underlay the “fifty-year experiment in ever larger government and ever less individual responsibility”.<sup>19</sup>

Edwards linked COS's goals to that of the larger conservative Republican movement to combat the New Deal legacy. He asserts: “COS's undisputed enemy was the liberal welfare state, a primary target of conservatives from Bob Taft through Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan to the present”. However, he highlights a difference between Gingrich and Reagan that set COS apart. “Gingrich stressed that although President Reagan unquestionably had “slowed down” the liberal welfare state, he had not fundamentally changed its character or its size. COS members therefore sought “wedge” issues, like

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>18</sup>Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution*, 326-327.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 327.

abortion . . . and magnet issues . . . like tax reform” to first repel voters away from the Democratic Party and then attract them to the GOP.<sup>20</sup>

Edwards also perceives Gingrich to be one of the iconic figures, along with Robert Taft, Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, who have “remade America” via the conservative movement.<sup>21</sup> However, one major difference in Gingrich’s era was the increased importance given to social values. Although Gingrich did not openly campaign on social issues in the 1994 midterms – COS did make them a part of their wedge driving issues in the House – the Contract with America contained a vital social issue as part of the agenda.<sup>22</sup> Welfare reform worked against the New Deal legacy, simultaneously using family values to attack a government programme accused of encouraging women to have children out of wedlock. On the other hand, the four were united in their opposition to tax-and spend liberalism.

Weber’s four-point response in 1990 was very similar to the foundation of the welfare reform plan in the Contract with America, as well as the welfare reform plan that Clinton signed into law during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. However, the conservative Republican theme of “opportunity” faced an uphill battle when the GOP-controlled 104<sup>th</sup> Congress proposed slashing Medicare benefits.<sup>23</sup> Challenging what COS-labelled the “liberal welfare state” was much more difficult when attacking a popular entitlement that was not viewed in the same light as welfare benefits, which could be accused of going to “the undeserving

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 281-282.

<sup>21</sup>I consider Herbert Hoover to play a larger role than what Edwards suggests. He highlights the similarities of the roles played by Taft and Gingrich – where two GOP Congresses, in 1994 and 1946, attempted, with limited success, to attack big government. For more, refer to: Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution*, 306-307.

<sup>22</sup>According to political scientist James Farney, the Contract had three points that were included to appeal to social conservatives. For more, consult: James Farney, *Social Conservatives and Party Politics in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 69-70.

<sup>23</sup>The point will be discussed in more detail later on in the chapter.

poor”.<sup>24</sup> Clinton was more successful defending Medicare than he was defending welfare against the Republican-controlled Congress.<sup>25</sup> The different outcomes of the two events highlight his difficult situation as a centrist Democrat looking to distance himself from the liberal wing of his party. He, however, found a fortuitous ally in Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-KS) to help turn the tables against Gingrich and the conservative dominated House, and to end the budget stalemate.

### **A Delicate Balance: Health Care, the New Deal Legacy and Four-Party Politics**

Although Gingrich wanted to move the GOP in a more conservative direction than Reagan, Reagan’s impact on the evolution of four-party politics is important to consider. Without his election in 1980 and re-election in 1984, Gingrich’s success in 1994 may not have been possible.<sup>26</sup> It would at least have been more difficult to achieve. Thus what the Reagan presidency achieved, the 1994 midterm elections solidified – the reconfiguration of four-party politics.<sup>27</sup>

Part of the change in four-party politics placed Clinton to the left of the Republican congressional party and to the right of the Democratic congressional party. This political dynamic played right into the ploys of conservative Republicans, and especially Gingrich.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>For more on the undeserving, consult: Michael Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon, 1989).

<sup>25</sup>Welfare reform is the central theme of the next chapter.

<sup>26</sup>For more on Reagan and party reorganisation, refer to: Walter J. Stone, Ronald B. Rapoport and Alan I. Abramowitz, “Party Polarization: The Reagan Revolution and Beyond”, in *The Parties Respond: Changes in American Parties and Campaigns*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), ed. L. Sandy Maisel, 69-99; Robert Mason, “Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party: Responses to Realignment”, in *Ronald Reagan and the 1980s: Perceptions, Policies, Legacies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), eds. Cheryl Hudson and Gareth Davies, 151-172; and Paul Allen Beck, “Incomplete Realignment: The Reagan Legacy for Parties and Elections”, in *The Reagan Legacy: Promise and Performance* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1988), ed. Charles O. Jones, 145-171.

<sup>27</sup>Political scientist Douglas Koopman also briefly analyses how the GOP in 1994 had altered their half of the four-party system. For more, refer to Koopman, *Hostile Takeover*, 156-158.

<sup>28</sup>For more on polarisation as party strategy, see: Thomas Byrne Edsall, *Building Red America: The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for Permanent Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 50-77.



According to political scientist Sean Theriault, although Reagan's 1980 presidential election victory challenged congressional bipartisanship, "Gingrich's penchant for confrontation started before 1980 and the establishment of COS".<sup>29</sup> Theriault's analysis of Gingrich's congressional career illustrates that his first term in the House, the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress of 1979-1980, laid the path towards partisanship, and when he became Speaker, "The Republicans who entered Gingrich's House looked and acted differently than the Republicans who entered the House after Gingrich".<sup>30</sup> With the election and subsequent shift of Phil Gramm (R-TX) from the House to the Senate in 1984 the seeds of partisanship took root.<sup>31</sup> During the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1993-1994), partisanship was evident on issues like Clinton's first budget and the failed attempt at health care reform.<sup>32</sup>

I argue that Clinton was a moderate Democratic president if judged on his response to the New Deal legacy.<sup>33</sup> In essence, he was not against expanding the legacy of the New Deal (via health care reform) but preferred to do so through the private insurance industry. He was also willing to defend the legacy, with regards to Medicare. However, many Republicans, especially conservatives, branded him a liberal Democrat in his attempts to

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<sup>29</sup>Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators*, 20-22. The quote is from page 22.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 28-30. The quote is from page 30. For more on the House Republican Party changed during the time span of 1980 to 1994, refer to: Koopman, *Hostile Takeover*.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 37-50.

<sup>32</sup>For more on partisanship during the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, consider: James P. Pfiffner, "President Clinton and the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress: Winning Battles and Losing Wars", in *Rivals for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1996), ed. James A. Thurber, 170-190; and Barbara Sinclair, "Hostile Partners: The President, Congress, and Lawmaking in the Partisan 1990s", in *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2000), eds. Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher, 146-148, 150-153.

<sup>33</sup>However, political scientist Sidney Milkis considers Clinton to be a progressive who wanted "to correct and renew the progressive tradition", whereas, historian David Courtwright considers Clinton to be a "progressive in his ends", via his leftist stance on morality. See: Sidney M. Milkis, *The President and the Parties: the Transformation of the American Party System since the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 312-313; Sidney M. Milkis, "The Presidency and Political Parties", in *The Presidency and the Political System*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), ed. Michael Nelson, 317; and David T. Courtwright, *No Right Turn: Conservative Politics in Liberal America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 239.

increase the scope of government, not only on health care but on other issues that conveniently fit in with their allegations, especially the tax increase included in his first budget plan to reduce the fiscal deficit. As a consequence, the budget only narrowly passed, without any support from the GOP opposition.<sup>34</sup> Historian Steven Gillon remarked that Clinton's "budget was a gift to Gingrich, who successfully stigmatized his modest proposal as a traditional "tax and spend" budget".<sup>35</sup> But in that regard Gingrich was not alone, for Bob Dole erroneously declared the budget to have included "not just the largest tax increase in American history. It's the largest increase in world history"; a claim that historian Iwan Morgan dismissed as "a patently ridiculous allegation . . . In reality, OBRA [Clinton's] tax increases were smaller than the Reagan-Dole tax hike of 1982, which netted \$268 billion in 1993 dollars over five years".<sup>36</sup>

Clinton's agenda during his first two years in office united the GOP opposition and was detrimental to congressional Democrats. "Clinton's first two years", according to political scientist Nicol C. Rae, "were an absolute disaster for the Democratic Party".<sup>37</sup> The theme of taxation rallied the GOP Congress, especially COS and Gingrich,<sup>38</sup> and took up where Reagan's rhetoric left off. But Gingrich wanted to go beyond what Reagan accomplished by ending Democratic control of Congress, as well as their big government

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<sup>34</sup>For more, see: Iwan Morgan, *The Age of Deficits: Presidents and Unbalanced Budgets from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 165-178; Steven M. Gillon, *The Pact: Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, and the Rivalry That Defined a Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113-114; and Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), 59-75, 80-86, 109-113, 165-173, 260-272.

<sup>35</sup>Gillon, *The Pact*, 114.

<sup>36</sup>Morgan, *The Age of Deficits*, 174.

<sup>37</sup>Nicole C. Rae, "Clinton and the Democrats: The President and Party Leader", in *The Postmodern Presidency: Bill Clinton's Legacy in U.S. Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), ed. Steven E. Schier, 192.

<sup>38</sup>Morgan, *The Age of Deficits*, 170-174; Michael Foley, "Clinton and Congress" in *The Clinton Presidency: The First Term, 1992-1996* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), eds. Paul S. Herrson and Dilys M. Hill, 29-31; Lewis L. Gould, *The Republicans: A History of the Grand Old Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 318-319; and Gillon, *The Pact*, 113-114

credo that stymied the Reagan revolution. Clinton, however, was not willing to cut taxes the way Reagan had or George W. Bush eventually would.<sup>39</sup>

As illustrated in the previous chapter, during the latter stages of his presidency, Reagan started to reassert the conservative Republican claim that liberals – in this instance Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Governor Michael Dukakis (D-MA) – wanted to tax-and-spend America into socialised medicine. As provocation he used the terms liberal and Democrat as interchangeable references because they were synonymous, a liberal was a Democrat and a Democrat was a liberal. The main point of his avowal was that no matter what you label them they still had have a big government agenda. This association, however, also bore implications on foreign policy.

According to political scientist John Kenneth White, “the Republican Party was the primary beneficiary of the struggle with communism, as it succeeded in tarring liberalism with the epithet that it was “soft” on communism”.<sup>40</sup> The “rejection of communism reinforced American nationalism, and made the Republicans into a patriotic party”.<sup>41</sup> However, the end of the Cold War signalled a change in American party politics. The public disliked new, big-government agendas, whilst at the same time it supported protecting the middle class welfare state. Clinton and the Democratic Party were more tight-fisted with government spending; the Republican Party was similar, whilst also reasserting conservative social values.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Catherine E. Rudder, “The Politics of Taxing and Spending in Congress: Ideas, Strategy, and Policy”, in *Congress Reconsidered*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005), eds. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, 319-342; 323-325, 237-329; and W. Elliot Brownlee, *Federal Taxation in America: A Short History* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 147-216.

<sup>40</sup>John Kenneth White, *Still Seeing Red: How the Cold War Shapes the New American Politics*, updated and expanded ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 5.

<sup>41</sup>*ibid.*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> For more, consult: White, *Still Seeing Red*, 221-285.

On GOP use of the red label, White posits: “Despite Republican efforts to paint Democrats red by association, the Cold War no longer remains an organizing image in American politics. Its fading portrait poses a significant challenge for the GOP. . . . New enemies must be found”.<sup>43</sup> His book, published in 1998, did not fully explore how both parties had changed but this work agrees that the red label can still be effective depending on the circumstances.

In 2003, however, White rearranged Burns’ four-party politics model in “the return of four-party politics”.<sup>44</sup> This noted how the exit of southern Democrats made both congressional parties more ideologically harmonious, whilst both presidential parties (his examples are Clinton and George W. Bush) fit in-between the two congressional parties. On the other hand, as I point out in the fourth chapter on George W. Bush, his presidency offered the GOP the opportunity to gain its own New Deal electoral coalition – albeit one that did not come into fruition.

Rae’s work on the demise of the liberal GOP wing is of importance to my argument.<sup>45</sup> In the current four-party politics dynamic, the remnants of liberal Republicanism have moved to the Democratic Party. Whilst the Democratic House is liberal dominated, this is not the case in the Senate nor for the presidential party.<sup>46</sup> Of course there are liberal Democrats in the Senate, but moderate Democratic support, if not also Republican support, is needed to pass Senate legislation. There are not enough liberal Democrats in the Senate to pass legislation without moderate support. And like the previous Democratic

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 273.

<sup>44</sup>John Kenneth White, *The Values Divide: American Politics and Culture in Transition* (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2003), 177-193.

<sup>45</sup>Nicol C. Rae, *The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Republicans* (New York: Oxford Press, 1989).

<sup>46</sup>However, others such as historian Ronald Radosh argue that Democrats have become a liberal party. For more, consult: Ronald Radosh, *Divided They Fell: The Demise of the Democratic Party, 1964-1996* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

Senate Majority during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (fifty-one with two Independents who caucused with the party), Republican support is needed to have the sixty vote supermajority to invoke cloture and overcome a potential filibuster. Compared to the House, the Senate is smaller and allows individual members more opportunity to assert their views – which makes an individual senator more influential than an individual house member.<sup>47</sup>

Bill Clinton was a southern Democrat who achieved major accomplishments, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), welfare reform and deficit reducing budgets, whilst working with and against liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans respectively.<sup>48</sup> Clinton represented a Democratic Party that was much more liberal on socio-moral issues than the GOP. Though economically centrist, it was (and still is) liberal by comparison to the GOP. Clinton lamented that his first year budget agenda did not have traditional Democratic priorities but instead was more in line with the policies of “Eisenhower Republicans”, whilst his administration was pitted against “fighting the Reagan Republicans. We stand for lower deficits and free trade and the bond market. *Isn't that great*

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<sup>47</sup>For more, refer to: Sarah A. Binder, *Minority Rights, Majority Rule: Partisanship and the Development of Congress* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). A powerful tool at a senator's disposal is the filibuster – an option that is no longer possible in the House since 1890. For more on the history of filibustering, consider: Lauren C. Bell, *Filibustering in the Senate* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011), 35-70; and Gregory Koger, *Filibustering: A Political History of Obstruction in the House and Senate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>48</sup>For more on southern Democrats, see: Nicol C. Rae, *Southern Democrats* (New York: Oxford, 1994). Clinton was also a member of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, which wanted to move the party away from its liberal base and towards the centre. For more, consider: Rae, *Southern Democrats*, 111-127; Kenneth S. Baer, *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2000); Alex Waddan, *Clinton's Legacy?: A New Democrat in Governance* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 26-43; James MacGregor Burns and Georgia J. Sorenson, with Robin Gerber and Scott W. Webster, *Dead Center: Clinton-Gore Leadership and the Perils of Moderation* (New York: Scribner, 1999), 145-168; and Paul J. Quirk and William Cunion, “Clinton's Domestic Policy: The Lessons of a ‘New Democrat’”, in *The Clinton Legacy* (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2000), eds. Colin Campbell and Bert A. Rockman, 200-225.

[italics added]?”<sup>49</sup> Political scientist Philip Klinkner’s take on Clinton and New Democrats is that they adhered to

an *accommodationist* ideology. . . . that attempts to accommodate itself with the dominant political tides by presenting a more moderate version of the latter. In this way, the New Democrats are akin to the “Moderate Republicanism” of the Eisenhower era. . . . [However,] the New Democrats lack the popular base to alter the dominant conservative political ideology. They are reduced to splitting the difference with or moderating the more unpopular elements of the conservative agenda.<sup>50</sup>

Political scientist Mark Smith explains the evolution of party politics as the following: “The flow of American politics in recent decades can thus be summarized by a basic fact: *With some exceptions, Republicans and their ideological allies changed their arguments while Democrats changed their positions.* Disarmingly simple in its essence, this contrast is complex in both its origins and its implications”.<sup>51</sup> This is the case with economics, which is Smith’s central theme, but when combining socio-moral policies both parties have changed positions. Conservative Republicans believe that individual freedom also equals individual responsibility.

Clinton, during his presidency, was the leader of a Democratic Party that did – and still does – support more socially liberal policies that do not moderate “the dominant conservative political ideology” as Klinkner suggests. However, unlike moderate Republicanism, moderate Democrats have a home in both their presidential and congressional parties – although this rings truer for the Senate than for the House. Moderate Republicans, on the other hand, have an uphill fight in their presidential party, balancing the desire to appeal to a conservative base without repelling the centre. They are also dwindling

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<sup>49</sup>Bob Woodward, *The Agenda: Inside the Clinton White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 165.

<sup>50</sup>Philip Klinkner, “Democratic Party Ideology in the 1990s: New Democrats or Modern Republicans?” In *The Politics of Ideas: Intellectual Challenges Facing the American Political Parties* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), eds. John Kenneth White and John C. Green, 128-129.

<sup>51</sup>Mark A. Smith, *The Right Talk: How Conservatives Transformed the Great Society into the Economic Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 18.

in numbers to be a force in either the Senate or the House. And as liberal Republicans have left the GOP, moderate Republicans are also getting pushed out of the party, and are now on the verge of extinction at the national level.

Previous works on the Clinton presidency, at least the first term, provide a path to understanding Clinton and the New Deal legacy, especially the failed attempt at health care reform and the defence of Medicare during the budget battles.<sup>52</sup> But how did four-party politics affect him in the two instances? Or for that matter, how did they also affect Gingrich and other conservative Republicans?

It is without a doubt that the pre-1994 four-party politics dynamic was transformed by the 1994 midterm elections. Whilst the Democratic controlled 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress maintained a high level of support for Clinton's agenda, on three of his major initiatives, national health care reform, welfare reform and the ratification of NAFTA, he was at odds with his congressional party.<sup>53</sup> And his NAFTA success was due to the help of Gingrich and congressional Republicans overcoming the opposition of a majority of congressional

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<sup>52</sup>For more on Clinton and his centrist policies affected his presidency, see: Burns and Sorenson, *Dead Center*; Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein, *Storming the Gates: Protest Politics and the Republican Revival* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996); Harris, *The Survivor*; Waddan, *Clinton's Legacy*; as well as Quirk and Cunion, "Clinton's Domestic Policy". For more on the rhetorical approaches to his presidency, consult: Antonio de Velasco, *Centrist Rhetoric: The Production of Political Transcendence in the Clinton Presidency* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010).

<sup>53</sup>Clinton's relationship with the 103<sup>rd</sup> congressional Democratic majority was complicated. His high success rate obscured significant defeats. For more, see: Pfiffner, "President Clinton and the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress", 170-190; Foley, "Clinton and Congress", 23-33; Charles O. Jones, *Clinton and Congress, 1993-1996: Risk, Restoration, and Reelection* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1999), 78-87; Barbara Sinclair, "Trying to Govern Positively in a Negative Era: Clinton and the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress", in *The Clinton Presidency: First Appraisals* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1996), eds. Colin Campbell and Bert A. Rockman, 88-125; and Richard S. Conley, *Presidency, Congress, and Divided Government* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 202-213.

Democrats.<sup>54</sup> NAFTA was one example of the complex political relationship between two key political rivals.<sup>55</sup>

Four-party politics was a mixed bag for both Clinton and Gingrich. By being to the left of the Republican congressional party ideologically, Clinton's health care reform plan and any other Democratic health care plan was successfully labelled by the GOP as a big government takeover of American health care. On the other hand, Medicare and the 1995/96 budget battle exposed Gingrich and the GOP for being overly zealous in their attempt to reduce the size of government. Conservative rhetoric framed a successful narrative in attacking health care reform, which helped the party to reap the rewards of their labours in the 1994 midterm elections. However, this also backfired when Bob Dole's presidential aspirations hindered a similar strategy during the two government shutdowns, as well as when the freshmen and other members of the House leadership were all too happy with the government shutdowns.

Bob Dole's 1996 presidential aspirations made him and Clinton temporary allies against Gingrich and the House Republicans, which did not sit well with many House members.<sup>56</sup> Dole believed the House Republicans were "a little too much in a hurry" with the notion of the Contract with America because "You don't undo 40 years or 20 years or 30 years in 100 days or four years".<sup>57</sup> And he even lamented that this all or nothing approach on

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<sup>54</sup>The final voting tally was 234-200 in the House and 61-38 in the Senate. For more on the vote totals, refer to: "H.R. 3450 (103rd): North American Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act", GovTrack, House Roll Call Vote 575 on 17 November 1993, and Senate Roll Call Vote 395 on 20 November 1993, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/103-1993/h575> and <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/103-1993/s395>. Both were accessed 26 May 2015.

<sup>55</sup>For more, consider: Gillon, *The Pact*; and Drew, *Showdown*.

<sup>56</sup>Bob Woodward, *The Choice: How Clinton Won* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 338, 340-342, 349; and Linda Killian, *The Freshmen: What Happened to the Republican Revolution?* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 243-244, 255.

<sup>57</sup>Woodward, *The Choice*, 340.



the budget, including Medicare allowed Clinton to “nail us [the GOP] to the mast on the government shutdown”<sup>58</sup>. Leading up to the 1995 Christmas recess, Gingrich was losing control of the House, and even though Clinton, Dole and Gingrich were willing to come to a budget agreement, “Gingrich’s own team”, including Arney and DeLay, were “willing to have an Alamo finish”.<sup>59</sup> According to journalist Bob Woodward, “Clinton saw the opportunity” to use the split to attack the House. “He [Clinton] called Dole”, noted Woodward “to explain that he was going to denounce the House Republicans in public. Dole did not resist. ‘My new best friend, Bob Dole’, Clinton declared to his aides afterwards”.<sup>60</sup>

This tactic was devised to force Gingrich to choose sides between either the House or Dole.<sup>61</sup> Arney was enraged that Clinton – via his usage of the press – was able to out manoeuvre the GOP in controlling the public perception of the budget battle: “Us getting taught by the master!” After the 17 January 1996 meeting between Clinton, Gingrich, Arney and Dole, Dole “realized, without a doubt, that Clinton had stalled the Republican revolution”.<sup>62</sup> The result was not the Alamo, but in the view of journalist Linda Killian it was more apt to call it “their Waterloo”.<sup>63</sup>

In following with Theriault’s analysis of how Gingrich House Republicans were making their way into the Senate, during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress the Gingrich Senators clashed with Dole and other moderate GOP Senators, however, the Senate did shift closer towards the House, especially afterward Dole resigned from Congress and Trent Lott (R-MS)

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<sup>58</sup>ibid.

<sup>59</sup>ibid., 341.

<sup>60</sup>ibid; also see: Drew, *Showdown*, 356, 365-368.

<sup>61</sup>Woodward, *The Choice*, 342.

<sup>62</sup>ibid., 359-360.

<sup>63</sup>Killian, *The Freshmen*, 258.

became the next Senate Majority leader.<sup>64</sup> But even before Dole resigned, he could not abandon Gingrich and the House outright during the earlier stages of budget negotiations. He had to contend with the presidential aspirations of Phil Gramm (R-TX), the original Gingrich Senator, who threatened to challenge him from the right.<sup>65</sup>

Gingrich, on the other hand, had a problem with Arme y. Whilst both were conservative Republicans, at the time, the former was concerned with governing whereas the latter was more concerned with ideological purity. Although conservative historian Donald Critchlow states that “Dick Arme y, a former university economics professor, provided the tactics (and the restraint) that enabled the revolt to succeed”, whereas journalists David Maraniss and Michael Weisskopf portray Arme y as more of an ideologue and Newt as the more restrained individual.<sup>66</sup> Or, in the words of journalists Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein, “Arme y was, if anything, more conservative than Gingrich. Pure ideology ran through his veins”.<sup>67</sup>

Analysis on the budget battle clearly shows how Arme y, the House leadership and many House freshmen focused more of their attention on reducing the size of government than on governing. Yet it is also relevant to note that Gingrich, the combativeness of COS and the Contract with America were effective in using conservative ideology to gain political power, and as a result launched a “Partisan Conservative” era in Congress.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>John E. Owens, “Taking Power? Institutional Change in the House and Senate”, in *The Republican Takeover of Congress* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), eds. Dean McSweeney and John E. Owens, 46-61. Freshmen Rep. Sam Brownback (R-KS) ran and won Dole’s vacated senate seat for the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. For more, see: Killian, *The Freshmen*, 326-339.

<sup>65</sup>Morgan, *Age of Deficits*, 187; and Drew, *Showdown*, 78, 150.

<sup>66</sup>Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 244; as well as David Maraniss and Michael Weisskopf, “Tell Newt to Shut Up!” (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 82-83.

<sup>67</sup>Balz and Brownstein, *Storming the Gates*, 149.

<sup>68</sup>Roger H. Davidson, “The Presidency and Congressional Time”, in *Rivals for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006), ed. James A. Thurber, 130-132, 140-143.

Politics professor Kenneth Cosgrove considers how Gingrich and the Contract was the “single best example of the conservative brand strategy”, where “rather than running as individuals, these conservatives ran as a block much as candidates in the Westminster model do”.<sup>69</sup> Gingrich also overlooked how to use this power as an effective means to govern with the presidency still under Democratic control. The mantra of Gingrich and COS was to gain political power, the next step was to articulate how to use the power available to change policy.

Central to the conservative Republican brand is a rhetoric that attacks the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy. In some ways Clinton helped the conservative cause in his response to the legacy, especially when it came to health care reform.

### **Rhetoric and Political Narrative**

As mentioned in the first chapter, Jimmy Carter attempted to defend the legacy of the New Deal (such as social security and Medicare), whilst also making it clear that he would not add on to the legacy via another government programme.<sup>70</sup> In this regard, Clinton followed Carter’s example by trying to combat both the liberal and socialist labels simultaneously.

In order for Clinton to be able to present his health care plan as moderate, he had to highlight the differences between his plan and a more liberal option, such as Medicare.

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<sup>69</sup>For more on what the chapter details, see: Kenneth M. Cosgrove, *Branded Conservatives: How the Brand Brought the Right from the Fringes to the Center of American Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 123-145. The quote is on page 129.

<sup>70</sup>For more on how Carter attempted to deal with liberals Democrats like Sen. Ted Kennedy who wanted to implement National Health Insurance, refer to: David Blumenthal and James A. Morone, *The Heart of Power: Health and Politics in the Oval Office* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 261-282; Jacob S. Hacker, *The Road to Nowhere: The Genesis of President Clinton’s Plan for Health Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 81; as well as Haynes Johnson and David S. Broder, *The System: The American Way of Politics at the Breaking Point* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996), 67-68.

Socialism is when the Government runs a health care system. We don't have socialized medicine in this country, and my plan is for private insurance and private doctors. . . .

Now, nobody thinks Medicare is socialism . . . You pay for it every month in a payroll tax. Is that socialism? No. I don't want to raise – I don't even want to pay for it like Medicare. I just want people who don't have insurance to have it.<sup>71</sup>

This example shows how he carefully positioned health care reform, to the right of Medicare, which is a government controlled health care programme. According to his statement, he wanted to establish that since Medicare was not socialist then neither was his plan, since it was more privatised than Medicare.

Another way in which Clinton wanted to establish his health care plan as a moderate reform was to link his plan to that of a former Republican president, Richard Nixon. In one reference to Nixon he said, “we need to complete a battle that was begun by Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman that has never been completed. And to show you how far our friends in the other party have gone, in 1972 – ’71 – President Richard Nixon recommended that all Americans be covered by health care and that employers and employees split the bill. They now think that is a radical, liberal idea”.<sup>72</sup> By stating that his plan was similar to Nixon's, he was trying to establish that his proposal not only used to have Republican support, it was originally *their* plan.<sup>73</sup> With this comparison, he was also insinuating that his plan was no more “radical” a reform than Nixon's.

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<sup>71</sup>Bill Clinton, "Remarks at a Health Care Rally in Greensburg, Pennsylvania", 15 July 1994, compiled by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50486> (accessed 7 December 2010).

<sup>72</sup>Bill Clinton, "Remarks at a Democratic Campaign Reception in Portland, Maine", 18 July 1994, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50511> (accessed 31 January 2011).

<sup>73</sup>Political scientist Stephen Skowronek described Clinton's political style as one of “preemption”. According to Skowronek, “Clinton drove himself to mystifying complexity in trying to insulate his health care initiative from the conservative repudiation of “big government” and “tax-and-spend” liberalism”; Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011), 105, 110.

On the other hand, Clinton, in trying to refute both the socialist and liberal labels, obscured the meaning of the New Deal legacy. As a moderate Democrat, he wanted to expand the legacy of his party, but not under the liberal label. One example of this conflicting message was when he stated:

Harry Truman had to say, “No, this is not socialized medicine, this is private insurance. No, this is not a Government takeover, we’re preserving the choice and the private medical system. No, we’re not going to waste more money covering everybody, we’ll actually save money.” And what did they say? “Harry Truman’s a radical liberal. He’s for socialized medicine. He’s for big government. He’s going to take this country down.” . . .

If you have ever dealt with Medicare, you know that it’s the furthest thing in the world from socialized medicine. Senior citizens pick their doctors, and the doctors make the decision. And yet, the arguments we’re hearing today against this plan are the same arguments the same crowd made against Medicare 29 years ago, just like they did against Harry Truman 50 years ago and F.D.R. 60 years ago.<sup>74</sup>

This example illustrates Clinton’s insistence that using private health insurance, as a way of health care reform, was also the basis of reform followed by President Truman. Yet in reality, Truman’s position on health care was closer to that of Lyndon Johnson’s and Medicare than it was to Clinton’s plan.<sup>75</sup> However, Truman’s health care preferences also differed from both of theirs. Social policy scholar David Blumenthal and political scientist James Morone in the *Heart of Power* assert, “Truman would snort at the idea that private markets met his ideals – he was a genuine New Deal egalitarian”.<sup>76</sup>

Medicare allows its users to see private sector doctors and go to private hospitals, but the federal government pays for their medical bills.<sup>77</sup> In comparison, Clinton’s plan mandated that private insurers would pay patients’ medical bills. The two approaches were

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<sup>74</sup>Bill Clinton, "Remarks to Health Security Express Participants in Independence, Missouri", 30 July 1994, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=48923> (accessed 31 January 2011).

<sup>75</sup>The concept of Medicare came about after Truman’s setbacks on health care, which was viewed as a more incremental approach focused on the elderly. For more, refer to: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 94-95; Jonathan Oberlander, *The Political Life of Medicare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 22-35; and Hacker, *The Road to Nowhere*, 78-79.

<sup>76</sup>Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 96.

<sup>77</sup>For more on the history of Medicare, see: Oberlander, *The Political Life of Medicare*.

vastly different from one another. In all likelihood, they were competing policies instead of similar plans. As a moderate Democrat, he was in the difficult position of defending the New Deal legacy, whilst simultaneously challenging its liberal pedigree.<sup>78</sup>

Clinton and Truman both failed, but each with different consequences.

Truman lost, but in the process of losing, he defined the terms of the debate. He gave the reforming generations that followed him a cause, a plan, and a patron saint to rally around.

In contrast, Bill Clinton walked away from the wreckage speculating about tactics and musing that he should have tried welfare reform instead. Opponents completely controlled the spin – and the history. And national health care reform – the Democrats’ signature cause – slipped out of political sight for a decade.<sup>79</sup>

Another issue they had in common was an ideological foe, a conservative Republican, who was determined to fight them tooth and nail along the way – Sen. Robert Taft (R-OH) for Truman and Rep. Newt Gingrich for Clinton.<sup>80</sup> The major ideological difference between Clinton and Truman, however, was that the latter wanted the state to provide health insurance and the former preferred private health insurance.

Regardless of Clinton’s position on the New Deal and its legacy, according to conservative rhetoric, his health care reform plan was a form of socialism because it gave government more power by way of oversight. His plan would expand government power at the expense of individual freedom. The conservative Republican argument against having a national health care plan is contrary to the positions of both liberal Democrats and moderates, Democratic or Republican. Conservative Republicans previously opposed moderate proposals that were brought forward by presidents Eisenhower, Nixon and

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<sup>78</sup>For more on this point, consult: Alex Waddan, “Found and Lost: A Third Way on Health Care”, in *The Presidency of Bill Clinton: The Legacy of New Domestic and Foreign Policy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), ed. Mark J. White, 102-103; Johnson and Broder, *The System*, 86-89; Theda Skocpol, *Boomerang: Health Care Reform and the Turn Against Government* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 63-65; and Hacker, *The Road to Nowhere*, 133-137.

<sup>79</sup>Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*, 419.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 77-78, 372.

Carter.<sup>81</sup> To them, it did not matter if a president was a moderate Democrat, such as Carter, Clinton and Obama, or a moderate Republican, such as Eisenhower and Nixon. What mattered to conservatives was the potential increase of power for the federal government to regulate national health care – a notion they abhorred.

Conservative Republican rhetoric, on the other hand, did not hesitate to imply that Clinton’s health care reform initiative was the culmination of over half a century of liberal Democratic expansion of the welfare state. COS members were some of the most vocal critics. In one instance, Gingrich declared:

Principle and policy sense, if they ever existed, have vanished in the mad scramble to cobble together enough votes for liberal Democrats to claim another historic expansion of the welfare state. These are the same liberals, by the way, who bemoan the declining prestige of government. It is all remarkable especially because never in American history has one party attempted to make so much social policy with so little support. The Clintons like to compare their effort to Social Security and Medicare, but those were military parades compared with this political riot. . . .

. . . Social Security and Medicare . . . both came after landslide presidential victories. Franklin Roosevelt was elected by a huge margin in 1932. Lyndon Johnson was elected by a huge margin. In 1992 we had a split election with a minority President getting 43 percent of the vote. There is no mandate for social engineering to turn America’s health care over to the government.<sup>82</sup>

On another occasion, both Gingrich and Arney described the plan as “a breathtaking display of social engineering, the scope of which has not been seen since the Great Society . . . the Clinton plan is good old-fashioned income redistribution. . . . It’s a top-down, welfare-state approach that diminishes personal freedom”.<sup>83</sup> Gingrich’s last two remarks highlight how he viewed the liberal welfare state as the enemy of individual freedom. This critique holds more sway against unpopular programmes like welfare, but if the critique is employed to also

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<sup>81</sup>For a more in-depth analysis on how previous presidents, from Herbert Hoover to George W. Bush, have dealt with health care reform, see: Blumenthal and Morone, *The Heart of Power*.

<sup>82</sup>Newt Gingrich, Thomas (Library of Congress), *Congressional Record*, 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 22 July 1994, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/LegislativeData.php?n=Record&c=103> (accessed 24 October 2011).

<sup>83</sup>Dick Arney and Newt Gingrich, “The Welfarization of Health Care”, *National Review* 46, no. 2 (7 February 1994): 53-56, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 14 July 2011).

rebuke popular programmes such as Medicare and social security, it will have to focus on credibility issues to undermine public confidence, or attempt to reform the entitlement.

Conservative Republicans viewed Clinton's health care reform agenda as the culmination of the liberal Democratic legacy. Exemplifying this outlook, Armev argued after the midterm elections that the Clinton health care plan "was to be the final fulfillment of the New Deal vision of lifelong "security" under the management of the state. Three of the five post-war Democratic presidents – Truman, Johnson, and Carter – tried and failed to add this capstone to the welfare state, the final piece that would consolidate middle-class dependence on Big Government forever. . . . The repudiation of this monstrous proposal was one of the best moments in our history".<sup>84</sup>

As Gingrich and Armev exemplify, conservative Republicans – especially those who initiated COS – asserted that Clinton had no mandate to add on to the reviled liberal legacy. Although they did not attack popular programmes such as social security and Medicare with the same intensity as health care reform, they regarded them as one and the same. In an exchange with Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), who was one of COS's founding members, expressed his views on the New Deal legacy. Hoyer asked Hunter the following question: "Does the gentleman believe that Medicare is a socialized system"? Hunter replied by stating "yes", "it is a small piece of a [larger] socialized system". And regarding both social security and Medicare, Hunter went on to state that America has "built a system around that [social security and Medicare] and we now have built thousands and millions of Americans who now have, for better or worse, become part of those programs, who put their money in, and who now feel that they have a contract with [a]

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<sup>84</sup>Dick Armev, *The Freedom Revolution*, 219.



government that took money that they might have better used in other programs and that those people are now locked into those programs”.<sup>85</sup>

Acknowledging the need to protect the “*earned* entitlements” of programmes like social security and Medicare, Arme y professed: “All the extortions of Big Government, all the programs, all the social “reforms” forced upon us are beginning to look like so many failing shadows”.<sup>86</sup> His preferred remedy was to privatise Medicare.<sup>87</sup> He also conceded, “Social Security is in need of reform, but I do not believe Congress has earned the trust necessary to reform it just yet. We must first reform – meaning rethink, cut, or eliminate altogether – other programs to prove we are able to reform Social Security without doing injury to those who now rely upon it”.<sup>88</sup> His preferred choice was to “transform the system and allow younger workers to begin directing some of their money to private accounts under their own control . . . The building blocks of any Social Security reform must be allowing choice for today’s workers and keeping our promises to the retired . . . It will be the final business of the Freedom Revolution”.<sup>89</sup> His ideal plan was similar to George W. Bush’s attempt to partially privatise social security, and his comments highlight how conservative Republicans want to battle the liberal welfare state and replace it with one which is conservative (this is also the goal of COS).

Gingrich made similar remarks on social security. In *To Renew America*, he said, “I have argued consistently that Social Security must be off the table in any discussion of a balanced budget. Social Security is the most widely accepted government contract in

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<sup>85</sup>Duncan Hunter, Thomas (Library of Congress), *Congressional Record*, 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 10 August 1994, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/LegislativeData.php?n=Record&c=103> (accessed 25 May 2011).

<sup>86</sup>Arme y, *The Freedom Revolution*, 303, 312.

<sup>87</sup>*ibid.*, 211.

<sup>88</sup>*ibid.*, 305-306.

<sup>89</sup>*ibid.*, 307-308.

America. It is also the single most popular government program. Furthermore, the current generation of politicians has not earned the necessary trust to talk about retirement accounts. There is plenty of government left to remake even if we protect Social Security”.<sup>90</sup> Echoing Arney’s previous comment on social security, he said, “In the short run, you have to take Social Security off the table and deal with everything else. And when you finish dealing with everything else, and you’ve done it right, you will have earned the trust of the American people to look at Social Security”.<sup>91</sup> Gingrich also expressed his desire to privatise Medicare. According to historian Iwan Morgan,

The GOP’s projected retrenchment of Medicare encapsulated its antistatist intent. It wanted seniors to take more responsibility for their health-care financial planning by capping benefits and encouraging them to opt for low-cost private health plans. . . . In a speech to the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Association on October 24 . . . [Gingrich] asserted, “We don’t get rid of it in round one because we don’t think that’s politically smart. . . . But we believe it’s going to wither on the vine because we think people are voluntarily going to leave it”.<sup>92</sup>

*The Contract with America* did not attack social security. The same could also be said with regards to Medicare.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, the Republican Congressional majority further strengthened Gingrich’s hand, which allowed him the opportunity to use the budget negotiations of 1995-1996, a way of privatising Medicare, as part of a larger plan to decrease the size of government (and also provide the wealthy with a tax cut). The House conservative Republican leadership wanted to seize the opportunity to attack the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy. Although some, such as Balz and Brownstein, suggest that the GOP “is [not] seriously contemplating eliminating Social Security or Medicare, the cornerstones of the American social welfare state”, however, others such as journalist

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<sup>90</sup>Newt Gingrich, *To Renew America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 96-97.

<sup>91</sup>Morgan, *The Age of Deficits*, 179.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>93</sup>Refer to: Ed Gillespie and Bob Schellhas, eds., *The Contract with America: The Bold Plan by Rep. Newt Gingrich, Rep. Dick Arney and the House Republicans to Change the Nation* (New York: Random House, 1994; Oberlander, *The Political Life of Medicare*, 162.

Elizabeth Drew, and academics like James MacGregor Burns and Georgia Sorenson, argue that the conservative Republican leadership of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress sought to do just the opposite.<sup>94</sup> According to Drew, the 1994 midterm elections gave Gingrich the opportunity to fulfil his desire to reform welfare – an opportunity to “repeal the New Deal” – as well as the prospect of realising an earlier goal of his to “transform Medicare”.<sup>95</sup> Burns and Sorenson argue the 104<sup>th</sup> GOP congressional freshmen “came to Washington ready to declare war on the Democratic establishment, and to reverse a half century of New Deal and Fair Deal programs”.<sup>96</sup>

Although, Balz and Brownstein are correct in their affirmation that conservative Republicans are not “seriously contemplating eliminating Social Security or Medicare, the cornerstones of the American social welfare state”. What needs more consideration, however, is the fact that conservative Republicans want to replace a liberal welfare state with a conservative welfare state that would offers fewer benefits and at least partially privatise the programmes. This was Gingrich’s failed strategy – especially with Medicare – during the budget battle of 1995-1996.<sup>97</sup> Historian Sean Wilentz observed, “The Republicans touted their budget as . . . the grandest domestic decision since the advent of the New Deal. That shift included an attack on Medicare”, with the intent being to “attack a cornerstone of the American welfare state”.<sup>98</sup> Their intent is to get government – as much as possible, if not

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<sup>94</sup>Balz and Brownstein, *Storming the Gates*, 297.

<sup>95</sup>Drew, *Showdown*, 49, 81.

<sup>96</sup>Burns and Sorenson, *Dead Center*, 162.

<sup>97</sup>Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 108-110; Maraniss and Weisskopf, *Tell Newt to Shut Up*, 128-145; Drew, *Showdown*, 300-304, 308-309, 323-329, 339-340, 348-351, 364-375; Gillon, *The Pact*, 147-172; Morgan, *The Age of Deficits*, 178-192; Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 361-364; and Waddan, *Clinton’s Legacy*, 53-57, 104-106.

<sup>98</sup>Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 362-363.

entirely over time – to defer to the free market, which allows government entitlement spending to decrease.<sup>99</sup>

Although Gingrich and COS were only partially successful in attacking the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy, Gingrich made a vital contribution to the evolution of Republican conservatism.

### **The importance of Gingrich in the evolution of conservative Republicanism**

Newt Gingrich played an essential role in getting conservative Republicans into the House – as well as the Senate – and strategizing a path to power in the 1994 midterm elections. Edwards considers his importance to the conservative Republican cause to be equal in importance to other stalwarts like Robert Taft, Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan.<sup>100</sup> Cosgrove considers Gingrich’s framing of the conservative message to have been as vital as Reagan’s.<sup>101</sup> And most importantly for Cosgrove, “What Ronald Reagan and his team had begun in Conservative politics, Newt Gingrich took to a level that continues to be used by Conservative candidates to the present day”.<sup>102</sup> This strategy is summed up by Theriault as “party polarization and escalated partisan warfare” that passed on from the House to the Senate.<sup>103</sup> Although others, such as Stephen Slivinski and Michael Tanner, both from the Cato Institute, argue that Gingrich was important in a more negative way, allowing the GOP to become a party of big government, just not as big as the Democrats – which only

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<sup>99</sup>This was also Bush’s intent for Medicare and social security. However, Bush added onto Medicare via a free-market expansion. Bush’s attempt to reform social security was similar in its intent to insert the free-market into the programme but without adding a new benefit. I argue that Bush’s “Ownership Society” was an attempt to build on Gingrich’s “Opportunity Society”. Both initiatives wanted to challenge the liberal welfare state and replace it with one that was conservative – which was the mantra of COS.

<sup>100</sup>Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution*, 2-4, 324

<sup>101</sup>Cosgrove, *Branded Conservatives*, 48, 142.

<sup>102</sup>*ibid.*, 142.

<sup>103</sup>Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators*, 16-18, 31. The quote is from page 16.

became worse under the George W. Bush presidency.<sup>104</sup> Both Gingrich and COS, however, had been accused of this before, during the Reagan administration,<sup>105</sup> as well as during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>106</sup>

Yet as Theriault's analysis illustrates, Gingrich helped to shift the House to conservatism, a change that also occurred in the Senate. Although the achievements of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress were mixed, it did force Clinton in a rightward direction in many ways, even during the budget battle and government shutdowns and especially welfare reform, in order to compromise.<sup>107</sup> Gingrich was instrumental in building on how Reagan and other Republicans used the liberal label with almost *carte blanche* against the Democratic Party, but also in how Reagan intermixed the socialist label with both the liberal and Democratic labels. He helped to bring more conservatives (especially southern) under the congressional GOP banner, a move that helped to bolster conservative rhetoric within the growing ranks of the GOP to attack Clinton and the Democratic Party.<sup>108</sup> And whilst this confrontational strategy was successful in helping to achieve power, it also became more difficult after the midterm elections for the GOP to attack government, because as the majority congressional party, it now faced the burden of having to put forward a governing agenda that attempted to shrink the size of government. With established and popular entitlement programmes this

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<sup>104</sup>Stephen Slivinski, *Buck Wild: How Republicans Broke the Bank and Became the Party of Big Government* (Nashville: Nelson Current, 2006), 84-108; and Michael D. Tanner, *Leviathan on the Right: How Big-Government Conservatives Brought Down the Republican Revolution* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2007), 9, 15, 53-59, 230-231.

<sup>105</sup>Lemann, "Conservative Opportunity Society".

<sup>106</sup>"The Evolution of a Revolution", *The Economist*, 4 November 1995: 23-25, *ProQuest, ABI/INFORM Complete*, *ProQuest* document ID: 224106601 (accessed 17 May 2013).

<sup>107</sup>Killian, *The Freshmen*, 301-303; and Waddan, *Clinton's Legacy*, 56-57.

<sup>108</sup>The increased reliance on southern conservatism could, however, lead to future problems for the GOP.

was easier said than done, but gaining control of the Republican Party had allowed the conservative position to become the official party viewpoint.

## **Conclusion**

My intent with this chapter was to establish how conservative rhetoric was successful in providing a political narrative to attack national health care reform, but was unsuccessful in doing so when it came to reforming Medicare. Conservative rhetoric controlled the narrative for the prior, but not the latter.

This chapter fits into my overarching theme by illustrating how conservative rhetoric attacks the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy. Gingrich and COS followed in the footsteps of previous conservative Republicans, especially Hoover, Taft, Goldwater and Regan. Four-party politics also played an important role. The change in four-party politics presented Gingrich and other conservative Republicans with an opportunity to dismantle New Deal reforms that was unavailable in earlier times. The 1948 Taft-Hartley Act is one of the few exceptions, but this took on organised labour, not entitlements. As this chapter shows, conservative rhetoric can control narrative, but within the political realities of four-party politics what can be achieved is limited. Gingrich and COS wanted to reform the welfare state, but a Democratic president stood in their way on this occasion. The next chapter shows how the GOP was able to use four-party politics to their advantage on welfare reform.

In the fourth chapter, I analyse how George W. Bush attempted to build off what Gingrich and COS attempted in this chapter, entitlement reform, which is one more step towards turning the liberal welfare state into a conservative welfare state. The 2010 midterm elections mirrored the 1994 midterm elections in how the GOP, as a minority party, was able

to attack a Democratic Party that controlled both the executive and legislative branches of government. However, that wave of conservative Republicans was even more rambunctious and less loyal to party leadership than the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. The 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, on the other hand, continued to increase the level of partisanship in Congress, building on Gingrich and COS, by using confrontation, rhetoric and the socialist label to declare war on big government liberalism. However, the current GOP controlled 114<sup>th</sup> Congress (2015-2016) has an opportunity to present a pragmatic governing philosophy, especially on issues where President Obama is at odds with congressional Democrats.

## **The Rollback of the New Deal Legacy? Welfare Reform in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress**

*I am proud to have been a part of the revolution. I am proud of the changes we brought to government. We proved that they ways of the Founding Fathers work, and they work in a modern, high-tech world. In fact, we proved that the socialism that had been creeping into American society for decades was failing the American people, failing the American vision, and failing the challenges of a new millennium.*

-Tom DeLay<sup>1</sup>

As Tom DeLay (R-TX), the House Majority whip of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, stated above, conservative Republicans believe that socialism has crept into America. They consider the modern American welfare state, which began with social security and the New Deal, to be the catalyst that unleashed socialism in America. The result of the 1994 midterm elections, and subsequent power shift in Congress, made it possible for conservative Republicans in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress to go after a key part of the New Deal and its ongoing legacy. Welfare reform was this key issue, and presented conservatives with the opportunity to defend the traditional family values they claim have been undermined by liberal policies and big government.<sup>2</sup>

The American welfare state is a combination of social insurance, such as social security and Medicare, and welfare, such as unemployment benefits, Medicaid and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).<sup>3</sup> Both social insurance and welfare are part of the New Deal legacy, which Conservative Republicans aim to undo, either by ending

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<sup>1</sup>Tom DeLay, with Stephen Mansfield, *No Retreat, No Surrender: One American's Fight* (New York: Sentinel, 2007), 7.

<sup>2</sup>A notion that Thomas Edsall highlights as a major goal for the GOP; Thomas Byrne Edsall, *Building Red America: The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for Permanent Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 11-12, 55-56, 154-158, 200-201. For more on cultural and family values, see: Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), esp. part four, 309-425.

<sup>3</sup>However, education is also considered, by some, to be part of the American welfare state. For an example, refer to: Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), 15-16.



programmes, such as AFDC, or by privatising them, such as with social security.<sup>4</sup> To a large extent, their preference of whether to abolish or privatise a programme is based on a programme's popularity, and to a lesser degree, other circumstances that factor into their decision making.

Social insurance is more popular with the public than welfare.<sup>5</sup> This is largely due to the belief that social insurance is for the deserving and welfare for the undeserving.<sup>6</sup> The former contribute to the costs of their programs by paying into them throughout their working life, whilst the latter receive a “handout” for not working. Dependency and work ethic are two points used to differentiate between the deserving and the undeserving, and have been at the forefront the welfare reform debate since the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> According to political scientist Lawrence Mead, welfare reform is one area where the political parties have changed positions.<sup>8</sup>

Mead argues that “Democrats are now in the classic “me-too” position of a minority party. The majority party has taken a stand on some potent issue that allow it to dominate; the minority believes in the opposite position and would like to assert it, but would be cast

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<sup>4</sup>Refer to the next chapter for more on George W. Bush's failed attempt to privatise social security and his successful attempt to expand Medicare via the free-market with prescription drug benefits.

<sup>5</sup>Gilens argues that the difference in popularity between social (also known as universal) insurance programmes and welfare (also known as means-tested) programmes varies depending on the welfare (means-tested) programme. For more, see: Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, 42-45.

<sup>6</sup>For more on the undeserving, consult: Michael Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon, 1989).

<sup>7</sup>For more, refer to: Lawrence M. Mead, *The New Politics of Poverty: The Nonworking Poor in America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992), 185-209; Michael Katz, *The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), 64-66, 71-76; and Gary Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality: The Great American Welfare Reform Debate* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 66-90.

<sup>8</sup>Although Mead supported the 1996 reform of welfare, he supports the concept of welfare in a way that Charles Murray does not. Murray's view is covered in more detail in the next two sections. Mead supports welfare that helps those in need provided they work. He is critical of conservative elites – as well as liberal elites - who ignore public opinion and instead focus on ideological interests. For more, see: Lawrence M. Mead, “The Politics of Conservative Welfare Reform”, in *The New World of Welfare* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), eds. Rebecca M. Blank and Ron Haskins, 201-220.

into the wilderness for its pains. Alternatively, it can take a stance close to the majority in order to have a shot at power, but it would lose its distinctive identity.”<sup>9</sup> Mead’s statement is credible when it comes to welfare, but not to the more popular aspects of the New Deal legacy, such as social security and Medicare.<sup>10</sup>

However, the Democratic Party was not against the concept of welfare reform, it simply struggled with how to address the issue in a way acceptable to its liberal, moderate and conservative members.<sup>11</sup> Some within the party had searched for a solution that would change how the public viewed the party on the welfare issue with “the right turn in American politics . . . in the 1980s”.<sup>12</sup>

A major priority for Clinton was welfare reform, which would demonstrate his New Democrat capacity to fix the shortcomings of the system.<sup>13</sup> This reform would help to iron out the liberal Democrat solution of the Great Society, one that had had good intentions, but had since produced negative results.<sup>14</sup> The importance of welfare reform can be seen in his

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<sup>9</sup>Mead, *The New Politics of Poverty*, 244-245.

<sup>10</sup>Although conservative Republicans are also trying to achieve what Meade describes as “the majority party status” with social security and Medicare.

<sup>11</sup>I am referring to the 1980s and 1990s, before the large increase of conservative Republicans and the steep decline of conservative Democrats after the 1994 midterm elections.

<sup>12</sup>Katz, *The Price of Citizenship*, 57. For more on welfare reform and the 1980s, consult: from the liberal perspective, Katz, *The Price of Citizenship*, 57-62, 65-66, 68-75, 81-83; and from the conservative perspective, Mead, *The New Politics of Poverty*, 190-193, 198-208.

<sup>13</sup>Clinton also made welfare reform a priority, whilst he was the governor of Arkansas and whilst he was campaigning for the 1992 presidential election. For more, see: Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 73-85; and Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 326-332.

<sup>14</sup>Some of the good intentions were to help provide mothers with financial support that would enable them be better able to provide food, clothing, shelter, etc. for their children. Some of the perceived negative results have been the breakdown of the traditional family which has made it more financially beneficial for women to have children out of wedlock and to also stay separated from the children’s father due to the requirements of the programme. This argument has been made by conservative Republicans and others in the conservative elite. President Clinton and other moderate Democrats, such as Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-NY) have also stated a similar argument. Liberal Democrats lacked a united front in defending welfare, some even had a reluctance to publicly support it. Examples can be found all throughout this chapter. For more, consult: William F. Buckley, Jr. and Charles Kesler, eds., *Keeping the Tablets: Modern*

1994 State of the Union Address. He mentioned “welfare” twenty-one times and the following statement best summarizes his major emphasis on the reform:

And just as we must transform our employment system, so must we also revolutionize our welfare system. It doesn't work. It defies our values as a nation. If we value work, we can't justify a system that makes welfare more attractive than work if people are worried about losing their health care. If we value responsibility, we can't ignore the \$34 billion in child support absent parents ought to be paying to millions of parents who are taking care of their children. If we value strong families, we can't perpetuate a system that actually penalizes those who stay together. Can you believe that a child who has a child gets more money from the Government for leaving home than for staying home with a parent or a grandparent? That's not just bad policy, it's wrong. And we ought to change it.<sup>15</sup>

Further remarks on 21 June 1994 indicate that he wanted to move forward with the welfare issue. In a letter to Congress, he wrote, “It is time to end welfare as we know it and replace it with a system that is based on work and responsibility – a system that will help people help themselves. . . . The Work and Responsibility Act of 1994 will replace welfare with work”.<sup>16</sup>

The major emphasis to take away from Clinton's two comments is that he wanted “to end welfare as we know it”. This is exactly what happened on 22 August 1996, when he signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PPWORA), the welfare reform bill that came from Congress.<sup>17</sup> Before signing the bill he said,

What we are trying to do today is to overcome the flaws of the welfare system for the people who are trapped on it. We all know that the typical family on welfare today is very different from the one that welfare was designed to deal with 60 years ago. . . .

The bill I'm about to sign, as I have said many times, is far from perfect, but it has come a very long way. Congress sent me two previous bills that I have strongly believe failed to protect our children and did too little to move people from welfare

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*American Conservative Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 8, 217-219; and Katz, *The Price of Citizenship*, 317-319.

<sup>15</sup>Bill Clinton, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union”, 25 January 1994, Compiled by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wolly, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50409> (accessed 21 January 2012).

<sup>16</sup>Bill Clinton, “Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Welfare Reform Legislation”, 21 June 1994, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50367> (accessed 7 February 2012).

<sup>17</sup>If one would like to see this law, it can be found at: [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=104\\_cong\\_public\\_laws&docid=f:publ193.104.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=104_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ193.104.pdf) (accessed 8 February 2012).

to work. I vetoed both of them. This bill had broad bipartisan support and is much, much better on both counts. . . .

After I sign my name to this bill, welfare will no longer be a political issue. . . .

Today we are ending welfare as we know it.<sup>18</sup>

After signing the bill Clinton stated: “The current welfare system is fundamentally broken, and this may be our last best chance to set it straight. . . . this bill is a real step forward for our country, for our values, and for people on welfare. It should represent not simply the ending of a system that too often hurts those it is supposed to help, but the beginning of a new era in which welfare will become what it is meant to be: a second chance, not a way of life”.<sup>19</sup>

Clinton’s comments offer an opportunity to explore what he meant when he said, “after I sign my name to this bill, welfare will no longer be a political issue”. Was he suggesting everything he and Congress discussed beforehand was merely political manoeuvring in order to gain the upper hand in the welfare reform debate? I believe that during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress this was exactly the case.<sup>20</sup> However, I do not believe the attack on welfare, and to a larger extent the American welfare state, ended with welfare reform. The political battle over the New Deal legacy has been ongoing since its inception and it came to the forefront again during Clinton’s first term.

The 104<sup>th</sup> Congress was able to target both Clinton and the New Deal legacy because the Republican Party was the majority party in both the House of Representatives and the

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<sup>18</sup>Bill Clinton, “Remarks on Signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and an Exchange With Reporters”, 22 August 1996, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=53218> (accessed 8 February 2012).

<sup>19</sup>Bill Clinton, “Statements on Signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996”, 22 August 1996, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=53219> (accessed 8 February 2012).

<sup>20</sup>For a general overview of welfare politics during Clinton’s first term, consult: Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*.

Senate. The new Republican majority was comprised of returning and first time members of Congress. The first time members can be referred to as freshmen.<sup>21</sup> These new members, 84 in total – 73(32% of the GOP House numbers) in the House and 11 in the Senate (21% of the GOP Senate members) – marked a change in congressional politics for the Republican Party.<sup>22</sup> Most of the freshmen, especially in the House, were conservative Republicans. This new batch of Republicans brought with them a conservative ideology that shunned the New Deal legacy and sought limited government.<sup>23</sup> Many of them came into office expecting to work with the House leadership in implementing the *Contract with America*.<sup>24</sup>

The conservative Republican attack on the New Deal and its legacy had advanced since Herbert Hoover's rhetorical assaults against Franklin Roosevelt. They could now exploit popular anti-tax sentiment, mistrust of government and hostility to welfare. These three issues, amongst others, played an important role during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. Whilst taxes and trust in government will be discussed in this chapter, the welfare state will be the centrepiece of this chapter analysis. Also, regarding Congress and the freshmen, I will mainly focus on the House of Representatives and not the Senate.<sup>25</sup> The format of this chapter will include a secondary analysis on the issue of welfare in America, the role of the

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<sup>21</sup>Not all of the new Republican members were true freshmen. Some had had prior legislative experience at the state or local level. Seven new members in the Senate were Gingrich Senators who had previously served in the House of Representatives. For more, see: Nicol C. Rae, *Conservative Reformers: the Republican Freshman and the Lessons of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 66-67, 132-133; and Sean M. Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators: The Roots of Partisan Warfare in Congress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>22</sup>Taken from Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 63, 132.

<sup>23</sup>I will use two examples of this later on in the chapter.

<sup>24</sup>However, the degree to which each individual conservative Republican freshman would adhere to their leadership, especially in the House, was best described as centralized anarchy. For more on this point, refer to: Linda Killian, *The Freshmen: What Happened to the Republican Revolution?* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 414-419. I will expand on this point later on in the chapter.

<sup>25</sup>For more on the Senate and the freshmen, consult: John Owens, "Taking Power? Institutional Change in the House and Senate", in *The Republican Takeover of Congress* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), eds. Dean McSweeney and John E. Owens, 33-70; and Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 131-167.

House of Representatives in attacking the New Deal legacy and how welfare reform affected the legacy. This chapter format will best address the questions I aim to answer.

These questions are:

1. Why is linking socialism to liberalism vital to conservative GOP rhetoric?
2. Why is welfare reform significant to the GOP conservative socialist critique against the New Deal legacy?

These questions will help to establish why it is important for conservative Republicans to link socialism with liberalism when critiquing the New Deal legacy. Welfare reform gave them the opportunity to move beyond rhetoric and achieve a legislative victory against both the Great Society and the New Deal.<sup>26</sup> This reform presented conservative Republicans the opportunity to pass legislation that supported both socio-moral values and the mantra of limited government.

## **Welfare Reform**

The conservative nature of the welfare reform bill that was passed in Congress and signed into law by Clinton was due in part to his insistence on addressing it as a New Democrat, thus proving to the public that he was not a liberal.<sup>27</sup> Public policy analyst R. Kent Weaver argues that Clinton's welfare reform rhetoric, whilst campaigning for president in 1992 and also during the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, "helped to push Republicans to shift their own

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<sup>26</sup>However, according to Gwendolyn Mink, "The [Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act] PRA may have been Republican legislation, but the pledge to end welfare was a Democratic president's inspiration"; for more, refer to: Gwendolyn Mink, *Welfare's End* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 5.

<sup>27</sup>For more, see: John Harris, *The Survivor: Bill Clinton in the White House* (New York: Random House, 2005), 230-239; Steve Gillon, *The Pact: Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, and the Rivalry That Defined a Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 101, 123-124, 157-158, 177-178; and James MacGregor Burns and Georgia Sorenson, *Dead Center: Clinton-Gore Leadership and the Perils of Moderation* (New York: Scribner), 225-239.

welfare reform stance to the right in order to avoid losing the welfare issue to Clinton”.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike Weaver, I am arguing that conservative Republicans would have attempted to push welfare reform to the right regardless of whether or not Clinton had done so. Unlike earlier reforms in the 1980s, Republicans controlled both Houses of Congress and the conservative Republican House leadership were adamant about using their majority to the fullest – a reality of four-party politics that was not possible beforehand.<sup>29</sup> They viewed Clinton’s rhetoric, not as a challenge, but as an opportunity to boldly attack this part of the New Deal legacy.<sup>30</sup>

I am not suggesting that a great number of Democrats and Republicans were against reforming the American welfare system.<sup>31</sup> However, the emphasis that Clinton put on welfare reform did cast a large shadow over his party. Political scientist Gary Bryner, in *Politics and Public Morality*, stated: “Clinton’s role in welfare reform was crucial. He made the idea of welfare reform acceptable in the Democratic party and among liberals”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>R. Kent Weaver, “Ending Welfare as We Know It”, in *The Social Divide: Political Parties and the Future of Activist Government* (New York: Russell Sage, 1998), 361. However, I agree with Weaver that moderate Republicans were more induced to shift to the right on welfare reform because of Clinton’s rhetoric.

<sup>29</sup>Reagan did have some success rolling back welfare via budget cuts in 1981 and 1982 that reduced welfare benefits, however, congressional Democrats were able to prevent Reagan from a more substantial rollback. Another reform, the 1988 Family Support Act (FSA) was more of a political compromise that increased the emphasis for job training, but also increased dependency on child support benefits for single mothers. For more, consult: Charles Noble, *Welfare as We Knew It: A Political History of the American Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 119-123; Katz, *The Price of Citizenship*, 70-76; and Richard K. Caputo, *U.S. Social Welfare Reform: Policy Transitions from 1981 to the Present* (New York: Springer, 2011), 29-38. However, others, such as Daniel Béland and Alex Waddan argue that FSA benefited conservatives more than liberals. For more on this perspective, see: Daniel Béland and Alex Waddan, *The Politics of Policy Change: Welfare, Medicare, and Social Security Reform in the United States* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 43-46.

<sup>30</sup>Refer to the section on the House conservative Republican leadership for more information on this point.

<sup>31</sup>One prominent Democrat that was well known for wanting to reform the welfare system was Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Conversely, even though Moynihan did want to reform the welfare system, he did not support the welfare reform bill that was passed by Congress and signed into law by Clinton. There will be more on this at a later point in the chapter.

<sup>32</sup>Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 156.

Clinton's stated intention to reform welfare, and also health care, increased the perception that the president and his party's congressional majority were ineffective. This made him vulnerable to the harsher conservative Republican notion of welfare reform.<sup>33</sup> After the 1994 midterm elections, Democrats lost control of Congress, and as a result of this defeat he lost control of the legislative initiative in Congress. Although he did not control congressional Democrats, they did agree on more issues as Democrats than he would have agreed upon with a Republican controlled Congress.

The conservative dominated House of Representatives led on the issue of welfare reform in the Republican controlled 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. They were able to coerce Clinton into agreeing to a reform that was much harsher than it would have been if he had passed a reform bill during the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress.<sup>34</sup> His insistence on changing welfare left him vulnerable on this issue, one that he and the Republican majority wanted to take advantage of leading up to the 1996 elections.<sup>35</sup>

Before welfare was reformed in 1996, America's welfare state was comprised of many programs, some of them included: social security, Medicare, Medicaid, unemployment benefits, food stamps and AFDC.<sup>36</sup> America has a long history concerning welfare and aid to

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<sup>33</sup>Clinton, in June 1994, did attempt to address welfare reform. He put forth legislation on the issue. During, the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Congress also made some attempts at welfare reform but there were no votes on any of the proposals. For more, refer to: Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 77-85; Michael Foley, "Clinton and Congress" in *The Clinton Presidency: The First Term, 1992-1996* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), eds. Paul S. Herrnson and Dilys M. Hill, 22-42; Alex Waddan, *Clinton's Legacy? A New Democrat in Governance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 119-122; and Béland and Waddan, *The Politics of Policy Change*, 49-51.

<sup>34</sup>Three examples of this are child care, even more assistance with job training, and aid to legal immigrants. Even so, Clinton was hesitant to move on welfare reform because he feared the wrath of liberal Democrats, and he would need their support for health care reform. For more, consult: Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 76-85, 157-161; and Kenneth Baer, *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 215.

<sup>35</sup>For more information, refer to: Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 326-332; Killian, *The Freshmen*, 346-350; Gillon, *The Pact*, 177-179; and Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 149-166.

<sup>36</sup>For more information, read: Theodore Marmor, Jerry Mashaw and Philip Harvey, *America's Misunderstood Welfare State: Persistent Myths, Enduring Realities* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); and Anne



families and children.<sup>37</sup> However, the history of welfare can be forgotten or even ignored when considering the public perception of the welfare state.

Instead of an historical perspective, the public focuses on how welfare affects individual freedom. In this regard, public policy scholars Theodore Marmor, Jerry Mashaw and Philip Harvey state:

the negative image of American social welfare policy has much to do with our most basic ideas of individual – state relations. . . . In a polity where state is equated with government, and where liberty is equated with limited government, it is easy to regard the welfare state as a threat to liberty. . . . because government action is commonly viewed as threatening individual liberty, state action to promote *social* welfare can be portrayed as threatening *individual* welfare. A citizen dependent on the state is not free from it, but entangled with it.<sup>38</sup>

This statement is central to the conservative Republican argument against the New Deal and its legacy. Yet what is missing from it is just how large a role taxes and trust in government also play in the conservative Republican “ideology that emphasized the individual, the family, voluntary associations, and the market as bulwarks against government profligacy and the erosion of freedom”.<sup>39</sup> The authors also argue that support for the overall welfare state was tested in the 1930s, but this attack failed and another attempt was made in the 1970s, which focused on the desire to both pay for and govern the welfare state.<sup>40</sup>

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Marie Cammisa, *From Rhetoric to Reform? Welfare Policy in American Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 25-59.

<sup>37</sup>For a more detailed analysis, see: Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of the Social Policy of the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992); Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare 1890-1935* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); and Steven Teles, *Whose Welfare? AFDC and Elite Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 19-40.

<sup>38</sup>Marmor, Mashaw and Harvey, *America's Misunderstood Welfare State*, 5.

<sup>39</sup>*ibid.*, 12.

<sup>40</sup>*ibid.*, 13-16.

Besides being attacked for the cost effectiveness of its programs, the welfare state has also been accused of decreasing dependents' work ethic.<sup>41</sup> Political scientist Charles Murray in *Losing Ground* argues that poverty in America decreased from 1950 to 1968 and increased afterwards because "the economic independence – standing on one's own abilities and accomplishments" of those on welfare was diminishing due to the programs provided by the federal government.<sup>42</sup> His solution to help reverse the "economic dependence" that was created by government welfare programs would be to undo "the entire federal welfare and income-support structure for working-aged persons, including AFDC, Medicaid, Food Stamps, Unemployment Insurance, Worker's Compensation, subsidized housing, disability insurance, and the rest".<sup>43</sup>

Murray's disdain for the welfare state, along with his desire to undo the majority, if not all, of the New Deal and its legacy, fits nicely within the ideology of conservative Republicans.<sup>44</sup> Yet the popularity of programs, such as social security and Medicare, makes it difficult to bring about the extinction of the entire American welfare state. On the other hand, tackling the welfare state in parts is a more feasible goal.

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<sup>41</sup>Marriage and race are also two important issues when discussing welfare. I will not focus on these two areas. For more information on marriage and race, consider: For the liberal perspective, Katz, *The Undeserving Poor*; for the moderate perspective, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1970); and for the conservative perspective, Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

<sup>42</sup>Murray, *Losing Ground*, 65.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 227-228.

<sup>44</sup>Conservative Republicans were aware of Murray's argument and they also were not opposed to pursuing a harsher version of welfare reform, but they had to compromise and were only able to eliminate a small portion of the welfare state. For more on their original aspirations on welfare reform, consult: Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein, *Storming the Gates: Protest Politics and the Republican Revival* (Boston: Little, Brown: 1996), 275-298; and Teles, *Whose Welfare*, 150-152. For more on Murray's influence on conservative Republicans and welfare reform, see: Katz, *The Undeserving Poor*, 151-156; Weaver, "Ending Welfare as We Know It", 371-372; Gingrich, *To Renew America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 78-79; as well as Balz and Brownstein, *Storming the Gates*, 275-281. For a behind the scene perspective on welfare reform, refer to: Ron Haskins, *Work over Welfare: The Inside Story of the 1996 Reform Law* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

Conservative Republicans have strived to take advantage of the more unpopular portions, like welfare, of the New Deal legacy. This is part of a broader strategy to undo the welfare state. One example of a conservative Republican who desires this is Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. As I stated earlier in the chapter, both Dick Armey and Gingrich, at the time leading up to the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, argued for dismantling the social insurance portion of the New Deal legacy by letting individuals pay into personal accounts that relied upon the free market. Although that rationale still applies, the motive for doing so has evolved. More recently, Gingrich has argued that the New Deal legacy, and specifically entitlements such as social security and Medicare, will ultimately guide America into a “socialist system” that would have more in common with Karl Marx than it would with the founding fathers. This would result due to the level of taxes Americans would be paying to the federal government to fund the New Deal and its legacy.<sup>45</sup>

Even though social security is the third rail of US politics, this has not stopped conservative Republicans, such as Reagan, Gingrich and George W. Bush, from discussing the benefits of its privatisation. As previously stated, in order for them to undo the entire New Deal legacy they need to attack it from the latest addition and work their way back to its beginning. The most established is social security, which means that the most likely way for social security to be privatised is for Medicare to be privatised first.

Conservative Republicans employ such rhetoric for two main reasons: firstly, to undermine the faith of the public in the popular aspects of the New Deal legacy, and secondly, to offer answers that rely on privatising the programs as a preferable alternative. Before this can be accomplished, they have to first dismantle the less popular aspects of the

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<sup>45</sup>Newt Gingrich, *To Save America: Stopping Obama's Secular-Socialist Machine* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2010), 185-196.

legacy. The welfare portion of the legacy is not as popular as the social insurance component, thus the public can be more easily persuaded on the need to change the parts of the legacy it does not wholeheartedly support before it will agree to undo the more popular aspects.<sup>46</sup> That is how welfare reform gave conservative Republicans the opportunity to claim they were correcting the mistakes of the Great Society, whilst being able to attack a government program in AFDC that can be traced back to FDR and the New Deal.

## **The House of Representatives and the New Deal Legacy**

### *The Conservative GOP Leadership*

In the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the charge against the New Deal legacy was led by the House of Representatives. The House majority leadership positions were all occupied by southern conservatives: Newt Gingrich, the House speaker, Dick Armey, the Majority leader and Tom DeLay, the Majority whip. Gingrich was from Georgia, whilst Armey and DeLay were both from Texas. The House leadership positions of southern conservatives gave further evidence of the shift in power within the congressional wing of the GOP from moderates to conservatives. They devised a cohesive strategy for individual members and the House as a whole.

Gingrich was one of the main architects behind the 1994 strategy. His desire for conservatives to win control of the House led to the founding of the Conservative Opportunity Society (COS), which he started in the early 1980s. He wanted to attract like-minded individuals who would help to further the cause of conservative Republicanism. Gingrich, Armey and others amongst the House leadership devised and published a strategy

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<sup>46</sup>Political scientist James Stimson considers welfare to be the least popular aspect “of the Democratic welfare state”. For more, consult: James Stimson, *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48.

to outline their policy proposals, ones that they argued would halt and reverse the tax-and-spend big government philosophy of Democrats. They called their plan the *Contract with America*.<sup>47</sup> And in the view of political scientist Kenneth Cosgrove, the Contract was the “best example” of conservative rhetoric, and was able to frame a simple narrative in the form of good (GOP conservatism) versus evil (Democratic liberalism).<sup>48</sup>

The overall emphasis of the Contract was to offer voters an alternative to a Congress controlled by the Democrats.

The Clinton Congress defaulted on its proper responsibility for protecting the citizenry. It mistook a responsibility to protect the public from violent crime for an opportunity to spend billions more on social problems. But Big Brother is alive and well through myriad government programs usurping personal responsibility from families and individuals. . . . Our contract seeks to restore a proper balance between government and personal responsibility.<sup>49</sup>

The Contract’s central theme relied upon the public distrust in government, individual freedom and taxation.<sup>50</sup> Its message was able to take advantage of the fact that the Democratic Party controlled both the executive and legislative branches of government. It

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<sup>47</sup>With regards to welfare reform, the Contract’s reform section was a compromise amongst moderate and conservative Republicans in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress. Baltz and Brownstein stated that “In moving the bill closer to the retrocon agenda, the conservatives had out muscled the moderates, not persuaded them. Their doubts about cutting off aid to unwed mothers under eighteen remained. But they conceded the argument because few of them thought the Republicans would win back the House – or that the leadership could force them to stand with the Contract bill if they did. On that they proved spectacularly mistaken”; this quotation can be found on page 283. For more on this, read: Balz and Brownstein, *Storming the Gates*, 275-285. For more on the strategy that was involved to come with the overall concept and policy initiatives of the Contract, refer to: John Bader, *Taking the Initiative: Leadership Agendas in Congress and the “Contract with America”* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 171-196.

<sup>48</sup>Kenneth M. Cosgrove, *Branded Conservatives: How the Brand Brought the Right from the Fringes to the Center of American Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 128-142.

<sup>49</sup>Ed Gillespie and Bob Schellhas, eds., *The Contract with America: The Bold Plan by Rep. Newt Gingrich, Rep. Dick Armey and the House Republicans to Change the Nation* (New York: Random House, 1994), 14.

<sup>50</sup>However, political scientist Lawrence Dodd made reference to how other factors also played into the hands of Republicans during the 1994 midterm elections. Republicans were able to take advantage of cyclical change in Congress and post-industrial tensions. For more, consider: Lawrence C. Dodd, *Thinking about Congress: Essays on Congressional Change* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 285-310.

also exploited public distrust of government and anti-tax sentiment in its attack on the record of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress.<sup>51</sup>

Cutting taxes allows conservative Republicans, in some aspects, to starve the beast of government. This was a difficult task for Gingrich and his fellow conservatives in 1995 and 1996 regarding Medicare, a more popular aspect of the legacy, especially when the proposed cuts to Medicare would help offset their tax cut plan, one which Clinton attacked as cutting Medicare in order to pay for the Republican tax breaks for the wealthy.

During the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House conservative Republicans wanted to address the size and the scope of government. They viewed welfare reform as a chance to actually reduce the size of government by ending the AFDC entitlement. This act allowed them to show that they took the proverbial scalp of big government by undoing part of the New Deal legacy. The Contract had a list of ten important goals that were to be accomplished during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. According to the order in the Contract, welfare reform came before tax cuts.<sup>52</sup> Gingrich also stated that welfare reform was to be addressed before tax cuts.<sup>53</sup> No matter which was the higher priority, both were appeals to social conservatives.<sup>54</sup> I am not

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<sup>51</sup>For more on the origins and goals of the Contract, see: Cosgrove, *Branded Conservatives*, 129-133; and John B. Bader, "The Contract with America: Origins and Assessments", in *Congress Reconsidered*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1997), eds. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, 347-354.

<sup>52</sup>Gillespie and Schellhas, *The Contract with America*, 15-19. On the other hand, journalist Elizabeth Drew considers the tax cuts to be 'the crown jewel' of the Contract for social conservatives because they were not "getting any other matter of real importance"; for more on Drew's argument, refer to: Elizabeth Drew, *Showdown: The Struggle Between the Gingrich Congress and the Clinton White House* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 171. However, welfare reform can also be considered 'the crown jewel' of the Contract due to the social-moral implications behind the reform. Journalists Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein argue that "Satisfying the concerns of the social conservatives on welfare reform became especially important because the Contract offered them so little else", 281. For more on this perspective, consult: Balz, and Brownstein, *Storming the Gates*, 281-283.

<sup>53</sup>Gingrich, *To Renew America*, 133-134.

<sup>54</sup>In the view of political scientist James Farney, welfare reform, The Family Reinforcement Act and tax cuts were three key caveats to appease social conservatives. For more on this point, see: James Farney, *Social Conservatives and Party Politics in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 69-70.

suggesting that many of the freshmen shared the same view as Gingrich, but as Speaker of the House he controlled both the issues that were to be addressed and in what order.<sup>55</sup>

The Contract's stance on welfare reform can be traced back to the previous Congress. During the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, Charles Murray met and discussed with Gingrich the need to shift the welfare reform debate to the right from the type of reform that Clinton mentioned. According to journalists Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein, Murray was able to encourage Gingrich to target single mothers, which in terms of welfare reform meant addressing the AFDC benefit. Other conservative elites such as William Bennett, William Kristol and Jack Kemp also rallied behind Murray's ideals of welfare reform and wanted conservative Republicans to adhere to his advice.<sup>56</sup> According to Balz and Brownstein, the debates on health care and crime helped to sharpen the resolve of the Republican Party "that could help the party gain control of Congress and impose its own agenda [on welfare reform]" by not compromising with Clinton.<sup>57</sup> They went on to state: "Armed and Gingrich had decreed that the provisions in the Contract must excite the grassroots antigovernment groups Republicans wanted to energize for the fall campaign".<sup>58</sup> Welfare reform was the one area that combined the anti-government sentiment with moral values that would appeal to the Religious Right (i.e. ending the AFDC benefit for unwed mothers). Armed even involved the conservative grassroots to pressure the moderate House Republican Ways and Means Committee members to agree with the conservative House Republicans. This was done to ensure that the House Republican response to welfare reform could form the basis of the reform

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<sup>55</sup>The freshmen's overall desire to cut taxes as their main reason for getting involved in politics is discussed at a later stage in this chapter.

<sup>56</sup>Balz and Brownstein, *Storming the Gates*, 278. William Bennett worked in both the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, William Kristol is the founder of the conservative magazine *The Weekly Standard* and Jack Kemp was a Rep. (R-NY) and was Bob Dole's choice for vice-president in 1996.

<sup>57</sup>*ibid.*, 280.

<sup>58</sup>*ibid.*, 281.

proposal that was in the *Contract with America*.<sup>59</sup> Armev's use of the grassroots is one example of how conservative Republican strategy is elite driven, but they do rely on the grassroots to help implement their strategy.

One must consider how the centrepiece of the final reform bill eliminated AFDC. This benefit was not initiated during the Great Society but instead by the New Deal and the Social Security Act of 1935. The AFDC benefit was originally the part called Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) and the programme was for widowed mothers with children. ADC became AFDC in the 1960s, and part of this change allowed for aid to single mothers with dependent children.<sup>60</sup> Conservative Republicans wanted to address the AFDC issue because it was one way to harness both themes within conservative Republicanism; which combines the original anti-state mentality on the economic front from the post-WWII era, the more one pays in taxes equates to a greater loss of freedom from big government, with the pro-state mentality on social-moral issues that has taken on a greater importance since the 1970s.

The brilliance of the *Contract with America* was its exploitation of the public desire for change in Washington, DC. It gave a general overview of what the compilers believed would offer a vision of reform and change in America's federal welfare policy. However, the *Contract with America* did not state that it would terminate the AFDC benefit, but instead would give control of this programme to the states, and also implement enrolment requirements, eligibility time and a pay cap to this benefit, which in reality would end AFDC

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 282-283.

<sup>60</sup>For more on the history of AFDC, see: Teles, *Whose Welfare*, 31-40; Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 1-26; Béland and Waddan, *The Politics of Policy Change*, 26-38; and Caputo, *U.S. Social Welfare Reform*, 3-12, 24, 29-41.



as an entitlement.<sup>61</sup> The intent of the Contract was to change the concept of the benefit. Liberal Democrats viewed the entitlement as the key component of the benefit and conservative Republicans considered the entitlement to be a hindrance to society. The AFDC programme fit into the larger argument of conservative rhetoric, one that encompasses their belief in the equality of opportunity and attacks liberals for believing in government mandated equality.<sup>62</sup> Conservative Republicans wanted to end the entitlement as a way of ending the liberal Democratic belief of entitlement that began with the New Deal and further expanded with the Great Society. According to Michael Katz, “The Contract criticized Clinton’s proposals to reform AFDC – which were attacked as too harsh by Democrats to the left of the president – as tepid and inadequate. Instead, conservative Republicans proposed much tougher changes, including the abolition of AFDC”.<sup>63</sup> What one can take away from the reform to welfare is this - the lack of public interest and knowledge on specific reforms in welfare allowed House conservatives the flexibility to make the reform bill as punitive as they could get away with.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding welfare reform, the Contract focused on the New Deal legacy via the Great Society. It stated, “The Great Society had had the unintended consequence of snaring millions of Americans into the welfare trap. . . . Our *Contract with America* will change this destructive social behavior by requiring welfare recipients to take personal responsibility for the decisions they make.”<sup>65</sup> To include an added emphasis on the importance of welfare

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<sup>61</sup>Gillespie and Schellhas, *The Contract with America*, 65-77.

<sup>62</sup>Refer to the comments made by Arney and Gingrich in this section.

<sup>63</sup>Katz, *The Price of Citizenship*, 322.

<sup>64</sup>For more, refer to: Katz, *The Price of Citizenship*, 322-328; Stimson, *Tides of Consent*, 47-49; Gilens, *Why American Hate Welfare*, 45-59, Teles, *Whose Welfare*, 43-55; as well as Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro, *Politicians Don’t Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 278-283.

<sup>65</sup>Gillespie and Schellhas, *The Contract with America*, 65.

reform during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, Gingrich also affixed a personal comment in the Contract about the welfare state and the Great Society. He said, “We have to replace the welfare state with an opportunity society. It is impossible to take the Great Society structure of bureaucracy, the redistributionist model of how wealth is acquired, and the counterculture value system that now permeates the way we deal with the poor, and have any hope of fixing them”.<sup>66</sup>

It is clear that the House conservative Republican leadership abhorred liberal Democrats. The Majority whip, Tom DeLay makes it obvious what he thinks of liberals in his book *No Retreat, No Surrender*, revealing how he, as a member of the conservative elite, uses the terms liberal and socialist interchangeably. One example is his comment on “revolution” at the opening of this chapter. If there were any doubts about who he blamed for the creeping socialism in America, his next statement puts it in a clearer perspective. “I have learned something about liberals. They are much like communists”.<sup>67</sup> His comments clearly indicate how he believed liberals have altered the true course of America, and are important when one considers that his views represent those of the conservative elite.<sup>68</sup>

As a member of the conservative elite, DeLay also provides a clear message of conservative Republican ideology.

I have tried throughout my political life to maintain a rigorous devotion to conservative principles. This has won me the hatred of liberals and the irritation of less conservative Republicans, but from the time I entered politics I have fought for certain clear principles that I think are the principles of freedom: small government; low taxes; the rule of law; an unrestrained free market; protection of private property; a strong defense; and traditional family values. These are what I believe in, and these

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>67</sup>DeLay, *No Retreat, No Surrender*, 8.

<sup>68</sup>For more on “the nature of the elite cultural conflict”, concerning AFDC, consult: Teles, *Whose Welfare*, 60-74.

are the principles that have been my guide. In fact, I have been devoted to these truths ever since my conservative epiphany during the Goldwater speech of 1964.<sup>69</sup>

He considered the policies of liberal Democrats to be the antithesis of the type of freedom he described, implying that liberals are in favour of big government, high taxes, government regulation, are weak on national defence, and adhere to the anti-family feminist agenda.

DeLay also believed that the conservative Republican ideology was successful in attacking Clinton's liberalism.

We moved a liberal president to the center and drove him toward a balanced budget; welfare reform legislation of a far more conservative type than he had intended; and more spending on defense . . .

What set me over the top about Clinton is that his brand of liberalism had an almost anti-American feel to it.<sup>70</sup>

This remark demonstrates that DeLay believed he and his fellow conservative Republicans were successful in moving the leftward policies of Clinton, which were un-American, to a more compromised centrist position overall, but with welfare reform they were able to get Clinton to agree to a much more conservative version than if he had tried it during the previous Congress.<sup>71</sup>

When analysing all of DeLay's remarks, it is important to remember that he was a man of great influence and power, as a member of the House Republican majority leadership in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress and also as a member of the conservative elite.<sup>72</sup> His statements also reflect the overall message of conservative Republicans, which is that liberals pursue policies, which are both socialist and un-American, that undermine the conservative vision

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<sup>69</sup>DeLay, *No Retreat, No Surrender*, 99-100.

<sup>70</sup>DeLay, *No Retreat, No Surrender*, 108.

<sup>71</sup>DeLay's claim of making Clinton agree to a "more conservative type" of welfare reform will be analysed in more detail later on in the chapter.

<sup>72</sup>He continued to climb up the GOP House hierarchy, including becoming the Majority Whip during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. He went on to become House Majority Leader during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. For more on DeLay's political career, see: Lou Dubose and Jan Reid, *The Hammer: Tom DeLay, God, Money, and the Rise of the Republican Congress* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

for America. He stated that Barry Goldwater made him a conservative, and in this regard he and the current batch of conservative Republicans were continuing the work that Goldwater began during the 1964 presidential election.

As part of the House majority leadership and the conservative elite, Dick Armey also targeted liberal Democrats and the New Deal legacy. He believed that the Republican revolution of 1994 represented a victory for Freedom in America. He stated that liberal Democrats have beliefs that are on par with the Nazis, Karl Marx, and communists, and they all failed because they opposed freedom.<sup>73</sup> On this subject Armey said,

At home, the spectacle of a passing order – with the “progressives” furiously digging in – is different only in degree. The odds for their success do not look good. Theirs is another lost cause, waged without even the dignity of an unselfish faith. The direction of events is evident in the occasional breaking of the ranks, as Big Government types pay rhetorical homage to economic Freedom. We didn’t use to hear this. Fifty years ago unionists and New Dealers proudly avowed their Socialist creed. During the Great Society we had “Social Democracy” – meaning “capitalism, but...” Then came the managed-decliners of the Carter era. And finally, after Reagan, we got the vague “New Democrat” – the “I’m not like those other folks the public has come to despise” types. But these were verbal equivocations only, new labels for old reactionary nostrums.<sup>74</sup>

Armey’s argument, unlike previous observations made by Gingrich and DeLay, attempts to link liberal Democrats to an ideology similar to that of Adolf Hitler, Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin and Fidel Castro. What Armey and his fellow conservative Republicans were implying is that liberal Democrats use their political power to attack capitalism and the free-market, two of the essential aspects of freedom. Armey implied that to be against freedom is to be against free-market capitalism, which is un-American. With these words he suggests that liberal Democrats want to turn America into something akin to

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<sup>73</sup>Dick Armey, *The Freedom Revolution: The New Republican House Majority Leader Tells Why Big Government Failed, Why Freedom Works, and How We Will Rebuild America* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1995), 74-76.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.

Nazi Germany or global communism. Even the phrase “New Democrat” is a ploy to trick the people into allowing the continuation of this assault on freedom.

However, unlike DeLay, both Arney and Gingrich were more subtle and adept at using the mantra of the free-market to undermine the credibility of the New Deal legacy. They knew that labelling popular programmes, such as social security and Medicare, as socialist hinders the support they need to undo the entire legacy of the New Deal. They argued for turning both Medicare and social security from government entitlement programmes to personal account programmes that allowed the individual to rely on the free-market. Doing so, they said, would give the individual more freedom from government, with the possibility of getting more value out of their contributions (what they pay in taxes).<sup>75</sup>

Arney and his fellow conservatives also argued that they were the party of choice to best help Americans maximize their individual freedom. He argued that liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans differed on their versions of freedom. The difference was that the conservative version relied more on “self-regulation” and “personal responsibility”, whereas liberals wanted more government regulation for “its next great social mission,” in “statist liberalism”.<sup>76</sup> Thus what he was suggesting was that his party offered freedom from government, whilst the other party offered more government at the expense of personal freedom.

The conservative ideology of the House Republican leadership offered an alternative to the New Deal legacy. However, it must also be said that the House reforms made during the start of 104<sup>th</sup> Congress further helped Gingrich to pursue the conservative Republican

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<sup>75</sup>Gingrich, *To Save America*, 192-196; and Arney, *The Freedom Revolution*, 302-306.

<sup>76</sup>Arney, *The Freedom Revolution*, 171-172, 312.

agenda. The reforms gave him more centralized control over the legislative process in the House, they helped him to discourage defections, reduce bargaining costs, and allowed him to both focus on and publicize the agenda.<sup>77</sup> The reforms also helped him to attack the New Deal legacy. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of Gingrich, Arme y and DeLay formed the basis for how the conservative Republicans would rebrand the legacy. The Great Society and welfare reform are two examples of how this strategy unfolded during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### *The Freshmen*

The message that emerged from the House majority leadership was very aggressive and confrontational towards liberal Democrats and the New Deal legacy, so it is no surprise that many of the new conservative Republican House majority also echoed similar views. What made the House Republican conservative freshmen stand out was the belief that they were elected to shrink both the size and the power of the federal government. Many of them were hostile towards the New Deal legacy just like their House leadership. One such freshman was Rep. George Radanovich (R-CA).<sup>78</sup> He stated: “in the last hundred years, through socialism, Communism, [and] fascism we have experienced disproportionate government over the other institutions in this country. And in America we felt the ancillary effects of that through the [New] Deal and also the Great Society”. He went on to assert that the New Deal legacy, especially the Great Society, was responsible for attacking both the individual freedom of America itself and all of its citizens.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>C. Lawrence Evans, and Walter Oleszek, *Congress Under Fire: Reform Politics and the Republican Majority* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 85-93. For more on this point, refer back to Owens, “Taking Power? Institutional Change in the House and Senate”.

<sup>78</sup>He also happened to be the freshman class president during the second session, from Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 179, 201.

<sup>79</sup>Representative George Radanovich, Thomas (Library of Congress), *Congressional Record*, 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1 May 1996, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/LegislativeData.php?n=Record&c=104> (accessed 20 April 2011).

Another example of a conservative Republican freshman targeting the New Deal legacy, via the Great Society, was Rep. David Funderburk (R-NC).

Before I came to Washington, I watched the liberal Democrats and their allies in the permanent poverty industry heap scorn upon anyone who dared stand up and say that welfare socialism was destroying our country from within. But on November 8, 1994 we the people finally rose up and said enough is enough. . . . They had 30 years to do something about welfare and they sat on their hands and did nothing.

. . . we are debating two visions of America. We know where the liberal version has taken us. The second version – the conservative version – begins and ends with individual liberty.<sup>80</sup>

These examples of freshmen conservative Republicans demonstrate just how their approach to the New Deal legacy centred on the way the legacy was undermining individual freedom by allowing un-American ideologies that derive from fascism, communism and socialism to destroy the country. Whilst both the New Deal and the Great Society have contributed to America's decreasing level of freedom, the "welfare socialism" of the Great Society caused those on welfare to be trapped and dependent upon socialism, which subdued them into "permanent poverty". The two statements echoed the preferred approach of the House majority leadership in declaring one of the more unpopular portions of the legacy, such as welfare, to be at fault for what was ailing America. Conservatives wanted to imply that by fixing welfare, the country could start to address the problems caused by the New Deal legacy.

The rhetoric the freshmen used against the New Deal legacy, and especially the Great Society and welfare, was based on the legislative agenda presented to them from the outset, before the actual start of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. There were two influential reference points that provided the freshmen with the message the conservative elite wanted them to hear. The first

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<sup>80</sup>Representative David Funderburk, Thomas (Library of Congress), *Congressional Record*, 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, 24 March 1995, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/LegislativeData.php?n=Record&c=104> (accessed 29 March 2011).

point of reference was that the *Contract with America* had an entire section on welfare and focused on how the Great Society was to blame for the welfare problem. The second point of reference was during the freshman Republican orientation in December 1994. This conservative theme of events was underlined by the presence of Rush Limbaugh as a guest speaker.<sup>81</sup>

Limbaugh was and continues to be a very influential member of the conservative elite, one that can reach an extremely wide audience with his nationally syndicated radio show.<sup>82</sup> Another conference attendee was Charles Murray, whom I also regard to be a member of the conservative elite.<sup>83</sup> As previously stated, he is very influential amongst conservative Republicans for his views on welfare reform.<sup>84</sup> His book, entitled *Losing Ground*, is the foundation conservatives adhere to, in regards to what would be their ideal remedy for resolving the problems of America's welfare system. Murray gave the freshmen a seminar titled the "Real Welfare Reform".<sup>85</sup> His view toward welfare reform went well

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<sup>81</sup>Thomas B. Rosenstiel, "It's Rush Night for GOP's Lawmakers-in-Waiting", *Los Angeles Times*, 11 December 1994. [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-12-11/news/mn-7794\\_1\\_rush-limbaugh](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-12-11/news/mn-7794_1_rush-limbaugh) (accessed 28 January 2012).

<sup>82</sup>For more on Limbaugh as member of the conservative elite, refer to: Gingrich, *To Renew America*, 209-211; Balz and Brownstein, *Storming the Gates*, 31-32; as well as Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella, *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 44-47, 77-80.

<sup>83</sup>Murray is also a policy scholar for the conservative think tank, the American Enterprise Institute, <http://www.aei.org/scholar/charles-murray/> (accessed 4 February 2012). For more on how Murray is part of the conservative elite, consult: Buckley and Kesler, *Keeping the Tablets*, 8, 217-219, they also include a portion of Murray's *Losing Ground*, 240-265; Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 271-272. However, Teles considers Murray to be a member of the intellectual elite, albeit one that had a great deal of influence with Republicans. For more on his argument, see: Teles, *Whose Welfare*, 71-72, 150-152.

<sup>84</sup>On the other hand, Waddan and Béland consider Lawrence Mead to have been more influential than Murray with regards to what was actually included in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PPWORA). However, social policy scholar Ann Withorn credits both Mead and Murray for moving a conservative argument from the right-wing to acceptance as a mainstream new argument in both parties by the first Clinton administration. For more, refer to: Waddan and Béland, *The Politics of Policy Change*, 39-41; as well as Ann Withorn, "Fulfilling Fears and Fantasies: The Role of Welfare in Social Thought and Strategy", in *Unraveling the Right: The New Conservatism in American Thought and Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), ed. Amy E. Ansell, 138-139.

<sup>85</sup>Rosenstiel, "It's Rush Night for GOP's Lawmakers-in-Waiting".



beyond what was stated in the *Contract with America*. Whilst the Contract called for setting limits to payments for benefits, Murray believed that all aid for welfare should be terminated.<sup>86</sup>

This demonstrates that the conservative Republican freshmen were well informed by both the *Contract with America* and the seminar given by Charles Murray. The conservative elite made it clear that both the Contract and Murray's seminar were important reference points, which the freshmen should remember when welfare reform was addressed during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. On the other hand, Murray's message to eliminate all welfare payments goes, at least, one step further than what was in the Contract – but Murray's influence via his research, writings, Senate Finance Committee testimony and credibility amongst conservative Republicans cast a looming presence throughout the GOP policy formulation process.<sup>87</sup>

I do not believe the *Contract with America* was an instrumental tool that the freshmen relied upon to get elected. That was certainly not the case for all of the freshmen, indeed only some explicitly used the Contract when campaigning during the 1994 midterm elections.<sup>88</sup> According to politics professor Nicol C. Rae, who interviewed some of the freshmen, the Contract took on a greater importance during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. To this extent he said, “while the impact of the Contract on the 1994 election result was considerably overstated, the document ironically would become much more important after the election, when it set the legislative agenda for the new Republican Congress”.<sup>89</sup> Whilst I agree with his argument, I also consider the relevance in how the Contract was a way for

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<sup>86</sup>Refer back to the previous section for more on Murray's view on welfare.

<sup>87</sup>For more, consult: Haskins, *Work over Welfare*.

<sup>88</sup>For more on this point, see: Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 34-44.

<sup>89</sup>*ibid.*, 44.

conservative Republicans to campaign against the New Deal legacy. This framework was not important leading up to the election for the freshmen, but it did start out as the foundation for how to proceed with welfare reform.

The hidden value of the Contract was that it was only the starting point. Murray's seminar on "Real Welfare Reform" provided the ideological groundwork that would fit within the overall theme of the Contract.<sup>90</sup> His December 1994 article can shed some light on to what was most likely the theme of his seminar. Some of his main points were that "*The centrepiece of the legislation should be freedom for the states to experiment*", "*Limit the reform to unmarried women*" as well as "*'Ending welfare' should mean at a minimum cutting off all payments which are contingent on or augmented by having a baby*". The core benefit to be ended is AFDC.<sup>91</sup> However, the approach he preferred was to scrap "welfare altogether, a proposal with which I have been associated for some years", yet he was "under no illusions that Congress is about to pass such a plan nationally".<sup>92</sup> Part of what he said was in the Contract and other parts were included on the final bill passed by Congress and signed into law by Clinton.

The Contract, with regards to welfare reform, mattered more as a basic guideline for helping the conservative Republican House leadership to focus on which platform to establish. It did not matter if the freshmen echoed the plan or any of the specifics, though Gingrich would not mind if any of the freshmen did just that, but that was the intended starting point for the House majority leadership. Murray's seminar at the freshmen orientation, Murray's meeting with Gingrich, and Armev's efforts to get key committee

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<sup>90</sup>Refer back to Murray's influence on Gingrich and welfare reform during the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress.

<sup>91</sup>Charles Murray, "What To Do About Welfare", *Commentary* 98, no. 6 (December 1994): 32, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 11 September 2011).

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

House Republican moderates to support the Contract bill suggest that the intent of the conservative elite, especially Murray, Gingrich and Armey, was to emphasize the importance of welfare reform. The importance of Murray's seminar was to make the freshmen aware of the need to support their leadership in this endeavour.

However, as I mentioned earlier, even though the freshmen were eager to help Gingrich implement the conservative Republican agenda, they did not always see eye to eye with the agenda of the majority leadership. Although both the freshmen and the House leadership wanted to implement a conservative Republican version of change in America, the leadership, and especially Gingrich, knew that any sort of change had to pass through the Senate, the House, and Clinton before the bill could be signed into law. Of course, Congress could override a Clinton veto with a two-thirds majority, but that level of support was not to be found in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. There were enough moderates, Republicans and Democrats, and liberal Democrats to quash any attempt by conservative Republicans to override a presidential veto. When it came to welfare reform, many of the freshmen realised that legislating for change meant having to accept a lesser degree of change, in order to achieve a transformation that can still be described as revolutionary when compared to the previous status quo.<sup>93</sup>

Overall, the freshmen were influential but only for a brief amount of time. This was due to their original intent in getting elected to Congress. They came to Washington, DC to change the way of government, from the big government ideology of liberal Democrats to the limited government ideology of conservative Republicans. According to journalist Linda

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<sup>93</sup>Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 206-209.

Killian, the freshmen “were not believers in that government was the answer to people’s problems. They thought government was the problem”.<sup>94</sup> She also stated:

The first Republican president of their adult lives was Ronald Reagan. Reagan was a God to them, a religion. He represented a shining example of what the Republican Party should stand for. Most of them would say without hesitation that he was one of the finest presidents in history.

Never mind that they had arrived in Washington specifically to fix the mess that Ronald Reagan had begun, with his tax cuts, military spending on steroids, and unchecked government growth. It was under Ronald Reagan that the federal deficit first hit \$200 billion. But never mind that. It was what Reagan represented, not what he really was, that they loved – that clean-cut, gung-ho, America-first, pro-business, shining-city-on-a-hill thing he had going. They loved it because that was who they were, too. They did seem much angrier than Reagan was, though. And louder.<sup>95</sup>

Her two statements reveal the paradox of getting elected to government on an anti-government platform. Many of the House freshmen believed that Reagan, as president, had actually reduced the size of government by cutting taxes. However, they were unaware that whilst Reagan believed in less government, he was only able to reduce government revenues, via tax cuts, whilst at the same time increasing government spending and the overall size of government.

The budget showdown with Clinton and the Republican controlled Congress ended the brief period of influence that the House freshmen wielded in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. According to Rae in *Conservative Reformers*, the freshmen took the budget issue very seriously. He said, “the budget issue alone not only symbolized everything they felt was wrong with the American political system but was also the central reason why many of them had taken the decision to enter politics. As a result, they were the most unyielding Republicans when it came to negotiating with the Senate and the White House,” and being “Unable to compete with Clinton, the freshmen found themselves being blamed by the

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<sup>94</sup>Killian, *The Freshmen*, 13-14.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

Democrats, the news media, and their own leadership for . . . failing to bring the shutdown to an end”.<sup>96</sup> The Republican Congress lost the public relations battle with Clinton over which side, the president or the Congress, won public support during the ongoing political struggle to see which side could gain the upper hand in the budget negotiations. Two closures of government occurred before Congress reached an agreement with Clinton.

However, the House leadership was not blameless for the budget debacle. Gingrich encouraged the freshmen’s rhetoric and used it to his advantage as speaker to move forward with the Contract, but as a result he had a hard time controlling them when they did not agree with him on policy issues.<sup>97</sup> Armev and DeLay were even more ideologically committed than Gingrich to shutting down the government and keeping it closed. As a result, Gingrich was leading House conservative Republicans, before the fiasco of the budget showdown, who viewed compromise more as a sign of weakness than as a trait of governing.<sup>98</sup>

The conservative ideology of the freshmen, one of less taxation, less government and more freedom from government, did not take into consideration that governing included having to compromise with non-conservative Republicans in the Senate, the Democrat minority and President Clinton. They seemed to believe that they could rely on their majority leadership to set the agenda and they could then pass legislation without concerning themselves of any serious opposition, as if they were legislating in a parliamentary system. They eventually realised that in order to get re-elected they had to compromise, which meant

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<sup>96</sup>Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 206.

<sup>97</sup>For another example of the freshmen giving the House leadership trouble regarding the Balance Budget Amendment, see: Drew, *Showdown*, 119-125.

<sup>98</sup>For more, refer to: David Maraniss and Michael Weisskopf, *“Tell Newt to Shut Up!”: Prizewinning Washington Post Journalists Reveal How Reality Gagged the Gingrich Revolution* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 146-203; Killian, *The Freshmen*, 185-195, 235-247; and Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 115-130.

accepting not effecting radical change in government but practical change, given the current political dynamic in Congress and the White House. They still achieved their mandate for change but it was more subdued from the lofty expectations they had had at the outset of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>99</sup> Tea Party Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, however, were even more determined to adhere to a robust ideological fervour, and considered pragmatism as betraying limited government.

### **The Significance of Welfare Reform on the New Deal Legacy**

The welfare reform bill that was signed into law by Clinton had an effect on the legacy of the New Deal. Although welfare reform had previously taken place from the 1960s to the 1980s, the reform to welfare that occurred in 1996 brought about a drastic change that affected the legacy, especially the concept of welfare, the precedent that began with the New Deal in 1935.<sup>100</sup> Ron Haskins, a social policy analyst at the Brookings Institution, viewed the reform as “the most fundamental change in American social policy since the Social Security Act of 1935”,<sup>101</sup> whereas political scientist Nolan McCarthy highlighted how polarisation enabled conservative Republicans to achieve a preferable outcome on welfare reform.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>For more, see: Rae, *Conservative Reformers*, 189-190, 197-198; and Killian, *The Freshmen*, 414-418.

<sup>100</sup>The history of welfare reform reveals just how much it has a mostly negative image and perception with both the public and with those in government. But this degree of hostility has amplified since the Great Society. For more, see: Mink, *Welfare's End*, 102; and Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 70-76.

<sup>101</sup>Haskins, *Work over Welfare*, 2. Moreover, Haskins viewed welfare reform as the crown jewel of the GOP takeover of Congress during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. In large part due to the emphasis given to it in the Contract; Ron Haskins, “Welfare Reform: The Biggest Accomplishment of the Revolution”, in *The Republican Revolution 10 Years Later: Smaller Government or Business as Usual?* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2005), eds. Chris Edwards and John Samples, 99-139. Haskins has been a fellow at the Brookings Institution – a centrist think tank – since 2001; <http://www.brookings.edu/experts/haskinsr> (accessed 10 June 2015). He was a key House GOP staffer on welfare reform form, and spent fourteen years advising House Republicans on welfare (October 1986 to January 2000), as well as a White Senior Advisor on Welfare Policy to George W. Bush in 2002; Waddan and Béland, *The Politics of Policy Change*, 41, 55-56, 72 (note twelve).

<sup>102</sup>Nolan McCarthy, “The Policy Effects of Political Polarization”, in *The Transformation of American Politics: Activist Government and the Rise of Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), eds. Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, 240-243.

This outcome, however, varied in its significance amongst both parties in Congress and with Clinton.

Congressional members were mostly either in favour of or against the bill.<sup>103</sup> But the difference between the two final voting sessions reveals that voting for this bill had added implications.<sup>104</sup> The number of Democrats, in both the House and the Senate, who voted for the bill increased from the first to the second vote, whilst support amongst Republicans was mostly the same for both votes.<sup>105</sup> For conservative Republicans there was no dilemma, the final version, from their perspective, was a compromise to ensure the support of many moderates. However, for moderate Democrats and moderate Republicans, supporting the welfare reform bill became a mixture of personal choice and political survival.<sup>106</sup> Moderate Democrats had the opportunity to support a bill that decreased the size and power of government. Whilst this was true as well for moderate Republicans, they also had to contend with the conservative members of their own party. On the other hand, many liberal Democrats wanted to defend this part of the New Deal legacy, but the notion of welfare reform was popular with the public and they risked having to defend their vote for an

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<sup>103</sup>For a general overview of the welfare reform debate during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, consult: Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 106-166; and Cammisa, *From Rhetoric to Reform*, 63-93.

<sup>104</sup>The first House vote was 256-170 and the second vote was 328-101. The first Senate vote was 74-24 and the second vote was 78-21, Thomas (Library of Congress), 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, Bill Summary and Status for H.R. 3734, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d104:HR03734:@@R> (accessed 25 July 2014).

<sup>105</sup>Support amongst Democrats for the first House vote was 30-165 and for the second vote it was 98-98. In the Senate, Democrat support during the first vote was 22-24 and for the second vote it was 25-21. House Republican support for the first vote was 226-4 and for the second vote it was 230-2. Senate Republican support for the first vote was 52-0 and for the second vote it was 53-0. For the House: Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, "Final Vote Results for Roll Call 331", <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/1996/roll331.xml>; and "Final Vote Results for Roll Call 383", <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/1996/roll383.xml>. For the Senate: U.S. Senate, 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, Roll Call Vote 232, [http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_lists/roll\\_call\\_vote\\_cfm.cfm?congress=104&session=2&vote=00232](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=104&session=2&vote=00232); and Roll Call Vote 262, [http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_lists/roll\\_call\\_vote\\_cfm.cfm?congress=104&session=2&vote=00262](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=104&session=2&vote=00262). All four were accessed on 23 July 2014.

<sup>106</sup>Weaver, "Ending Welfare as We Know It", 384-394; and Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 157.

unpopular, if not controversial, component of the legacy. In fact, only one liberal Democrat, Sen. Paul Wellstone (MN) was willing to vote against the reform bill, whilst also running for re-election in 1996.<sup>107</sup> To further illustrate the difficulty of uniting a majority of Democrats in Congress against this bill, one only has to look at their congressional leadership, for even their minority leadership was not united against welfare reform.<sup>108</sup> Of all of the Democratic votes, one of the more notable liberal Democrats to vote for this bill was Sen. John Kerry (MA), whilst one of the more distinguished moderate Democrats to vote against this bill was Sen. Daniel Moynihan (NY).<sup>109</sup>

What made Moynihan's no vote important was his vast experience in both researching and writing about welfare.<sup>110</sup> Aside from his academic background, as a Senator he was an eminent proponent of reforming the welfare system. Yet the main reason he did not support welfare reform during the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress was due to the elimination of AFDC. Regarding the Republican welfare reform proposal, he said,

This is a bill that would repeal Title IV-A of the Social Security Act of 1935 that provides aid to dependent children. It will be the first time in the history of the nation that we have repealed a section of the Social Security Act. That the White House should be so eager to support such a law is beyond my understanding and, certainly in 34 years' service in Washington, beyond my experience. If this administration wishes to go down in history as one that abandoned, eagerly abandoned, the national commitment to dependent children, so be it. I would not want to be associated with such an enterprise, and I shall not be.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Waddan, *Clinton's Legacy*, 125-126.

<sup>108</sup>The House leadership, which included the Minority leader Rep. Richard Gephardt (MO) and the Minority whip David Bonior (MI) were united against the bill; whilst the Senate leadership was divided, the Minority leader, Sen. Tom Daschle (SD) voted against the bill, and the Minority whip, Sen. Wendell Ford (KY) voted for the bill.

<sup>109</sup>Kerry was one of the twenty-five Democratic Senators who voted for the final welfare bill, whilst Moynihan was one the twenty-one Democratic Senators who voted against the final bill.

<sup>110</sup>Besides *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1970), some of his other works have included *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1970) and *Miles to Go: A Personal History of Social Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

<sup>111</sup>Moynihan, *Miles to Go*, 38.



Whilst Moynihan was upset with Clinton for not supporting one of the prominent aspects of the New Deal and its legacy, he was also disappointed that Clinton did not make welfare reform a higher priority during the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress.<sup>112</sup>

Aside from criticising Clinton's support on welfare reform, Moynihan also argued that many Senate Democrats "are humiliating themselves. Having failed to push welfare reform when they controlled the Senate", they are now unwilling "to take a stand that will be unpopular with the voters".<sup>113</sup> He was critical of Democrats for being more willing to vote for welfare reform for political reasons instead of reforming welfare when they controlled the presidency and the Congress, which would have allowed them to have much more control on how the welfare system was reformed.<sup>114</sup>

In contrast to Moynihan's remarks concerning Democrats, with regards to the conservative Republican agenda he states that the *Contract with America* helped to install "a new vocabulary", which had

supplanted the old. Welfare was child abuse; to end child abuse, end welfare. . . . The reasoning, occasionally quite explicit, was that ending welfare would make the lives of illegitimate babies so unendurable that mothers would forbear to bear more. Cruelty to children – "tough love" – became an instrument of social policy. No Social Darwinist can ever have dreamed of a measure. . . In fairness, the conservatives were serious. Liberals never have been, and now they were merely silent.<sup>115</sup>

In sum, Moynihan's comments offer an explanation as to how conservative Republicans were determined to attack the New Deal legacy via the New Deal instead of the Great Society. The earlier comments from Gingrich, Armey, DeLay and the two House

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<sup>112</sup>For more, consult: Bryner, *Politics and Public Morality*, 78-80; Weaver, "Ending Welfare as We Know It", 382; and Harris, *The Survivor*, 234-235.

<sup>113</sup>Moynihan, *Miles to Go*, 40.

<sup>114</sup>However, in all fairness, a question has to be asked. How many Democrats viewed welfare reform in the same manner as Moynihan?

<sup>115</sup>Moynihan, *Miles to Go*, 30.

freshmen demonstrate that conservatives, especially House Republicans, would seize upon any opportunity to attack the legacy of the New Deal in the most malicious way. Even though this line of attack did force them to compromise on some issues, they were still able to assert that they had addressed the problems caused by the Great Society, yet they did so by targeting a programme that stemmed from the New Deal. To a conservative Republican this was seen as the best of both worlds, fixing the social ills of the Great Society by targeting the New Deal. What welfare reform has shown is that the New Deal legacy is vulnerable and further aspects or even all of it can also suffer, just as the AFDC benefit was eliminated with a few strokes of a pen.

## **Conclusion**

Conservative Republicans viewed welfare reform as a way to incorporate social values into entitlement reform. The intent was to combat socio-cultural liberalism by upholding traditional family values. As was evident with the remarks of Armev, DeLay, Gingrich and freshmen congressional members, they put great emphasis on linking liberalism to socialism. Conservatives support the notion that the attack against family values began in the turbulent 1960s and has continued ever since. A major point of reference for social decay is placed at the doorstep of 1960s counter-cultural liberalism. Cultural identity enables conservatives to critique the New Deal legacy for embodying un-American socialistic ideals championed by liberals and funded via big government.

As discussed in the introduction and previous chapter, as GOP conservatism has evolved from the 1930s to the post-Cold War era, what it stands for has merged an economic critique against the legacy with moral condemnation. The influence of southern conservatives has been vital in this regard. Southern traditionalism values order, or put

another way, a social hierarchy. The Great Society challenged this notion as it expanded welfare beyond the original New Deal intent. The greater access to welfare led to more economic assistance that challenged southern traditionalism. A conservative dominated Republican House channelled this belief as it set utilise the new GOP congressional majority in an attempt to fix, or to “right”, America’s moral compass. Reagan’s rhetoric echoed this sentiment, but the congressional four-party dynamic did not present either a GOP congressional majority or a powerful conservative bloc that he could rely on to support such an endeavour. The 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, however, presented such an opportunity for a GOP congressional majority to right the wrongs of the past, and did so with the reluctant support of a Democratic president.

This chapter shows how four-party politics was used by conservative Republicans to unite their party and press Clinton into either reforming welfare before the 1996 presidential election or leaving it as a possible issue leading up to the election. This is an example of how any future attempt to reform entitlements by either ending them, as was the case with the AFDC benefit, or reducing/reforming them to rely more on the free-market for individual benefits, in the cases of Medicare and social security, can benefit conservatives. Since they assert great influence within both the Republican congressional and presidential parties, they are more united than the Democratic Party in this regard. However, as the next chapter demonstrates, even when the GOP controls both the presidency and Congress, entitlement reform is still not a forgone conclusion – especially when reform leads to increasing the size of government.

## Four-Party Politics and the Legacy of George W. Bush

*We need a new generation of Ronald Reagan Republicans who, instead of making a separate peace with big government, will fight a containment policy that concedes not another inch of territory to the Socialist agenda.*

-Stephen Moore<sup>1</sup>

Of all of the post-World War II Republican presidents, George W. Bush presented the greatest challenge to the New Deal and its ongoing legacy. A member of the conservative elite and chief economist of the Heritage Foundation, Stephen Moore's remark illustrates that conservatives were far from united on Bush's approach to combating the liberal welfare state.<sup>2</sup> Bush attempted to expand both social security and Medicare via free market reforms, a goal that divided opinion amongst conservatives. Yet with a popular and entrenched entitlement system in place, how else would conservative Republicans be able to reform the entitlements and further implement government policies that better adhered to their ideology?

Bush was even more of an adversary to the New Deal legacy than Ronald Reagan. William Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR*, considers Bush to be "a kind of anti-FDR" who, whilst at the Harvard Business School, "denounced Roosevelt as a 'socialist' and had deplored old age pensions, unemployment insurance, the SEC, and other New Deal departures".<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that Reagan did not believe in rolling back the New Deal legacy, because Reagan and Bush both agreed that the free-market offered a superior alternative to government sponsored social insurance programmes, such as social security and Medicare. However, unlike Bush, Reagan respected Roosevelt's legacy – as illustrated

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Moore, "Is U.S. in Slow Motion to Socialism"? *Human Events* 61, no. 16 (9 May 2005): 5, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 25 May 2012).

<sup>2</sup>This was as of January 2014, before that he worked for the *Wall Street Journal*. For more, see: <http://www.heritage.org/about/staff/m/stephen-moore> (accessed 14 July 2014).

<sup>3</sup>William E. Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR: From Harry Truman to Barack Obama*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 297.

in chapter one, Reagan was vocal in his opposition to LBJ and the Great Society whilst acknowledging his support of FDR and the New Deal.<sup>4</sup> Another element that separated Bush and Reagan is that whilst Reagan had to deal with either a split Congress or a Democratic Congress, Bush, from 2003 to 2006, had a Congress that was under conservative Republican control which greatly enhanced the opportunity to reform both social security and Medicare; two goals that were part of an agenda that led politics scholar Alex Waddan to note: “Bush’s initiative . . . presented a greater theoretical threat to the American welfare state than anything attempted by Ronald Reagan”.<sup>5</sup> But in doing so, Bush had to proceed with caution when addressing two of the more popular government programmes. Labelling them or the New Deal legacy as socialist would not have helped his reform initiatives at all. Instead, he opted to focus on their alleged shortcomings.<sup>6</sup>

Bush, on the other hand, did use the liberal and socialist labels to attack Democrats and their initiatives, but this was only done when he was trying to distance himself from Democrats. One instance was during a 2004 presidential debate, where he elaborated on John Kerry’s tax-and-spend liberalism:

He's been there [in the Senate] for 20 years. . . . He voted 98 times to raise taxes. I mean, these aren't make-up figures. And so people are going to have to look at the record—look at the record of the man running for the President. . . . [The *National Journal* does not] name him the most liberal in the United States Senate because he hasn't shown up to many meetings. They named him because of his votes, and it's reality. It's just not credible to say he's going to keep taxes down and balance budgets.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>But Reagan also became more critical of the New Deal, not Roosevelt, as he became more in line with conservative Republicanism – examples include the TVA and social security.

<sup>5</sup>Alex Waddan, “Bush and Big Government Conservatism”, in *Assessing George W. Bush’s Legacy: The Right Man?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), eds. Iwan Morgan and Phillip John Davies, 177.

<sup>6</sup>I am not suggesting that Medicare and social security are perfect programmes, reforms are needed to ensure they have the funds to function as intended, however, Bush opted to only focus only on free-market reforms.

<sup>7</sup>George W. Bush, “Presidential Debate in St. Louis, Missouri”, 8 October 2004, compiled by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wolly, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=72776> (accessed 30 January 2014). For more on how Bush used the liberal label against Kerry, see: Kenneth M.

Another was in 2007, after Republicans lost control of Congress, where Bush vetoed the Democratic congressional legislation that expanded the State's Children Insurance Program (SCHIP). His rationale for doing so, was

socialized medicine has led to lower standards, longer waits, rationing of care. We've tried, by the way, here in Washington to have a major effort to put the Federal Government square in the center of health care in 1994, and the legislation didn't pass. I believe many of the Democrats in Congress who supported that legislation have learned from the experience. So instead of pushing to federalize health care all at once, they're pushing for the same goal through a series of incremental steps. . . . . . . . . the bill Congress passed would lead one out of every three children who moves on to Government coverage to drop private health insurance. . . . That is the wrong direction . . . private health care is the best medicine possible for the American people.<sup>8</sup>

But during the four years of conservative Republican control of the executive and legislative branches, he was better able to control the political narrative.

Bush's disdain for tax-and-spend liberalism placed him at the forefront of the continuing conservative Republican condemnation of the New Deal and its ongoing legacy, in the tradition of Herbert Hoover, Robert Taft, Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, what it means to be a conservative Republican has evolved over time. Leading up to World War II, conservatives like Taft favoured an isolationist foreign policy approach, but they shifted to a more hawkish foreign policy stance in the Cold War. There have been other changes that have led to the evolution of conservative Republicanism – resulting in a gradual shift towards a pro-state mentality on moral values whilst

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Cosgrove, *Branded Conservatives: How the Brand Brought the Right from the Fringes to the Center of American Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 243-273.

<sup>8</sup>George W. Bush, "Remarks at the Grocery Manufacturers Association/Food Products Association Fall Conference", 31 October 2007, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=76003> (accessed 30 January 2014).

<sup>9</sup>For more on Bush and his importance to GOP conservatism, see: David R. Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 209-256.

maintaining their anti-statist position on economic issues. Consequently there were significant differences between Bush's conservatism and that of Taft and Goldwater.

Yet even with the evolution of conservative Republicanism, the goal of rolling back the New Deal legacy has remained consistent. Bush's attempts to reform social security and Medicare presented an opportunity for them to combat "the liberal tradition" legacy, but also revealed a rift amongst conservatives. This rift developed from Bush's promotion of big government conservatism as the remedy to big government liberalism. Some members of the conservative elite even went as far as branding his attempted reforms as socialist, however, this was largely done by elites outside of Congress, especially via conservative periodicals such as the *National Review* and *Human Events* – and were mainly focused on Medicare, not social security. Echoing the likes of Stephen Moore, quoted earlier, Phyllis Schlafly, berated Bush's Medicare reform as "one more step incrementally for socialized medicine".<sup>10</sup>

Overall, the difference in opinion can be broken down into two opposing viewpoints. The arguments are: firstly, Bush was increasing the scope of government in the short term, by adding free-market reforms that would over time reduce the size of the New Deal legacy; and secondly, Bush was correct in his attempt to privatise social security but he was wrong with regards to Medicare (Part D).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Quote was taken from: John Gizzi, "Conservative Activists Rebel Against Drug Plan", *Human Events* 59, no. 22 (30 June 2003): 5, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 23 May 2012).

<sup>11</sup>There was also another argument offered by a small minority of conservatives like Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) who argued against both of Bush's reform initiatives. Paul is a libertarian and considered Bush's Medicare plan to be a form of "Republican Socialism"; Ron Paul, "Republican Socialism", 25 November 2003, <http://www.lewrockwell.com/paul/paul143.html> (accessed 9 September 2012). Paul believes that "The best private solution, of course, is simply to allow the American people to keep more of their paychecks and invest for retirement as they see fit." Instead of having to invest in "government-approved investments"; Ron Paul, "Social Security: House of Cards", 9 November 2004, <http://www.lewrockwell.com/paul/paul215.html> (accessed 8 October 2012).

The differences in the opposing viewpoints offer two questions for consideration. They are:

1. What is the significance of Bush's attempts to reform Medicare and social security as a way to promote a conservative governing philosophy?
2. How did Bush's conservatism differ from congressional Republicans?

When using the parameters of four-party politics, two points are evident. Firstly, the Republican presidential and congressional parties are to the right of their Democratic counterparts. Secondly, a vital distinction emerges between the Republican parties – Bush's conservatism placed him to the left of his congressional colleagues.<sup>12</sup> As a result, this exposed Bush to the accusation that his policies had as much in common, if not more, with the ideas of liberal Democrats than with those of “small government” conservative Republicans.<sup>13</sup>

In this chapter I will argue that George W. Bush did not betray conservative Republicans. Instead, he attempted to combat the two most popular components of the New Deal legacy. However, in order to undo the legacy, free-market reforms became the only realistic options for them. The public would not stand for the complete undoing of both programmes, even if this was their ultimate goal. According to journalist Ryan Sager, “[Conservative] Republicans are never going [to be able] to roll back the New Deal [legacy]. But they can shape what takes its place”.<sup>14</sup> Given the circumstances, Bush was trying to use

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<sup>12</sup>John Kenneth White, *The Values Divide: American Politics and Culture in Transition* (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2003), 186-193.

<sup>13</sup>The Cato Institute, a conservative think tank, made this argument very adamantly. For examples, see: Michael Tanner, *Leviathan on the Right: How Big-Government Conservatism Brought Down the Republican Revolution* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2007); Stephen Slivinski. *Buck Wild: How Republicans Broke the Bank and Became the Party of Big Government* (Nashville: Nelson Current, 2006); and John Samples, *The Struggle to Limit Government: A Modern Political History* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2010).

<sup>14</sup>Ryan Sager, *The Elephant in the Room: Evangelicals, Libertarians, and the Battle to Control the Republican Party* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 109.



the most popular means at his disposal to confront the New Deal legacy and ultimately give it a conservative twist.

### **Bush and Entitlement Reform: A Conservative New Deal?**

Regarding Bush's overall strategic plan, conservative historian Donald Critchlow in *The Conservative Ascendancy* argues that the way Bush envisioned undoing the New Deal and its ongoing legacy differed from what "the first generations of postwar conservatives . . . had called for when they sought to overturn the New Deal liberal order". Instead of "dismantling the welfare state" Bush wanted to "transform the liberal welfare state into a conservative welfare state".<sup>15</sup> In order to accomplish his task, however, he needed to challenge the underlying attitudes towards key programmes of the New Deal legacy, social security and Medicare.

In a more detailed analysis of Bush's reform initiatives, social policy scholar David Blumenthal and political scientist James Morone in *The Heart of Power* state, "In the 1930s, liberals imagined a universal right to health care by a national, compulsory insurance plan – Social Security extended to medical care". But after the death of President Roosevelt, Harry Truman and other "Liberal Democrats turned national health insurance into the New Deal's unfinished legacy. They would fervently pursue it for the next thirty years; some pursue it to this day".<sup>16</sup> Blumenthal and Morone also contend that Bush's Medicare reform centred on a "promarket approach" which would "drag Medicare out of the Social Security mindset".<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 257, 278. For more, also see: Lewis L. Gould, *The Republicans: A History of the Grand Old Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 331, 337-339.

<sup>16</sup>David Blumenthal and James A. Morone, *The Heart of Power: Health and Politics in the Oval Office* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 15.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

According to them, “When the spirit and the politics moved him, Bush could set health care goals, pursue them relentlessly, give and get in the legislative process, and emerge with a program he was proud of. This is the story of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, which provided prescription drug coverage for the elderly”.<sup>18</sup> They claim that the Bush administration “would support Medicare as an entitlement and drug coverage as a benefit, but it wanted to reform – the administration always called it modernizing – the program along conservative lines.”<sup>19</sup>

This argument suggests that Bush wanted to remove the “Social Security mindset” from Medicare and replace it with a free-market mindset, but he wanted to go beyond what Blumenthal and Morone argue was the case with his Medicare reform plan. Even though he wanted to remove Medicare from the “Social Security mindset”, he *also* sought to change the “Social Security mindset”, from viewing social security as a defined benefit, to a defined contribution.<sup>20</sup>

Bush argued: “Medicare has lived up to President Johnson’s vision. . . . Medicare is a binding commitment. The Medicare promise we made in 1965 will never change. And as medicine advances and the needs of our seniors change, Medicare, too, must advance, and it, too, must change. Thus generation of leaders must honor and renew the promise of Medicare

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 385.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 395.

<sup>20</sup>A defined contribution’s pay-out amount is determined by the free-market. For more information, see: <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/key-elements/savings-retirement/defined-contribution.cfm> (accessed 20 October 2012); and <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/key-elements/savings-retirement/defined-benefit.cfm> (accessed 20 October 2012). For more on Bush and define contributions, consult: Steven E. Schier, *Panorama of a Presidency: How George W. Bush Acquired and Spent His Political Capital* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 108-109. For an in-depth analysis on the battle over benefits in contemporary American political history, see: Jacob S. Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

by strengthening Medicare for the future”.<sup>21</sup> After the passage of the prescription drug benefit, he defended the reform on the grounds that it “put market-oriented principles in the bill”; which was key because “the marketplace is a much better allocator of resources than the Government”.<sup>22</sup>

Near the end of his second term, Bush reflected on his failed effort to reform social security. His argument for reform was similar to the one he made for Medicare. Even though he was unsuccessful, Bush argued that his reform initiative was the way forward because

the younger worker would gain a rate of return which would be more substantial than the rate of return of the money now being earned in . . . Social Security . . . the current system can't sustain that which has been promised to the workers. . . .

Now, the benefits, as far as I'm concerned . . . the personal savings account . . . encourages an ownership society. . . . The Social Security system was designed in . . . an era that is long gone . . . the question is whether or not our society has got the will necessary to adjust from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan.<sup>23</sup>

These remarks reveal a great deal about Bush's intentions toward both Medicare and social security. His attempted reforms aimed to challenge the legacy behind both entitlements. Medicare reform added a new entitlement, Part D, which gave private pharmaceutical companies more of a foothold into Medicare.<sup>24</sup> Social security reform challenged the current system by allowing private accounts to start changing it “from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan”. Social security reform was the more direct assault on the New Deal legacy. Bush's social security reform attacked the programme

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<sup>21</sup>George W. Bush, “Remarks on Medicare Reform”, 12 July 2001, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=73361&st=medicare&st1=> (accessed 1 June 2012).

<sup>22</sup>George W. Bush, “Remarks to the American Enterprise Institute and a Question-and-Answer Session”, 18 December 2008, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85272> (accessed 1 June 2012).

<sup>23</sup>George W. Bush, “The President's News Conference”, 20 December 2004, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=62982> (accessed 1 June 2012).

<sup>24</sup>Medicare Part C, Medicare Advantage was another, it allows private insurers to purchase Part A and Part B for its enrollees. For more, see: <http://www.medicare.gov/sign-up-change-plans/medicare-health-plans/medicare-advantage-plans/medicare-advantage-plans.html> (accessed 5 November 2012); and Daniel Béland and Alex Waddan, *The Politics of Policy Change: Welfare, Medicare, and Social Security Reform in the United States* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 114.

as a whole, whereas his Medicare reform was a back door attack, a “Trojan Horse” which allowed the free-market into the system and could in future expand its influence over the rest of the programme.<sup>25</sup>

Bush’s failed attempt at social security reform is based on the larger conservative agenda to discredit the programme.<sup>26</sup> Its core goal to question the long term viability of the programme drew on a strategic plan outlined by conservative social policy scholars Stuart Butler and Peter Germanis in a 1983 article, “Achieving A “Leninist” Strategy”.<sup>27</sup> Their intent was to help frame the policy debate around the notion “that Social Security would be vastly improved if it were restructured into a predominately private system”.<sup>28</sup> They conclude “that Social Security can be reformed only by treating the issue primarily as a political problem. . . . the strategy we adopt must be flexible. . . . [and] we must be prepared to redefine segments of the plan . . . to meet the changing political circumstances”.<sup>29</sup>

In a comparison to the authors’ concluding remarks, Bush did treat social security reform as a political problem, but one can question if he was flexible enough in his

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<sup>25</sup>Béland and Waddan argue that Bush’s “frontal” attack on social security scared off conservative Republican support, whereas Bush’s approach to Medicare reform did not do so, which spared his conservative supporters the wrath of the electorate; *The Politics of Policy Change*, 170-171. I agree, however, a vocal minority of conservative Republicans opted not to support Medicare reform and also did not have to face the wrath of the public. Although Rep. Nick Smith (R-MI) made enough enemies from the GOP leadership, and retired later that session, his son, who was running to take over the seat, had to suffer the consequences of his decision; Slivinski, *Buck Wild*, 137-138.

<sup>26</sup>Peter Baker, *Days of Fire: Bush and Cheney in the White House* (New York: Doubleday, 2013), 380-382, 390. And even centrist Democrats like Bill Clinton are not opposed to reforming social security to also include private accounts; Steven M. Teles and Martha Derthick, “Social Security from 1980 to the Present: From Third Rail to Presidential Commitment – and Back?” in *Conservatism and American Political Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), eds. Brian J. Glenn and Steven M. Teles, 267-273; as well as Béland and Waddan *The Politics of Policy Change*, 132-142.

<sup>27</sup>Stuart M. Butler and Peter Germanis, “Achieving A “Leninist” Strategy”, *Cato Journal* 3, no.2 (Fall 1983), 547-556, <http://www.cato.org/pubs/journal/cj3n2/cj3n2-11.pdf> (accessed 23 July 2012). At the time, both worked for the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank. Butler is now a Senior Fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution; <http://www.brookings.edu/experts/butlers> (accessed 30 June 2015).

<sup>28</sup>Butler and Germanis, “Achieving A “Leninist” Strategy”, 547.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 556.

approach. However, he adhered more to this strategy with Medicare than he did with social security. The final voting tally, which included a mixture of both Democrats and Republicans supporting the prescription drug benefit, was a testament to his approach. Ironically, Bush had more issues getting conservative votes, for ideological reasons, during Medicare reform than he did during social security reform.<sup>30</sup> The lack of a united conservative front on social security was caused by his inflexibility. Historian Lewis Gould viewed Bush's social reform effort as a purely "hyperpartisan approach" to rolling back the New Deal legacy.<sup>31</sup> He did not reach out to Democrats and was mostly focused towards his own party, and this allowed Democrats and interest groups such as the AARP to make his party and many conservatives afraid to face the political consequences of such a policy proposal.<sup>32</sup>

Overall, Bush's domestic goals, especially from 2003-2006, were constructed around a highly partisan agenda.<sup>33</sup> However, his agenda did not come without consequences. Although his 2001 tax cuts had moderate Democratic support, the means by which the conservative GOP leadership whipped fellow congressional Republicans to support Bush's agenda compelled Senate moderate James Jeffords (R-VT) to leave the party, become an Independent and caucus with Democrats. This was an act that swapped control of the Senate from the GOP to the Democratic Party for most of the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>34</sup> Yet throughout the

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<sup>30</sup>Barbara Sinclair, "Living (and Dying?) by the Sword: George W. Bush as Legislative Leader", in *The George Bush Legacy* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2008), eds. Colin Campbell, Bert A. Rockman and Andrew Rudalevige, 182.

<sup>31</sup>Gould, *The Republicans*, 338-339.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 168-169, 177-182.

<sup>33</sup>For more on Bush and partisanship, consider: Richard M. Skinner, "George W. Bush and the Partisan Presidency", *Political Science Quarterly* 123, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 605-622, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25655567> (accessed 17 January 2015); Gary C. Jacobson, *A Divider, Not a Uniter: George W. Bush and the American People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Longman, 2011); and Sinclair, "Living (and Dying?) by the Sword".

<sup>34</sup>Joseph A. Pika and John Anthony Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, rev. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), 203-204; Geoffrey Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the*

first six years of Bush's presidency, the congressional makeup allowed him to be very assertive with his agenda.<sup>35</sup> Historian Gil Troy considered Bush to be driven by conviction more so than Reagan, Clinton or Obama.<sup>36</sup> Of course, the conservative GOP control of Congress allowed Bush to take advantage of the four-party dynamic in a way that Clinton, Obama, and even Reagan could not.<sup>37</sup>

Alex Waddan in "The Politics of Aging" argues that Bush's Medicare reform was a "hybrid package" that in theory could appeal to conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats. However, liberal Democrats were not happy with the reform package because it did not allow the government to directly "negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies" with regards to how much the prescription drugs would cost, and it "also stipulated that the benefit be provided by private insurers rather than directly through the Medicare programme". Conservative Republicans voiced concerns about the reform because it expanded the Medicare entitlement and especially afterwards when the hitherto hidden true costs of the reform became known after its enactment.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding social security reform, Waddan argues that Bush was determined to spend some of the "political capital" he acquired from his 2004 re-election victory in an attempt "to challenge the fundamental tenets of the Social Security programme"; and even though

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*Destruction of the Republican Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 382-384; Baker, *Days of Fire*, 80, 103-105; and Sinclair, "Living (and Dying?) by the Sword", 169-174, 176-177.

<sup>35</sup>The GOP House, however, was more aligned with Bush in comparison to the GOP Senate, where compromising was more common in order to gain the votes required to move legislation forward. For more, consult: Charles O. Jones, "The U.S. Congress and Chief Executive George W. Bush", in *The Polarized Presidency of George W. Bush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), eds. George C. Edwards III and Desmond S. King, 405-408, 412-416; and Sinclair, "Living (and Dying?) by the Sword".

<sup>36</sup>Gil Troy, *Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents: George Washington to Barack Obama*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

<sup>37</sup>For more, refer to: Michael A. Genovese, Todd L. Belt and William W. Lammers, *The President and Domestic Policy: Comparing Leadership Styles, FDR to Obama*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

<sup>38</sup>Alex Waddan, "The Politics of Aging", in *Assessing the George W. Bush Presidency: A Tale of Two Terms* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) eds. Andrew Wroe and Jon Herbert, 167-172.

conservative Republicans wanted to target what they consider “the holy grail of politics . . . one of the fundamental building blocks of New Deal liberalism”, the Republican Congress deserted Bush. He was, however, more determined than Reagan to alter social security. Reagan focused on fiscal solvency, whilst Bush wanted “a much more far-reaching reform that focused on the collectivist principles of the programme”. Moreover, this attempt on social security allowed congressional Democrats to form a united opposition against reform, whereas congressional Republicans were not willing to go out on a limb politically as they were with Medicare reform and support the administration at the risk of their constituents’ discontent.<sup>39</sup> As Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) observed. Bush “ran on it. We didn’t. He’s not up for election again. We are”.<sup>40</sup>

In retrospect, despite the mixed results of Medicare and the attempted reform of social security, Bush was successful in striking a blow against “New Deal liberalism”. In the case of Medicare, he added a conservative Republican reform to this liberal Democratic creation. Moreover, whilst he failed to privatise social security, he was able to build upon the conservative Republican victory on welfare reform in 1996 with his achievement on Medicare reform. The reason Bush failed to reform social security is that he did not propose an addition but a change to the existing system, which would be costly to start but would have been a significant victory for conservative Republicans. From the conservative Republican perspective, they would have achieved a result they had desired since 1933, a

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 172-177; and Sinclair, *Party Wars*, 173, 240-241.

<sup>40</sup>Graham’s remark was taken from: Terry Weiner, “Touching the Third Rail: Explaining the Failure of Bush’s Security Reform Initiative”, *Politics & Policy* 35, no. 4 (2007): 888-891. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2007.00087.x/pdf> (accessed 17 October 2012). Another example from the conservative elite is William Kristol. Kristol is the founder and editor of the conservative magazine *The Weekly Standard*. Kristol wanted Bush to focus on taxes, jobs and the war on terror. For more on this point, see: Tanner, *Leviathan on the Right*, 132-133; and Samples, *The Struggle to Limit Government*, 239. However, both Tanner and Samples downplay Kristol’s political rationale for opposing Bush’s social security reform and focus their arguments on Kristol supporting big government conservatism over limited government conservatism.

victory that would bring the entire New Deal legacy into question and quite possibly drive a political stake into the heart of liberal Democrats, including Franklin Roosevelt.

Even though the prescription drug benefit angered many within the conservative elite, and a vocal minority in Congress voiced opposition to it, the Bush White House considered it a major domestic policy victory.<sup>41</sup>

Medicare and social security are entrenched entitlements, but will always be subject to reform, and although Bush failed to reform social security, it was not due to a lack of effort on his behalf.<sup>42</sup> His desire to reform social security spanned back over three decades.<sup>43</sup> According to journalist Robert Draper, privatising social security was something Bush first envisioned in 1978 and his desire never waned. Draper also mentions that even before the start of Bush's second term, he attempted to court Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) to work with him on reforming social security. Baucus was willing to discuss entitlement reform, with an emphasis on Medicare, but "it dawned on him that solvency wasn't what was preoccupying Bush and Rove. This was about privatizing the New Deal". Bush was determined to push ahead with his initiative because "This is what the people want. I've got

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<sup>41</sup>Waddan, "Bush and Big Government Conservatism", 174-175.

<sup>42</sup>For more on social security's history, see: Daniel Béland, *Social Security: History from the New Deal to the Privatization Debate* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005); as well as Teles and Derthick, "Social Security from 1980 to the Present", 261-290. For more on Medicare's history, consult: Jonathan Oberlander, *The Political Life of Medicare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); and Theodore R. Marmor, *The Politics of Medicare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: A. de Gruyter, 2000).

<sup>43</sup>Although, the actual plan Bush devised may have been inspired by Chile's privatisation of its pension system by José Piñera. The two met in the late 1990s. For more, see: Barbara T. Dreyfuss, "The Siren of Santiago", *Mother Jones*, March/April 2005, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2005/03/siren-santiago> (accessed 1 June 2012). Piñera works for the Cato Institute. For more, consult: <http://www.cato.org/people/jose-pinera> (accessed 9 November 2012). The Cato Institute had a vital role in helping to craft Bush's social security initiative. For more on this perspective, consult: Nelson Lichtenstein, "Ideology and Interest on the Social Policy Home Front", in *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), ed. Julian E. Zelizer, 190-192; Béland, *Social Security*, 170-177; as well as Teles and Derthick, "Social Security from 1980 to the Present", 268-271.



political capital, and I intent to spend it”.<sup>44</sup> However, it is highly debateable if Bush had any political capital.

Political scientists Lawrence Grossback, David Peterson and James Stimson highlight that electoral mandates rarely happen, although such a claim is made more often than it is merited. Their analysis offers very few examples over a forty-four year period (1960-2004) where a party or president had any “political capital . . . to spend”. The 2004 election did not mirror the election results of 1964, nor did it match the outcomes of 1980 or 1994. And even when there is a mandate, its time is limited before the political capital dissipates.<sup>45</sup> Yet even without a mandate, it is possible to bequeath a legacy.

Public policy scholars Christian Weller and Amanda Logan argue that President Bush has left a legacy within the Republican Party regarding how it will address social security reform. However, this type of reform was both unpopular with the public and failed to address any future solvency issues, nor did it address the growing concerns about retirement security. The main concern was to introduce privatised accounts into a government entitlement programme.<sup>46</sup>

What I would add to the previous analysis is that Bush never intended to address the solvency of social security. His attempt to reform social security, as well as reforming Medicare, was politically motivated, and by taking advantage of the doubts about the long

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<sup>44</sup>Robert Draper, *Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 293-294.

<sup>45</sup>Lawrence J. Grossback, David A.M. Peterson and James A. Stimson, *Mandate Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 43-50, 179-189.

<sup>46</sup>Christine E. Weller and Amanda M. Logan, “President Bush’s Legacy on Social Security”, in *Perspectives on the Legacy of George W. Bush* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), eds. Michael Orlov Grossman and Ronald Eric Matthews Jr., 96-119. For more, also see: Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Off Center: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy*, with a new afterword (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 75-80.

term stability of social security he attempted to offer a conservative Republican solution, which was to diminish, as much as possible, the state's role in this social insurance programme. An agenda that journalist Michael Hiltzik depicts as "the plot against Social Security".<sup>47</sup>

In essence, Bush was much more open to a compromised solution with Medicare than with social security. He wanted to privatise social security in a way that was more ideologically driven than Medicare. In the end, it cost support from centrists within both parties, whereas with Medicare he received just enough support to pass the legislation.<sup>48</sup>

There is an ongoing debate, which asks whether what Bush did as president – especially to Medicare and social security, but also to tax cuts, education, social issues and the war on terror – did or did not adhere to Reagan's legacy.<sup>49</sup>

### **Bush's Conservatism: "Red George" or Reagan's Heir?**

Lou Cannon and Carl Cannon in *Reagan's Disciple* argue that Bush is Reagan's legatee, especially on issues such as "tax and trade policies, immigration issues, and judicial

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<sup>47</sup>Michael A. Hiltzik, *The Plot Against Social Security: How the Bush Plan Is Endangering Our Financial Future* (New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005).

<sup>48</sup>Sixteen House Democrats and 11 Senate Democrats voted for the final bill, whilst this is not a large number it does illustrate that this bill had some crossover appeal. The vote tally is from Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, "Final Vote Results for Roll Call 669", <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2003/roll669.xml> (accessed 25 July 2014); and U.S. Senate, 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, Roll Call Vote 459, [http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_lists/roll\\_call\\_vote\\_cfm.cfm?congress=108&session=1&vote=00459](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=108&session=1&vote=00459) (accessed 25 July 2014). Although, the level of support in the Senate was much less than the original version that was supported by Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and opposed by many conservative Republicans. For more on this point, see: Sinclair, "Living (and Dying?) by the Sword", 177-179.

<sup>49</sup>Reagan's legacy is also argued to have been turned into a myth. For more, see: Will Bunch, *Tear Down This Myth: How the Reagan Legacy Has Distorted Our Politics and Haunts Our Future* (New York: Free Press, 2009); John W. Sloan, "The Economic Costs of Reagan Mythology," in *Deconstructing Reagan: Conservative Mythology and America's Fortieth President* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), eds. Kyle Longley, Jeremy D. Mayer, Michael Schaller and John W. Sloan, 41-69; and Michael Espinoza, "Myth, Memory and the Reagan Legacy: Taxes and the GOP", *49th Parallel* 31 (Spring 2013): 1-39, <http://www.49thparallel.bham.ac.uk/back/issue31/Espinoza.htm> (accessed 28 January 2014).

appointments” and budget deficits.<sup>50</sup> On the issue of social security, however, they believe that he was more determined to strive for a grand solution instead of compromising to help defuse a heated political fight between the parties.<sup>51</sup>

Amongst others, conservative economist and former Reagan administration official Bruce Bartlett offers an opposing narrative that Bush “is an imposter, a pretend conservative” in much the same manner as Richard Nixon.<sup>52</sup> He considers Bush’s tax cuts, trade policy, prescription drug benefit and failure to reform social security as policies that went against the Reagan legacy.<sup>53</sup> Journalists John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge argue that those who hold a viewpoint similar to Bartlett may become prone to view Bush as “Red George”, due to his engagement “in a bold experiment: to see whether programs that were created by liberals from the 1930s to the 1970s can be reshaped in a conservative fashion”.<sup>54</sup> So if Bush has betrayed Reagan’s legacy as some suggest, what has happened to conservatism?

Conservative historian Gregory Schneider suggests that big government conservatism “has moved conservatism in the public mind far away from its original small government principles. On a majority of issues it is hard to see Bush as a conservative, yet the equation of Bush with conservatism echoes in the public’s mind and will hasten the

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<sup>50</sup>Lou Cannon and Carl M. Cannon, *Reagan’s Disciple: George W. Bush’s Troubled Quest for a Presidential Legacy* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), 38-40, 304.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 38, 84, 253-254, 292-293, 305. For more on Reagan and social security reform, consult: Martha Derthick and Steven M. Teles, “Riding the Third Rail: Social Security Reform”, in *The Regan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and Its Legacies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), eds. W. Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham, 182-208; Lichtenstein, “Ideology and Interest on the Social Policy Home Front”, 187-189; Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 149, 169, 204; Béland and Waddan, *The Politics of Policy Change*, 129-132; and Béland, *Social Security*, 149-162.

<sup>52</sup>Bruce R. Bartlett, *Imposter: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 1.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 16-19.

<sup>54</sup>John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Why America is Different* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 259.

speed at which the Reagan conservatism crumbles”. In this regard, Bush may have been burdened by Reagan’s legacy.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, Schneider also acknowledges that as a movement,

Conservatives continue to face difficulties over what their ideas stand for and what their legacy is in the new century. Conservatism continues to be remarkably protean and conservatives have altered their ideas, changed their perspectives, and altered their movement’s history over the course of the twentieth century. Yet the current conservative identity crisis is a severe one and is testing the will of both politicized conservatives to stay the course in the pursuit of smaller government and low taxes, as well as the conservative intellectuals to have faith in a restoration of the primacy of Western culture in an increasingly fragmented and multicultural society. What emerges from this identity crisis will, for all practical purposes, bear little resemblance (on most levels) to the conservatism that preceded it. But if history should teach us anything it is that conservatives have been at this point before – repeatedly – in what turned out to be the conservative century.<sup>56</sup>

As his analysis suggests, pragmatism was the mould that helped to shape and drive conservative Republicanism from the periphery to the mainstream of American politics – a pragmatism that has also shaped how to combat the New Deal legacy.

Although Bush and many conservative Republicans claim to be following in Reagan’s shadow, Reagan was more pragmatic than they were during the Republican controlled 104<sup>th</sup> Congress and during the four years of complete Republican control of both the executive and legislative branches from 2003-2006. Of course, when Reagan governed he did not have such a luxury and was thus more reliant on reaching out across the aisle to compromise with Democrats. Bush also sought bipartisanship on some occasions, as with Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) over the educational reform initiative, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). However, his compromises with Democrats did not challenge

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<sup>55</sup>Paul Kengor, “Reagan’s Legacy, Bush’s Burden”, in *The Enduring Reagan* (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2009), ed. Charles W. Dunn, 93-117.

<sup>56</sup>Gregory L. Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 215.

the New Deal and its ongoing legacy in nearly the same fashion as with Medicare and social security.<sup>57</sup>

Bush may be *Reagan's Disciple* in the ways mentioned by Cannon and Cannon, but he was also following in the footsteps of Herbert Hoover. Fred Barnes in *Rebel-in-Chief* offers a perspective on Bush which differs in some regards from that of Cannon and Cannon. He considers that Bush is not a “typical conservative” but instead is a new conservative, a big government conservative who “favors an activist federal government” that will uphold conservative Republican values.<sup>58</sup> He claims that Bush’s attempt with social security reform, and to a lesser extent Medicare reform, was due to his vision for the “ownership society”.<sup>59</sup> Barnes suggests that Bush’s “opportunity society” built upon the theme of Newt Gingrich’s Conservative Opportunity Society formed in the early 1980s as a political strategy to turn the GOP from the minority me-too party into the majority conservative party.<sup>60</sup>

He argues that conservatives who do not agree with Bush on his “opportunity society” for social security and Medicare do not realise that he was using “government policies to expand personal freedom, a conservative virtue. His reforms to create voluntary

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<sup>57</sup>Whilst it is true that Reagan desired and achieved welfare reform, he did so working with a Democratic controlled Congress in 1988. However, the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act was repealed seventeen months later because of the backlash from upset seniors who were not informed of the increase beforehand. The payments of the more financially well off beneficiaries were increased to fund additional benefits. Reagan would not support a plan that included any additional government funding. For more, consider: Béland and Waddan, *The Politics of Policy Change*, 89-94; Carl Hulse, “Lesson Is Seen in Failure of Medicare Law in 1989”, *New York Times*, 17 November 2013, [www.nytimes.com/2013/11/18/us/politics/lesson-is-seen-in-failure-of-1989-law-on-medicare.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/18/us/politics/lesson-is-seen-in-failure-of-1989-law-on-medicare.html); William E. Aaronson, Jacqueline S. Zinn and Michael D. Rosko, “The Success and Repeal of the Medicare Catastrophic Act: A Paradoxical Lesson for Health Care Reform”, *Journal of Health Politics* 19, no.4 (Winter 1994): 753-771, <http://jhppl.dukejournals.org/content/19/4/753.full.pdf>; and Thomas Rice, Katherine Desmond and Jon Gabel, “The Medicare Catastrophic Act: A Post-Mortem”, *Health Affairs* 9, no. 3 (1990): 75-87, <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/9/3/75.full.pdf>. All links accessed 8 April 2014.

<sup>58</sup>Fred Barnes, *Rebel-in-Chief: Inside the Bold and Controversial Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Crown Forum, 2006), 157-158.

<sup>59</sup>*ibid.*, 126. For a general overview of what Barnes describes as the “ownership society”, consult pages 125-139.

<sup>60</sup>*ibid.*, 125-126.

investment accounts in Social Security and health savings accounts in Medicare aim to do that,” which help to summarise Bush’s conservatism “in three words and one institution”, “choice, accountability, and freedom. The institution is a strong national government. These themes hang together and constitute a sensible new conservatism”.<sup>61</sup> In Barnes’ estimate, therefore, Bush is “best characterized as a strong-government conservative”. Moreover, “Given Bush’s influence”, he asserts, “many more conservatives will adopt that label and the ideology that goes with it”, because Bush’s brand of conservatism helped the Republican Party to be “America’s majority party for the first time since the 1920s”.<sup>62</sup>

Barnes’ argument makes it seem that Bush’s conservatism was the next evolution of conservative Republicanism, beyond the Reagan and Gingrich brands. However, he does not give much, if any, coverage on conservative Republicans from Hoover to Goldwater, and instead starts the reflection on conservatives beginning with the Reagan presidency. This short-sighted approach did not acknowledge the gradual evolution that conservative Republicans have made over time. The majority Republican Party of the 1920s was very different from today’s GOP. Amongst conservatives, supporting limited government has gradually evolved to supporting a big government in certain domestic and foreign policy realms, but this support did not condone ballooning budgets. This approach has led to criticism within the conservative Republican ranks about Bush’s policies. For example, whilst libertarians may have supported his proposal for social security reform and his desire for tax cuts, they did not support a number of his policies, especially the war on terror and Medicare reform.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 176-177.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>63</sup>However, as previously mentioned in footnote ten, Ron Paul did not even support Bush’s social security reform plan. He believed that Bush’s plan still called for too much government control.

Barnes' argument can also lead one to conclude that Bush was offering his party the path to the future by challenging the ongoing legacy that spawned both social security and Medicare. However, in order for this to happen the GOP would become a hybrid party of sorts, part Republican Party of 1928, and part of the Democratic Party from the Roosevelt to Johnson era. The conservative led GOP would use state power to make America more compliant to free-market principles. Thus in essence, Barnes argues that, domestically, Bush's role was to lead conservative Republicans to offer the complete opposite to that of liberal Democrats, using state power to deliver more economic freedom from government via the free-market, whilst also using state power to mandate less freedom from government on social values.

Barnes's defence of Bush ignites a lot of controversy within the conservative elite.<sup>64</sup> Steven Slivinski, of the Cato Institute, argues against the perspective of those who defend Bush's policies, such as Fred Barnes and David Brooks of the *New York Times*. He asserts: "The first controversial notion here is that the size of government doesn't matter. That's automatically something many small-government conservatives would take umbrage with, and rightly so. There's a moral argument to be made in defense of smaller government. Every increase in the size of government beyond a few core functions does, by definition,

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<sup>64</sup>Two other conservative elites who argued against Bush's policies were Pat Buchanan and Richard Viguerie. For more on their critiques, consult: Patrick J. Buchanan, *Where the Right Went Wrong: How Neoconservatives Subverted the Reagan Revolution and Hijacked the Bush Presidency* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2005); Richard A. Viguerie, *Conservative Betrayed: How George W. Bush and Other Big Government Republicans Hijacked the Conservative Republican Cause* (Los Angeles: Bonus Books, 2006). Although both Buchanan and Viguerie were hostile towards Bush, they had differing views on the ongoing legacy of the New Deal. Viguerie was very hostile towards it, whereas Buchanan accepted it as the status quo people depend on it and pay for it. For more on Viguerie's views on social security and Medicare, refer to pages 4 – 17 in his book. In an unflattering manner on page 21 Viguerie wonders if Bush is really "the Republican LBJ or FDR". Buchanan argued something similar on pages 8-9 of his book.

translate into a decrease in personal liberty in some way”.<sup>65</sup> In particular, he asserts that

Barnes’ argument

is hardly a new idea. It’s a good one, though. The intellectual case for just this sort of market-driven reform has been constructed by small-government think-tanks during a period of close to three decades, and some of these reforms have been implemented and been phenomenally successful in other countries. . . .

The major downside, however, is that Bush’s political strategy hasn’t worked. What Barnes suggests is a political winner – coupling the reform with an increase in spending to make the package palatable to all ideological persuasions – has backfired. What we’ve ended up with instead is more government and no reform to speak of.<sup>66</sup>

Is Slivinski suggesting that if Bush succeeded in reforming social security then

Barnes’ argument would have been valid – conservatives would learn to live with the parts of Bush’s accomplishments they disagree on and learn to praise the accomplishments they adore? One conservative Republican who would have had to face that dilemma is Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN), who opposed Bush on Medicare and No Child Left Behind, but fully supported the president on social security, tax cuts and social issues.<sup>67</sup>

Although Pence was not arguing against Barnes specifically, he did not agree with big government conservatism. For example, he voiced harsh criticism against the expansion of Medicare by stating that “a universal drug benefit could . . . usher in the beginning of socialized medicine in America”, where “Congress threatens our nation’s fiscal stability, the private prescription plans of millions of seniors and the survival of our free-market health care system”.<sup>68</sup> Another is after the 2004 elections, when he declared:

In the wake of the historic landslide on November 2, American conservatives must steer government back to the limited-government course charted by Ronald Reagan

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<sup>65</sup>Slivinski, *Buck Wild*, 167-168.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>67</sup>For more, see: Mike Pence, “House Conservatives Steer Course For Return to Limited Government”, *Human Events* 60, no.39 (15 November 2004): 1, 8, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 24 May 2012); and Mike Pence, “We Need More Conservatives in Congress”, *Human Events* 62, no. 30 (11 September 2006): 7, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 26 May 2012).

<sup>68</sup>Mike Pence, “Why I oppose the Drug Entitlement”, *Human Events* 59, no. 41 (24 November 2003): 1, 8, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 24 May 2012).



when he took the helm of state in 1981. We must rediscover the freedom agenda of less government and greater fiscal discipline. We must be strong and courageous and do the work knowing that this cause will prevail. For the cause of freedom is not our story but His – the author and finisher of our faith and our freedom.<sup>69</sup>

However, Daniel Casse, former managing editor of *The Public Interest*<sup>70</sup> and George H.W.

Bush administration official, is a business, politics and policy pundit who, in his support of

Barnes' rationale, argues:

Barnes' pithy formulation . . . does convey accurately enough the direction of 'Bush conservatism' – and it does undeniably comport with political reality. . . .

Nor . . . should one forget that Reagan's two terms in office were full of contradictions of their own. Reagan's speeches may have excoriated Congress for its failure to send him balanced budgets, but his (admirable) build-up of defense expenditures made such a balanced budget impossible. His embrace of supply-side tax cuts was countered by the tax increases he signed in 1982 – at the time, the largest in American history. . . .

. . . The 'Bush revolution' may still not have fully taken off, but if the Republican party is truly to remain the party of ideas, then it has no choice but to embrace and explain a 'preemptive' program modelled more or less along the lines that Bush has laid out. If it is to succeed, that program should always remain cognizant of the ideals Ronald Reagan pursued in launching the modern conservative era 25 years ago. But it need not be bounded by them, either.<sup>71</sup>

Casse's argument both supports Barnes's argument and refutes Pence's claim of Reagan's ideological purity. However, Slivinki's argument is accurate in that Bush's reform plans for both Medicare and social security did not deliver a new GOP majority.<sup>72</sup> Although in future that may indeed be the case with the likes of Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) – who supported Bush on many issues, including Medicare and social security – offering similar ideas as Chairman of the House Budget Committee in the 112<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Pence, "House Conservatives Steer Course For Return to Limited Government".

<sup>70</sup>*The Public Interest* (1960-2005) was a neo-conservative magazine co-founded by Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell. Casse was the managing editor from 1985 to 1987.

<sup>71</sup>Daniel Casse, "What Is a Bush Republican?" *Commentary* 121, no. 3 (March 2006): 43-44, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 6 December 2011).

<sup>72</sup>This will be analysed in more detail in the next section.

<sup>73</sup>For more on why Ryan support Bush's agenda on Medicare and social security, see: Representative Paul Ryan, Thomas (Library of Congress), *Congressional Record*, 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, 10 September 2003, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/LegislativeData.php?&n=BSS&c=108> (accessed 9 October 2012); Thomas (Library of Congress), *Congressional Record*, 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, 27 April 2005,

On the other hand, most within the conservative elite supported Bush's social policies, especially his policies on stem cell research and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Many conservatives favour more government involvement on social-moral issues, such as abortion, gay rights, immigration and school prayer.<sup>74</sup> From the conservative Republican perspective, this is one area where Bush was more successful than Reagan. Political scientist James Farney posits that the social views of George W. Bush established that he "gave more rhetorical recognition . . . [to] social conservatives and policy changes than any previous president, even Ronald Reagan. . . . In short, by 2008 the transformation of the American right that began with Goldwater in 1964 and that had taken lasting steps with Reagan and the Moral Majority in the 1980s had come to fruition".<sup>75</sup> Bush was also more successful than Reagan with tax cuts.<sup>76</sup> Both cut taxes, but Reagan also raised taxes on numerous occasions, whereas Bush only cut taxes, and most of the tax cuts have become permanent.<sup>77</sup>

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<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/LegislativeData.php?&n=BSS&c=109> (accessed 9 October 2012). For more on Ryan's House Budget plans, refer to: Paul Ryan, "The Path to Prosperity: Restoring America's Promise", <http://budget.house.gov/fy2012budget/>; "The Path to Prosperity: A Blueprint for American Renewal", <http://budget.house.gov/fy2013prosperity/>; "The Path to Prosperity: A Responsible, Balanced Budget", <http://budget.house.gov/fy2014/>; and "The Path to Prosperity: Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Resolution", <http://budget.house.gov/fy2015/> (all were accessed 10 July 2014).

<sup>74</sup>However, Waddan argues that conservatives have not reached a general consensus on social issues. For more, see: Waddan, "Bush and Big Government Conservatism", 168-169. I argue that conservative Republicanism has evolved and the majority view is one that favours a stronger government role in social issues. I am not inferring that every conservative takes this position but overall it is the majority view. However, others consider social values conservatism to be on the wane, with liberal values dominating America. For more, consult: John Dombrink, *The Twilight of Social Conservatism: American Cultural Values in the Obama Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); and David T. Courtwright, *No Right Turn: Conservative Politics in Liberal America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>75</sup>James Farney, *Social Conservatives and Party Politics in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 73-80.

<sup>76</sup>Popular conservative Republican rhetoric maintains that Reagan never raised taxes. This belief is an essential component of the Reagan myth.

<sup>77</sup>For more on the lasting effects of Bush's tax cuts on Obama's first term, see: Tim Conlan and Paul Posner, "A Solution for All Seasons: The Politics of Tax Reduction in the Bush Administration", in *Building Coalitions, Making Policy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2012), eds. Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and Martin M. Shapiro, 205-210; and beyond, consult: Zachary A. Goldfarb, "The Legacy of the Bush Tax Cuts, In Four Charts", 2 January 2013, *Washington Post* Wonkblog,

Regarding presidents and ideology, the Bush tax cuts adhered to Reaganomics. Political scientist Thomas Langston considers “ideology” to have been “the driving force behind Reaganomics”,<sup>78</sup> an ideology that has remained influential in American party politics.<sup>79</sup> Social scientists Tim Conlan and Paul Posner argue: “Tax cuts were the centerpiece of George W. Bush’s domestic agenda”, and were mirrored to emulate the success that the GOP associates with to Reagan’s tax legacy.<sup>80</sup> Economic historian W. Elliot Brownlee argues that Reagan “wanted to cut everyone’s taxes, regardless of whether or not any particular economic theory supported him, and regardless of whether or not the cuts worsened the deficit”.<sup>81</sup> He also went on to state: “To be sure, both Reagan and [George W.] Bush hoped their tax cuts would reduce discretionary spending. But Bush seemed prepared to go further and use tax cutting as a vehicle for containing or reducing the entitlement programs of Social Security and Medicare”.<sup>82</sup>

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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/01/02/the-legacy-of-the-bush-tax-cuts-in-four-charts/> (accessed 29 January 2014).

<sup>78</sup>Thomas S. Langston, *Ideologues and Presidents: From the New Deal to the Reagan Revolution* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 137. Langston argues this was also true for the Roosevelt administration’s pursuit for the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Johnson administration’s pursuit of “a Model Cities Program”. For more, see pages 70-134. And Regarding Bush’s foreign policy, Langston highlights how neoconservatives in the Bush administration were very influential in shaping the ideological response to Iraq as part of the War on Terror. For more, consult: Thomas S. Langston, “Ideology and Ideologues in the Modern Presidency”, *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 4 [December 2012]: 745-746, 749-750, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2012.04015.x/pdf> (accessed 3 February 2014).

<sup>79</sup>Iwan Morgan, *The Age of Deficits: Presidents and Unbalanced Budgets from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 118; Andrew E. Busch, “Ronald Reagan and Economic Policy”, in *The Reagan Legacy: Assessing the Man and His Legacy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), eds. Paul Kengor and Peter Schweizer, 41-42; M. Stephen Weatherford and Lorraine M. McDonnell, “Ideology and Economic Policy”, in *Looking Back on the Reagan Presidency* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), ed. Larry Berman, 148-151; and Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 87-91.

<sup>80</sup>Conlan and Posner, “A Solution for all Seasons”, 181, 183.

<sup>81</sup>W. Elliot Brownlee, *Federal Taxation in America: A Short History* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 148.

<sup>82</sup>*ibid.*, 217-218. For more on taxes and deficits during the presidencies of Reagan and Bush, consult: Morgan, *The Age of Deficits*, 76-121, 206-249; and Brownlee, *Federal Taxation in America*, 147-177, 217-248. For more on Bush’s tax rhetoric, refer to: Mark A. Smith, *The Right Talk: How Conservatives Transformed the Great Society Into the Economic Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 145-148, 174-175.

In terms of ideology, some, like Waddan, maintain that Reagan was more ideological than Bush.<sup>83</sup> Others, like historian Nelson Lichtenstein, argue that ideology formed part of the core of Bush's entire domestic policy.<sup>84</sup> Although both consider Bush to have posed a greater threat to the New Deal legacy, it is important to acknowledge how four-party politics hindered Reagan. During the Reagan presidency, conservatives were split between the Democratic and Republican parties, instead of united in a single party. Bush, on the other hand, had a congressional Republican Party that was controlled by conservatives, and became increasingly so throughout his two terms. Yet both made an effort to use the presidency as a way to strengthen the GOP.<sup>85</sup>

When comparing Bush to Reagan, political scientist Stephen Skowronek's argument sits alongside Barnes. Skowronek regards Bush as an "orthodox innovator" who operated within the dominant conservative regime that began with the Reagan presidency.<sup>86</sup> And when compared to Reagan and Clinton, Bush had "neither the repudiative authority of a Ronald Reagan nor the mongrel license of a Bill Clinton [via preemption]. In contrast to both of these, he crafted a political stance that renounced flexibility in the name of commitment".<sup>87</sup> A stance that Skowronek calls "Reagan Plus" and moreover,

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<sup>83</sup>Waddan, "Bush and Big Government Conservatism", 167.

<sup>84</sup>Lichtenstien, "Ideology and Interest on the Social Policy Home Front", 169-198.

<sup>85</sup>For more on Bush, Reagan and party building, consider: Sidney M. Milkis and Jesse H. Rhodes, "George W. Bush, the Republican Party, and the 'New' American Party System", *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (September 2007): 461-488, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20446498> (accessed 11 July 2014). For more on presidents and party building, refer to: Daniel J. Galvin, *Presidential Party Building: Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>86</sup>Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 132-149. However, others such as Curt Nichols and Adam S. Myers, posit that Reagan's reconstruction was not as successful as Skowronek states is the case, some success yes, but the entrenched welfare state "might make reconstructive failure more likely". For more, refer to: Curt Nichols and Adam S. Myers, "Exploiting the Opportunity for Reconstructive Leadership: Presidential Responses to Enervated Political Regimes" *American Politics Research* 38, no. 5 [19 May 2010]: 809-819, 829-830, <http://apr.sagepub.com/content/38/5/806> (accessed 27 January 2014).

<sup>87</sup>Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*, 133-134. However, in terms of the War on Terror, Gerard N. Magliocca considers Bush's actions to challenge the courts to have been reconstructive. For

hardly indifferent to the Reagan orthodoxy: On matters of taxation, defense, regulation, and family values the stand is ironclad. . . . however, compassionate conservatism was more than a simple return to orthodoxy. Among other things, Bush has added federally supported education programs, prescription-drug entitlements, faith-based welfare provisions . . . [as well as] a seemingly progressive initiative to “save” Social Security, and a moderate proposal for immigration reform. . . . In this, Bush did not offer a different order of things than Reagan had promised; rather, he has suggested the possibility of a higher ordering of those same values.<sup>88</sup>

However, Reagan’s most important contribution was his rhetoric, which both challenged and ended the liberal dominance as the prevailing political narrative – but did not challenge the New Deal state.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, a GOP congressional majority in the post-1994 four-party dynamic also enabled Bush to achieve more legislative success than Reagan.<sup>90</sup>

On the other hand, some like political scientist Nicol C. Rae, posit the idea that the Bush presidency may signify the end of the dominant conservative regime articulated by Skowronek – making Bush more in the line with Jimmy Carter and Herbert Hoover as a disjunctive president rather than an orthodox innovator, and ending “the Age of Reagan”.<sup>91</sup>

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more, see: Gerard N. Magliocca, “George W. Bush in Political Time: The Janus Presidency”, *Law & Social Inquiry* 34, no.2 [Spring 2009]: 483-486, [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-4469.2009.01153.x/pdf](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-4469.2009.01153.x/pdf) (accessed 25 January 2014).

<sup>88</sup>Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*, 134-135.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 98; and also Milkis and Rhodes, “George W. Bush, the Republican Party, and the ‘New’ American Party System”, 465.

<sup>90</sup>Genovese, Belt and Lammers, *The President and Domestic Policy*, 18-19, 25-27, 100-111, 127-135, 347-350, 360-364; and Richard S. Conley, “The Legislative Presidency in Political Time: Unified Government, Divided Government, and Presidential Leverage in Congress”, in *Rivals for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), ed. James A. Thurber, 164-171, 178.

<sup>91</sup>Nicol C. Rae, “The Bush Presidency in Historical Context: The Limitations of the Partisan Presidency”, in *Ambition and Division: Legacies of the George W. Bush Presidency* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), ed. Steven E. Schier, 33-35. Another is Matthew Laing, who argues that Obama attempted to create his own reconstructive political alignment after the Bush presidency, in much the same way as Reagan did during his presidency. For more, consult: Matthew Laing, “Towards a Pragmatic Presidency? Exploring the Waning of Political Time”, *Polity* 44, no. 2 [April 2012]: 252-254, <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/polity/journal/v44/n2/abs/pol201124a.html> (accessed 27 January 2014). That may be the case, but if it was, then Obama’s attempt – to this point – has not succeeded. For more on Bush and the end of “the Age of Reagan”, see: Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 454-458; Morgan, *The Age of Deficits*, 247; or for more on Bush and the end of modern conservatism, see: Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern Conservatism*, 207-217, 256.

Others like politics scholar Jon Herbert support Skowronek's overall argument.<sup>92</sup> Yet social scientists Katherine Newman and Elisabeth Jacobs, also argue that the Bush tax cuts were continuing the conservative Republican politics of disjunction in order to "revers[e] the legacy of the New Deal, rolling back government efforts at social engineering wherever possible".<sup>93</sup>

Nonetheless, as Skowronek illustrates, Bush's compassionate conservatism and opportunity society went beyond mere rhetoric by using government as a means for conservative policymaking, with the aim of forging a conservative Republican electoral coalition that could rival its New Deal order precursor.<sup>94</sup>

### **Bush, Big Government Conservatism and the Quest for a New Majority**

Kevin Phillips, in *The Emerging Republican Majority*, states: "the election of Richard M. Nixon as President of the United States in November, 1968, bespoke the end of the New Deal Democratic hegemony and the beginning of a new era in American politics".<sup>95</sup> This, however, did not come to fruition.<sup>96</sup> What is more apt is the analysis of Richard

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<sup>92</sup>Yet Hebert pays more "attention to the need for coalition building" than Skowronek does. For more, see: Jon Herbert, "The Struggles of an 'Orthodox Innovator'", in *Crisis of Conservatism? The Republican Party, the Conservative Movement, & American Politics After Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), eds. Joel D. Aberbach and Gillian Peele, 151-177.

<sup>93</sup>For more, consult: Katherine S. Newman and Elisabeth S. Jacobs, *Who Cares? Public Ambivalence and Government Activism from the New Deal to the Second Gilded Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 4, 9, 113, 121, 133. The quote can be found on page 4.

<sup>94</sup>Sidney Milkis and Jesse Rhodes share a similar view; Milkis and Rhodes, "George W. Bush, the Republican Party, and the 'New' American Party System", 468, 470-471.

<sup>95</sup>Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1970), 25. This combined Nixon's vote with that of southern Democrat George Wallace [by way of the American Independent Party] – both of which Phillips argues was a vote against "Democratic liberalism". Although Phillips worked for the Nixon administration, he, much like Pat Buchanan, is not a supporter of George W. Bush (nor that of the Bush family dynasty), including "Texanomics" and "compassionate conservatism". For more, see: Kevin P. Phillips, *American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune, and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush* (New York: Viking, 2004), 111-148.

<sup>96</sup>Phillips almost opted to call the book by a different name, "The Emerging Conservative Majority". For more, consult: Kevin P. Phillips, *Post-Conservative America: People, Politics & Ideology in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 53. For more on Nixon and his attempt to build a new majority, see: Robert

Scammon and Ben Wattenberg in *The Real Majority* where they argue a majority of Americans sat in the centre, with a combination of economic liberalism and social conservatism.<sup>97</sup> Whilst Phillips agrees with the thesis of Scammon and Wattenberg, he also went on to argue in *Post-Conservative America* that the Republican move away from economic liberalism during the first Reagan administration – which differed from Nixon – was too radical, especially when combined with social conservatism, to become the New Majority party.<sup>98</sup>

Bush, depending on one's perspective, either attempted to challenge Phillips' argument with a combination of economic and social conservatism that was *more* radical than Reagan's, or he used a mix of economic liberalism and social conservatism that attempted to corroborate Scammon and Wattenberg's thesis.

What Bush was able to benefit from had eluded the GOP since the first two years of the Eisenhower presidency, 1953-1954, control of both the presidency and Congress. More importantly, however, he attempted to re-establish the GOP as the dominant party, which was previously the case in 1928 with Herbert Hoover's presidential election – lost after Democrats won a slim House majority after the 1930 midterm elections, and further buttressed with Franklin Roosevelt's defeat of Hoover in 1932.<sup>99</sup> Such an opportunity was

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

<sup>97</sup>Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Real Majority* (1970; repr., New York: Primus, 1992), the new 1992 introduction, 72-81, 279-305.

<sup>98</sup>Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*. Phillips also worries that Bush and extreme social conservatism may turn the party into a "Republican Theocracy". For more, consult: Kevin P. Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking, 2006), 208-217, 232-250, 348, 353-357. For more on the growing influence of social conservatism within the GOP, consider: Ryan Sager, *The Elephant in the Room: Evangelicals, Libertarians, and the Battle to Control the Republican Party* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2006); as well as Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Right Nation*, 262-264, 308-312.

<sup>99</sup>For a more in-depth analysis on how the Republican Party tried to overcome Democrats as the majority party, refer to: Robert Mason, *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan*

partially accomplished once the GOP won control of Congress in the 2002 midterm elections, and gained momentum with Bush's re-election in 2004, but was done away with when Democrats won control of Congress in the 2006 midterm elections.<sup>100</sup> His attempt at a new majority centred on expanding support for the GOP via "compassionate conservatism" and "the opportunity society" – which were also referred to as big government conservatism.<sup>101</sup>

Conservative political scientist Andrew Busch highlights how Bush's domestic record was successful, but the nature of its success is up for debate. Although the successes and failures varied on the partisan scale (high, moderate, low), Busch concludes that "In the end, while not devoid of significant victories, compassionate conservatism failed to fundamentally transform the nation's domestic policy or its politics as Bush had hoped. Instead, Bush appears fated to have served as merely a transitional president".<sup>102</sup> However,

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(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); as well as Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, "The Ongoing Republican Search for a New Majority since 1980", in *Seeking a New Majority: The Republican Party and American Politics, 1960-1980* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2013), eds. Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, 213-227.

<sup>100</sup>For more, see: Philip Davies, "A New Republican Majority"? in *Right On? Political Change and Continuity in George W. Bush's America* (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2006), eds. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies, 184-203; Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Right Nation*, 400-414; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 280-289; and Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 440-449. Furthermore, political scientist Andrew Taylor considers Bush's attempt to turn the GOP into the majority party was a futile attempt to build upon the party's strength as "a ruling party"; for more, consult: Andrew J. Taylor, *Elephant's Edge: The Republicans as a Ruling Party* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005). I, however, consider Taylor to be giving the GOP too much credit on domestic policy. The difference between Bush and congressional Republicans in key domestic areas, such as immigration, social security and NCLB are significant aspects that cannot be overlooked. This will even put the ruling party status in jeopardy. Although Taylor combines Republican success at the local, state and federal levels, whereas in this thesis I focus mainly on the federal level.

<sup>101</sup>In this section I will largely focus on compassionate conservatism. Refer back to the previous two sections for more on the opportunity society, also see: Waddan, "Bush and Big Government Conservatism", 169-172. For more on compassionate conservatism, consider: Marvin N. Olasky, *Compassionate Conservatism: What It Is, What It Does, and How It Can Transform America* (New York: Free Press, 2000).

<sup>102</sup>Andrew E. Busch, "George W. Bush's Domestic Policy Agenda", in *Testing the Limits: George W. Bush and the Imperial Presidency* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), eds. Mark J. Rozell and Gleaves Whitney, 66-67. For an early appraisal of Bush's compassionate conservatism up to 2003, consult: Gary Mucciaroni and Paul J. Quirk, "Deliberations of a 'Compassionate Conservative'", in *The George W. Bush Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects* (Washington, DC: GQ Press, 2004), eds. Colin Campbell and Bert A. Rockman, 158-190.



no matter one's outlook on Bush, his tax cuts – especially the 2001 tax cuts – have left a lasting legacy; a way to starve the beast of big government,<sup>103</sup> an outlook that is strongly supported amongst the conservative elite<sup>104</sup> as a way to confront the New Deal legacy.<sup>105</sup>

One possible transition is for conservative Republicans to embrace expanding government's influence to enforce the concept of *individual responsibility* in both economic and cultural spheres. Instances of joint support amongst Bush and congressional Republicans included two tax cuts, 2001 and 2003, and on socio-cultural issues, such as a partial birth abortion ban, restricting embryonic stem cell research and the right to life debate in the Terri Schiavo affair. Yet he was unsuccessful in winning congressional conservative support for more government as a way to counter big government liberalism – as well as supporting immigration reform to broaden the GOP's electoral appeal to Hispanics, which is something that has eluded Republicans overall,<sup>106</sup> with Texas serving as an exception to the rule.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Waddan, "Bush and Big Government Conservatism", 172-173; and Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 436-438. Whether or not this is sound fiscal policy is another question entirely; Bartlett, *Imposter*, 157-167; and Michael J. New, "Starve the Beast: A Further Examination", *Cato Journal* 29, no.3 (Fall 2009): 487-495, <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/cato-journal/2009/11/cj29n3-7.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2015).

<sup>104</sup>For more, see: McCarthy, "The Policy Effects of Political Polarization", 231-232; and Catherine E. Rudder, "The Politics of Taxing and Spending in Congress: Ideas, Strategy, and Policy", in *Congress Reconsidered*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005), eds. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, 329-335.

<sup>105</sup>For more, consider: Hacker and Pierson, *Off Center*, 45-93, 103-104, 112-116; and Paul Krugman, "Starve the Beast: Fiscal Calamity is the GOP's Plan to Shrink Government", *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 23 February 2010, <http://www.post-gazette.com/opinion/Op-Ed/2010/02/23/Paul-Krugman-Starve-the-beast-Fiscal-calamity-is-the-GOP-s-plan-to-shrink-government/stories/201002230182> (accessed 7 July 2015).

<sup>106</sup>For more on the Republican Party and immigration, see: Andrew Wroe, *The Republican Party and Immigration Politics: From Proposition 187 to George W. Bush* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>107</sup>For some examples of Hispanic support for Bush, and current the rate of Hispanic support for the GOP, see the following Gallup Polls: Andrew Dugan, "Texan Hispanics Tilt Democratic, but State Likely to Stay Red", 7 February 2014, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/167339/texan-hispanics-tilt-democratic-state-likely-stay-red.aspx> (accessed 7 February 2014); Frank Newport, "Bush Job Approval Rating: Little Difference Among Whites, Hispanics", 29 June 2007, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28009/Bush-Job-Approval-Rating-Little-Difference-Among-Whites-Hispanics.aspx> (accessed 8 February 2014); and Lydia Saad, "Minority Reports: The Bush Presidency", 25 June 2002, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/6277/Minority-Reports-Bush-Presidency.aspx> (accessed 8 February 2014).

Aside from Busch, Hebert is another who acknowledges that “Bush’s particular brand of conservatism, combining “the ownership society” and “compassionate conservatism,” involved ideological contradictions that the maturing conservative movement could not absorb”.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, Bush’s attempt to build a new GOP majority followed in the mistakes of the Republican controlled Congress during the Clinton presidency. Both misread electoral successes as a mandate for their political agendas, but Bush’s big government conservatism fractured the Republican Party, unlike the GOP Congress in the mid to late 1990s.<sup>109</sup>

Although I consider Bush to be a conservative Republican, his conservatism, which has been influenced by his experience as Governor of Texas,<sup>110</sup> embraced ways to expand the GOP appeal to Hispanics, many of whom tend to be more economically liberal and socially conservative, especially on the abortion issue.<sup>111</sup> Thus their views fit into Scammon and Wattenberg’s thesis. Bush’s attempt at immigration reform would have helped to win over more Hispanic support to the GOP, but this notion does not currently exist amongst congressional conservative Republicans.<sup>112</sup> This impasse was an example of four-party

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<sup>108</sup>Herbert, “The Struggles of an ‘Orthodox Innovator’”, 169-170.

<sup>109</sup>Mason and Morgan, “The Ongoing Republican Search for a New Majority since 1980”.

<sup>110</sup>For more on Bush and Texas (southern) conservatism, refer to: Michael Lind, *Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Earl Black and Merle Black, *Divided America: The Ferocious Power Struggle in American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2008), 81-91; 268-269; as well as Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Right Nation*, 131-150, 262-264.

<sup>111</sup>For more, refer to: Paul Taylor, Mark Hugo Lopez, Jessica Martínez and Gabriel Velasco, “When Labels Don’t Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity”, Pew [Research] Hispanic Center, 4 April 2012, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/04/v-politics-values-and-religion/> (accessed 13 February 2014).

<sup>112</sup>For more on Bush’s failed attempt on immigration reform, consider: Herbert, “The Struggles of an ‘Orthodox Innovator’”, 162-165; Busch, “George W. Bush’s Policy Agenda”, 59-60; and Wroe, *The Republican Party and Immigration Politics*, 182-217. However, not all hope is lost. For more on the potential inroads the GOP can make with Hispanics, see: Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Right Nation*, 238-242; Thomas Byrne Edsall, *Building Red America: The New Conservative Coalition and the Drive for Permanent Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 218-221; and Taylor, *Elephant’s Edge*, 9-11, 35, 40-41, 155, 224-228.

politics, where Bush's position was to the left of his congressional party.<sup>113</sup> This view has carried over to the Obama presidency, especially after the GOP won control of the House in the 2010 midterm elections.<sup>114</sup> This is part of the divide that currently exists within four-party politics, which is especially true of congressional conservative Republicans who reside in the old Confederate States of America where the Hispanic population is not yet at the same level as California or Texas,<sup>115</sup> and still rely on the 'angry white male vote'.<sup>116</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter addresses the difficulties in how best to address entitlements and to utilise political advantages. A GOP that controlled both the presidency and Congress from 2003-2006 was grappling with how to accomplish such a feat. A unifying theme for conservative Republicanism has been what it opposes, rather than what unites its members. They are opposed to the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy, but are not united in how to confront it. It is easier to unite against a common foe like Bill Clinton or a Democratic controlled presidency and Congress, which allows them to assert their conservative position versus a "liberal" position. In four-party politics, it is far easier to label Democrats as liberals since on the whole they align to the left of the GOP - how *far* to the left is irrelevant.

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<sup>113</sup>Wroe, *The Republican Party and Immigration Politics*, 187-217; and David Plotke, "Moving Right? Bush's Decline and American Conservatism", *Dissent* 53, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 33-34, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/dissent/v053/53.3.plotke.pdf> (accessed 24 May 2014).

<sup>114</sup>However, when immigration is not a major election issue, as was the case in the 2010 Florida Senate election between Marco Rubio (R) and Charlie Crist (I), conservatives and Hispanics can find common cause; Ronald T. Libby, *Purging the Republican Party: Tea Party Campaigns and Elections* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 103-121. Nevertheless, it is important to note the Florida is home to many Cuban-Americans and they support the GOP more than any other Hispanic Demographic.

<sup>115</sup>For more on America's Hispanic population demographics, refer to: Anna Brown and Mark Hugo Lopez, "Mapping the Latino Population, By State, County and City", Pew Research [Center] Hispanic Trends Project, 29 August 2013, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/08/29/mapping-the-latino-population-by-state-county-and-city/> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>116</sup>Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Right Nation*, 250-253, 262-263; and Edsall, *Building Red America*, 39, 161-187.

However, when Democrats are in the minority, four-party politics takes on a different significance for the GOP. Within the party, whether it is between a Republican president and Congress, or the Senate and the House, the differences amongst them become magnified. And on issues where the Republican presidential and congressional parties were at odds, Bush's views placed him to the left of Congress.

Bush, however, was attempting to promote a conservative governing philosophy, but was criticised for championing big government conservatism instead of limited government conservatism. The trouble with this criticism is that many conservatives *also* support big government, as it gives them the power to uphold traditional moral values. Bush, along with the Gingrich and the GOP Congress during the 1990s, was far from perfect in his endeavour to use big government as a pragmatic approach. Yet conservatives have to come to terms with the reality that the American political system makes it difficult to achieve quick and radical change, in a way that is more feasible in a Parliamentary system. Furthermore, Tea Party Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress also failed to adapt to this reality, causing their own leadership problems as they attempted to mount a challenge against Barack Hussein Obama, as well as a Democratic Senate majority.

## **“Red Fascism”? Obama’s First Term: Healthcare, the Tea Party and the Role of Government**

*The younger generation probably doesn’t realize that the word socialism means and connotes a system that is profoundly un-American. Socialism has virtually disappeared from our national lexicon since the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) collapsed because of Ronald Reagan’s policies and the National Socialist (Nazi) Party was destroyed by the United States in World War II. . . . Socialism requires a totalitarian system – that gives the ruling gang the power to distribute the fruits of other people’s labor to its political pals. That is what is happening to the United States as President Obama proceeds with his goal of “Remaking America”.*

-Phyllis Schlafly<sup>1</sup>

Conservatives – both within and beyond Congress – contend that the Democrats, and especially President Barack Obama, are increasing the size of government and “Remaking America” into a socialist country that will cause the public to become even more dependent on government than ever before. Phyllis Schlafly’s comment exemplifies this contemporary belief that Obama’s presidential agenda will result in an even more socialised America.

Consideration must be given to how conservative rhetoric implies that Obama and Democratic policy initiatives are expanding the power of government, claiming it is un-American and a threat to America itself. This rhetoric accentuates that big government is America’s enemy in much the same way as the “Evil Empire” was during the Cold War, as well as the Nazis during WWII. Similar to the way America defended itself against both totalitarian foes, conservatives – especially in Congress – must resist many, if not all, Democratic initiatives because they represent big government liberalism. Conservative Republicans are continuing Reagan’s ideological battle against a foreign adversary, but this particular conflict is domestic – a continuation of their war against the New Deal and its

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<sup>1</sup>Phyllis Schlafly, “Obama Is Remaking America Into Socialism”, *Human Events*, 2 June 2009, <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=32095> (accessed 6 January 2011).

ongoing political legacy. Their strategy builds upon the conservative Republican theme that more taxation leads to less individual freedom and vice versa.

The conservative strategy attempts to revive a time in American history when Nazi fascism and Soviet communism were both regarded as one and the same, and were the main threat to America. It is, however, important to note that this phenomenon has a long history. This allegation was also made by conservatives during the Clinton administration. Yet the framework behind the claims has become more significant as part of conservative rhetoric when taking on Obama himself, especially with regards to his race and religion, as well as the implications for the New Deal legacy.<sup>2</sup>

Three questions this chapter will address are:

1. How important is the socialist label to contemporary conservative rhetoric?
2. How has the Tea Party intensified the conservative socialist critique since its emergence as a force in GOP politics?
3. To what extent is Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC) a principal GOP rhetorician of socialism?

Taxation is a theme interwoven into the above questions. Taxes played a vital role in the conservative opposition to the Affordable Care Act, the Tea Party and Medicare (entitlement) reform. The combination of the four is vital to the conservative Republican argument against big government – which they consider an assault against individual

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<sup>2</sup>For more on Obama, race and religion, consult: Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 68-70; Nicole Hemmer, “Shock Poll: Why Do So Many Republicans Think Obama Is a Socialist, a Muslim, or Even the Anti-Christ?” *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 March 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/0325/Shock-poll-Why-do-so-many-Republicans-think-Obama-is-a-socialist-a-Muslim-or-even-the-anti-Christ> (accessed 12 March 2013); as well as Christopher S. Parker and Matt A. Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 2, 7-9, 89, 95, 191-193, 197, 201, 209-210, 224, 253.

freedom via the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy. The conservative discourse against Obama and the Democratic Party is based on the premise that the growth of the American state is leading the country towards socialism, which it claims is turning America into a totalitarian state. The intent is provoke some fear, but mostly anger, toward Democratic ideals, as well as implying that the Republican alternative is the only way to save the country from this impending doom.

### **“Red Fascism”?**

A vital element to conservative rhetoric can be traced back to World War II and the early Cold War periods. According to historians Les Adler and Thomas Paterson, at that time “many Americans blurred the ideological differences between Communism and fascism and tended to believe that totalitarian methods overrode the role of ideology in shaping political forms”, an ideology labelled as “Red Fascism”.<sup>3</sup> I argue that the conservative elite employ these blurred differences to criticise Barack Obama and other Democrats on the size of government and the proper role it should play.<sup>4</sup> However, conservatives have adapted the “Red Fascism” described by Adler and Paterson to fit into their attack against Democrats, asserting that many share a similar ideology with socialism.

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<sup>3</sup>Les K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, “Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930’s – 1950’s”, *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (April 1970): 1046-1064, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1852269> (accessed 24 September 2011). The quote is from page 1049. However, historian Thomas R. Maddux disagrees with Adler’s and Paterson’s argument by asserting that whilst socialism and fascism had differences there was no mistaking the similarities of the Russians and Nazis in the 1930s, they were both anti-Democratic totalitarian dictatorships. For more on this argument, see: Thomas R. Maddux, “Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism: The American Image of Totalitarianism in the 1930s”, *Historian* 40 (November 1977): 85-103, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hisn.1977.40.issue-1/issuetoc> (accessed 27 November 2012).

<sup>4</sup>I consider the conservative elite to be a combination of those both inside and outside of Congress. Examples include individuals like Phyllis Schlafly, Newt Gingrich and Dick Armey, and periodicals such as the *National Review* and *Human Events*, as well as think tanks like the Cato Institute and Heritage Foundation.

One example is Jonah Goldberg, who is the senior editor of the *National Review* online. Launched by William F. Buckley in 1955, this magazine looked to unite conservatives of all stripes – libertarian, traditionalist and anti-communist – in an effort to launch the conservative revival as a legitimate alternative to the popular New Deal political order of the day. Goldberg states: “fascism, properly understood, is not a phenomenon of the right at all. Instead, it is, and always has been, a phenomenon of the left. This fact – an inconvenient truth if there ever was one – is obscured in our time by the equally mistaken belief that fascism and communism are opposites. In reality, they are closely related, historical competitors for the same constituents”.<sup>5</sup>

Goldberg goes on to speculate, “American Progressivism – the moralistic social crusade from which modern liberals proudly claim descent – is in some respects the major source of fascist ideas applied in Europe by Mussolini and Hitler. . . . The American fascist tradition is deeply bound up with the effort to “Europeanize” America and give it a “modern” state that can be harnessed to utopian ends”, which he labels as “liberal fascism”.<sup>6</sup> He also includes Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky in his analysis, as well as FDR, LBJ, Bill and Hillary Clinton, and Obama. He defines fascism as “a religion of the state”, one that “is *totalitarian* in that it views everything as political and holds that any action taken by the state is justified to achieve the common good”.<sup>7</sup> The latter remark makes it possible for Goldberg to further claim that there are “many common features among New Deal liberalism, Italian Fascism, and German National Socialism”.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 7.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 130. However, Goldberg also attacks “compassionate conservatism” as a form of “compassionate fascism”, yet this is only for George W. Bush’s efforts, as well as those who support similar policies, of pro-state “social conservative” policies, but not his attempt to privatise social security. For more,



Another example is Newt Gingrich, who builds on Goldberg’s definition of fascism as “a religion of the state” to bolster his claim that “in healthcare, the goal of the secular-socialist machine is to use the power of government to control America’s health decisions. This goal is both an ideological imperative that places the power of government over the rights of citizens and a raw power grab. It is a symptom of secular socialism’s creeping totalitarianism – a mindset completely opposed to historic American values”.<sup>9</sup> He also asserts: “This was their moment [Obama and the Democratic Party] to build another Great Society – a permanent expansion of the welfare state that would reduce ever more Americans into government dependence and bind them to the Democratic political machine”.<sup>10</sup>

In much the same way as Goldberg and Gingrich, political scientist John Freie argues that the conservative media doggedly alleged that Obama was an anti-American president, branding him as “a socialist, a Muslim, an elitist, a radical, and a racist . . . pursuing the same policies that Adolf Hitler pursued”. This strategy went unopposed by Obama and as a result was the leading message that shaped the opposition’s perception of him.<sup>11</sup> This belief was reinforced by conservative Republicans, such as Rep. Steve King (R-IA), claiming that the president was a “Democratic socialist”. According to historian Nicole Hemmer this

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consult pages 15, 395-405. This type of sentiment espoused by Goldberg is one problem of conservative rhetoric and the evolution of conservative Republicanism that will be mentioned in the thesis conclusion. Another example of the *National Review* using Goldberg’s logic is: Kevin D. Williamson, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Socialism* (Washington, DC: Regnery Press, 2011). The difference in Williamson’s argument is that he includes an updated attack against the ACA, comparing it to the NHS in the UK; chapter fifteen, pages 237-263. For a conservative argument that Obama has been a socialist his whole life, consult: Stanley Kurtz, *Radical-in-Chief: Barack Obama and the Untold Story of American Socialism* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2010).

<sup>9</sup>Newt Gingrich, *To Save America: Stopping Obama’s Secular-Socialist Machine* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2010), 92.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid.*, 86.

<sup>11</sup>John F. Freie, *The Making of the Postmodern Presidency: From Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011), 166.

“Over-the-top rhetoric also means the Republican Party will move even more right in the coming years. Politicians who betray a hint of moderation will face Tea Party challengers as formerly local races become national battles to purge the party of any but the most conservative”.<sup>12</sup>

Goldberg and Gingrich illustrate an evolution of the “Red Fascism” rhetoric that was covered in an article by Adler and Paterson. The moral implications from the 1930s to 1950s – as analysed by Adler and Paterson – revealed a rhetoric that was common in America. For example, Hebert Hoover in 1938 proclaimed: “I have visited many countries of totalitarian government – dictatorships, Fascists, Socialists, or Nazis. Their slogans are social conscience and social justice. But their outstanding characteristic is degradation of personal conscience”.<sup>13</sup> And even Harry Truman in 1947 declared: “There isn’t any difference in totalitarian states. I don’t care what you call them, Nazi, Communist or Fascist”.<sup>14</sup> Yet conservative rhetoric has evolved from that era, from a mostly economic message to one that now insists that liberal Democrats adhere to statism as a form of religious faith. This change in rhetoric alleges a moral argument which now includes both social and economic positions to be interchangeable as part of an all-encompassing premise.

Gingrich’s comments are important because his influence has been vital to conservative Republicanism in the last thirty years, starting with the Conservative

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<sup>12</sup>Hemmer, “Shock Poll”.

<sup>13</sup>Herbert Hoover, *Further Addresses upon the American Road, 1938-1940* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1940), 15.

<sup>14</sup>The quotation is from Adler and Patterson, “Red Fascism”, 1046. George W. Bush also made a similar remark regarding Al Qaida: “They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of fascism and Nazism and totalitarianism”; George W. Bush, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11”, 20 September 2001, compiled by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wolly, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=64731> (accessed 18 February 2014).

Opportunity Society in the House of Representatives, as well as his time as House Speaker from 1995 to 1998. Conservative Republicans now embody Gingrich's fight against big government. However, as this chapter will highlight, the current crop of conservatives are bolder in their attempt to demonise the liberal welfare state and replace it with one that is conservative, building on the themes of the Conservative Opportunity Society and the George W. Bush presidency. The current conservative Republican mantra pushes for a decrease of government power on economic issues, whilst calling for an increase of government control in social-moral issues, as well as arguing for the need to turn defined benefit entitlements into defined contribution entitlements (social security and Medicare). A key component of the conservative battle against the New Deal legacy is its opposition to national health care reform.

### **Health Care Reform**

*Obamacare, as we know, is the crown jewel of socialism. It is socialized medicine.*  
-Michele Bachmann<sup>15</sup>

Rep. Michele Bauchmann's (R-MN) comment highlights what many conservative Republicans thought of the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010, also known as Obamacare. They also considered the ACA to have added onto the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy – a legacy which includes social security and Medicare. The ACA expanded the oversight power of government, which is something conservatives refuse to support. Instead, they favour a free-market based health care system, regarding a national health care system to be a foreign and un-American, and implying it is a form of socialism.

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<sup>15</sup>Michele Bachmann, Thomas (Library of Congress), *Congressional Record*, 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, 19 January 2011, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/LegislativeData.php?&n=Record&c=112> (accessed 30 January 2015).

The expansion of government oversight over the American health care system is a battle conservative Republicans have been fighting since the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt. The conservative perspective regards the ACA to be yet another government programme which needs to be rolled back – albeit in a different manner than social security and Medicare. The longevity of both social security and Medicare helps both programmes maintain popularity with the American public in a way that the ACA does not. Therefore, any attempt at reforming social security and Medicare is aimed at reducing benefits and/or privatising the entitlement. But the ACA is not as revered as social security or Medicare, which is why it is an easier target for conservatives.<sup>16</sup> They focus on the outright repeal of the act, but are also willing to support legislation to purge its funding.<sup>17</sup> The rhetoric they employ has been consistent with the rhetoric of previous conservative Republican eras, and even with the passage of the ACA their rhetoric has not changed or decreased, but they now also face the task of battling the latest addition to the American welfare state.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>However, not even social security was initially revered and had to withstand a shaky beginning. For more, see: Daniel Béland, *Social Security: History from the New Deal to the Privatization Debate* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 99-101.

<sup>17</sup>For more, refer to: Russell Berman, “House Repeals Healthcare Law”, *The Hill*, 19 January 2011, <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/138897-house-votes-to-repeal-healthcare-law>; as well as Jennifer Haberkorn and Seung Min Kim, “House Votes to Repeal ‘Obamacare’ – Again”, *Politico*, 11 July 2012, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0712/78403.html>. This continued into the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, for more, see: Russell Berman, “House Conservative Call for a New Vote to Repeal Obamacare”, *The Hill* blog, 24 April 2013, <http://thehill.com/blogs/healthwatch/health-reform-implementation/295887-house-conservatives-call-for-new-vote-to-repeal-obamacare20130426>. On the other hand, any attempt by the House GOP leadership to offer any bill that amended and kept small parts of the ACA were scorned by many in the conservative elite, including the Tea Party. For more, see: Michael Catalini, “Explaining the GOP Split Over Repealing Obamacare”, *National Journal*, 30 April 2013, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/politics/explaining-the-gop-split-over-repealing-obamacare-20130426>. All of the above links were accessed 30 April 2013.

<sup>18</sup>This is a battle that is also ongoing at the state level; for more, refer to: James A. Morone, “Bipartisan Health Reform? Obamacare in the States”, *Issues in Governance Studies*, Brookings Institute, no. 64 (December 2013), <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/12/17-bipartisan-health-reform-obamacare-states> (accessed 17 January 2015); and “Current Status of State Medicaid Expansion Decisions”, *Kaiser Family Foundation*, 16 July 2015, <http://kff.org/health-reform/slide/current-status-of-the-medicaid-expansion-decision/> (accessed 17 July 2015).

Political scientist James Morone argues that Obama's health care reform achievement was not in the model of Harry Truman, who favoured a public single payer system, and was instead more in the line with Bill Clinton's failed attempt at national health care reform. However, none of this mattered to conservative Republicans who yet again used the rallying cry that national health care reform was a plot to advocate for socialised medicine.<sup>19</sup> Morone states that the ACA was a moderate Democratic vision for health care reform. "The signature move of the new Democrat, embraced by Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama, is to put aside the ambitious social insurance agenda; no more universal programs like Medicare . . . Instead, contemporary health reforms hunt for solutions that might lift the debate beyond partisanship and politics".<sup>20</sup>

However, there were important differences between the way Clinton and Obama approached health care reform; differences that enabled Obama to succeed where Clinton failed.<sup>21</sup> According to political scientist George Edwards, the differences between Clinton and Obama did not have to do with public opinion, but instead had to do with the differences in policy formation, handling special interest groups and working with Congress. Obama gave more policy control to Congress, focused the theme of health care reform on helping to improve the health care of those who were already insured, and worked with, not against, the "organized interests" involved on the issue, such as the health care industry, the AARP, the American Medical Association and the drug manufacturing industry. Clinton, on the other

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<sup>19</sup>James A. Morone, "Obama's Health Reform: The Managerial President and the Political Storm", in *The Obama Presidency: Promise and Performance* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), ed. William Crotty, 71-83.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 76. For more on this point, also consult: Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, *Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 67.

<sup>21</sup>Lawrence Jacobs made a bold assertion that Obama's health care reform was less radical than Clinton's; the comment was made on 17 April 2013 at the Rothermere American Institute, Oxford University, during the "Governing the U.S. in Polarized Times" conference.

hand, created more enemies – even within his own party – who were less inclined to support his initiative.<sup>22</sup>

What needs to be added to Morone’s argument is that the moderate Democratic option for health care reform is similar to moderate Republican proposals of the past, especially during the presidency of Richard Nixon and Mitt Romney – the 2012 GOP presidential candidate – when he was governor of Massachusetts.<sup>23</sup> According to health care policy expert Stuart Altman, who has advised Nixon, Clinton and Obama on health care policy issues, “both Romney and Obama borrowed from Nixon”.<sup>24</sup>

The Nixon plan, however, differed from the ACA by calling for an employer mandate, whereas the ACA emphasised an individual mandate. Moreover, the individual mandate was originally supported by the conservative elite, and was the brainchild of the Heritage Foundation, an influential conservative think tank.<sup>25</sup> Stuart Butler, a former social

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<sup>22</sup>George C. Edwards III, *Overreach: Leadership in the Obama Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 26-27, 51, 66, 72, 146, 152, 54-155. For more on the differences between Clinton’s and Obama’s health care reform strategies, consult: Jacob S. Hacker, “The Road to Somewhere: Why Health Reform Happened Or Why Political Scientists Who Write about Public Policy Shouldn’t Assume They Know How to Shape It”, *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 3 (September 2010): 863-867; The Staff of *The Washington Post*, *Landmark: The Inside Story of America’s New Health-Care Law and What It Means for Us All* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), 15-16, 50-51.

<sup>23</sup>For more on the similarities between the health care plans of Romney and Obama, consider: Hacker, “The Road to Somewhere”, 867, The Staff of *The Washington Post*, 69, 90-91; as well as Jacobs and Skocpol, *Health Care Reform and American Politics*, 6-7, 87, 90, 104.

<sup>24</sup>The comment was taken from: Jason Kane, “Conversation: Nixon, Obama and Universal Health Care”, PBS NewsHour, 5 January 2012, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/book-conversation-power-politics-and-universal-health-care/#.VaEBT9VOZyU> (accessed 15 July 2015). For more on Altman and health care reform, see: Stuart Altman, “Obama and Romney Health Plans: Both Borrowed from Richard Nixon”, *CNN*, 25 October 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/10/25/opinion/altman-romney-obama-health-care/> (accessed 15 July 2015); as well as Stuart Altman and David Shactman, *Power, Politics and Universal Health Care: The Inside Story of a Century-Long Battle* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2011).

<sup>25</sup>For more, refer to: Lee Edwards, *The Power of Ideas: The Heritage Foundation at 25 Years* (Ottawa, IL: Jameson Books, 1997); and Thomas Medvetz, *Think Tanks in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 38, 95, 100-015, 111, 115, 120, 124-129, 136, 173, 177-178. For more on the roles of think tanks during health care reform, consult: Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 167-180.

policy expert at the Heritage helped devise the idea for the individual mandate in 1989.<sup>26</sup> Heritage supported this mandate as the preferable alternative to the Clinton health care reform plan, which supported an employer mandate.<sup>27</sup> However, Butler argued that the “Heritage Foundation did not invent the individual mandate”, nor did its mandate form the centrepiece of the ACA.<sup>28</sup> Whilst the latter is true, the Heritage Foundation (and Butler), did invent the concept.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the idea of universal coverage encompassed a concept similar to the Heritage Foundation, the Clinton health care reform plan, and the ACA as well as Nixon’s national health reform plan of 1973 and 1974.<sup>30</sup> The employer mandate was initially supported as a market friendly alternative to a single-payer health care system. The individual mandate, however, was also devised as a better alternative to both,<sup>31</sup> and was supported by Heritage as well as by many in the GOP when national health care reform was believed to be inevitable. Yet with over forty years of failure to achieve national health care reform, the individual mandate became the fall-back plan for Democrats. And

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<sup>26</sup>Stuart M. Butler, “Assuring Affordable Health Care for All Americans”, *The Heritage Lectures*, Heritage Foundation, no. 218 (October 1989), <http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/assuring-affordable-health-care-for-all-americans> (accessed 15 July 2015), as well as Stuart M. Butler and Edmund F. Haislmaier, eds., *A National Health Care System for America* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 1989), <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/1989/a-national-health-system-for-america> (accessed 15 July 2015).

<sup>27</sup>Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 140-147.

<sup>28</sup>Stuart M. Butler, “Don’t Blame Heritage for ObamaCare Mandate”, *USA Today*, 6 February 2012, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/story/2012-02-03/health-individual-mandate-reform-heritage/52951140/1> (accessed 15 July 2015).

<sup>29</sup>For more, consider: Michael Cooper, “Conservatives Sowed the Idea of Health Care Mandate, Only to Spurn It Later”, *New York Times*, 14 February 2012, [www.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/health/policy/health-care-mandate-was-first-backed-by-conservatives.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/health/policy/health-care-mandate-was-first-backed-by-conservatives.html) (accessed 15 July 2015); James Taranto, “Heritage Rewrites History”, *Wall Street Journal*, 8 February 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000142405297020436940457721161144786448> (accessed 15 July 2015); and Avik Roy, “The Tortuous History of Conservatives and the Individual Mandate”, *Forbes*, 7 February 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/theapothecary/2012/02/07/the-tortuous-conservative-history-of-the-individual-mandate/> (accessed 15 July 2015).

<sup>30</sup>Roy, “The Tortuous History of Conservatives and the Individual Mandate”; and Jill Quadango, “Right-Wing Conspiracy? Socialist Plot? The Origins of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act”, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 39, no. 1 (February 2014): 35-56, <http://jhppl.dukejournals.org/content/39/1/35.full.pdf+html> (accessed 17 January 2015).

<sup>31</sup>Quadango, “Right-Wing Conspiracy”, 38-39; and Cooper, “Conservatives Sowed the Idea of Health Care Mandate, Only to Spurn It Later”.

conservative Republicans were unwilling to help Democrats expand the welfare state – which resulted in their opposing a plan that many originally supported.<sup>32</sup> This was the case for Newt Gingrich, as well as others amongst the conservative elite, including Butler and the Heritage Foundation.<sup>33</sup>

Although a change of mind is possible, conservative Republican opposition to any expansion of the New Deal legacy runs deep. Furthermore, the Heritage Foundation was founded in 1973 to support conservative Republicans in their efforts to overcome liberalism,<sup>34</sup> not propose a policy that would serve as major legislative achievement for a Democratic president. And the Heritage Foundation’s stance is unlikely to change anytime soon with Jim DeMint as its president.

The change in the GOP structure has made any moderate attempt for national health care reform too liberal for any conservative Republican, and with conservatives dominating the congressional wing of the party, Obama had little hope of winning any conservative support.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the increasing conservative bent in the GOP can even influence how academics regard issues. One example is Edwards, who interprets Obama’s first term, including health care reform, as having “advanced a large, liberal agenda”.<sup>36</sup> Others who share this view include political scientist Stanley Renshon and the conservative academic

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<sup>32</sup>For more on this point, see: Ezra Klein, “Unpopular Mandate”, *New Yorker*, 25 June 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/06/25/unpopular-mandate> (accessed 15 July 2015).

<sup>33</sup>Roy, “The Tortuous History of Conservatives and the Individual Mandate”; Taranto, “Heritage Rewrites History”; Cooper, “Conservatives Sowed the Idea of Health Care Mandate, Only to Spurn It Later”; and Conor Friedersdorf, “Newt Gingrich Supported an Individual Mandate as Recently as May 2009”, *The Atlantic*, 30 January 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/01/newt-gingrich-supported-an-individual-mandate-as-recently-as-may-2009/252233/> (accessed 15 July 2015).

<sup>34</sup>Medvetz, *Think Tanks in America*, 100-105, 115-116; Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, 53-55, 152, 206; and Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*.

<sup>35</sup>Nonetheless, Obama was determined to reach out to the GOP in the hope of passing a health care reform bill that was truly bipartisan. For more on this point, see: Edwards, *Overreach*, 141-143, 156.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 180.



Andrew Busch.<sup>37</sup> Busch made a bold assertion about the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress – “a liberal Congress [that] gave a liberal president more or less what he wanted”, in large part because it was “a solidly liberal Congress”.<sup>38</sup>

Obama has acted as a magnet for conservative Republicans, uniting them in opposition against many of his achievements – especially in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress – such as ACA, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act of 2010, and the American Recover and Investment Act of 2009. I am not suggesting that Obama’s first term did not advance the liberal agenda, I believe it did but to a lesser degree than what Edwards and Busch suggest. Overall, I believe his first term advanced a centrist agenda, with many of his policies, such as health care reform and the stimulus package, supported by liberals.<sup>39</sup> Yet this does not mean that because policies have liberal support they also uphold bold liberal ideals,<sup>40</sup> even if some, like journalist Jonathan Alter, support the notion that the passage of ACA put “Barack

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<sup>37</sup>Stanley A. Renshon, *Barack Obama and the Politics of Redemption* (New York: Rutledge, 2012), 132-134; Andrew E. Busch, “President Obama and Congress: Deference, Disinterest, or Collusion?” in *The Obama Presidency in the Constitutional Order* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), eds. Carol McNamara and Melaine M. Marlowe, 71-89. For more conservative academic perspectives on Obama, consider: Charles R. Kesler, *I Am the Change: Barack Obama and the Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: Broadside Books, 2012); and James W. Ceaser, “The Great Repudiation”, *Claremont Review of Books* X, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 6-9, [http://www.claremont.org/repository/doclib/20101201\\_Fall2010CRBpdfCeaser.pdf](http://www.claremont.org/repository/doclib/20101201_Fall2010CRBpdfCeaser.pdf) (accessed 24 May 2013).

<sup>38</sup>Busch, “President Obama and Congress”, 86. Busch also considers Obama’s health care reform initiative to have been similar to George W. Bush’s attempt to reform social security. I argue that Obama had more in common with Bush’s successful reform of Medicare instead of his failed attempt on social security.

<sup>39</sup>However, Obama and the Democratic controlled 111<sup>th</sup> Congress had the most successful first two years of any new presidency since LBJ and the 89<sup>th</sup> Congress. For more, consult: John E. Owens, “Congressional Leadership in Obama’s First Two Years”, in *Obama in Office* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011), ed. James A. Thurber, 107-126.

<sup>40</sup>However, some liberals conclude that Obama is one of them, but his less than liberal policies are due to the political realities he has to confront. For more on this perspective, see: E. J. Dionne, *Our Divided Political Heart: The Battle for the American Idea in an Age of Discontent* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 11, 97-99; as well as Eric Alterman and Kevin Matterson, *The Cause: The Fight for American Liberalism from Franklin Roosevelt to Barack Obama* (New York: Viking, 2012), 459-460. Alterman and Matterson also consider Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton to have been liberals in their own way, whereas in his latest book Dionne also argues the same for Clinton and Obama. I differ from their views by arguing that the trend towards moderate Democratic presidents began with Carter and continued with both Clinton and Obama.

Obama . . . in the company of Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson . . . in terms of domestic achievement”.<sup>41</sup>

An important difference between Clinton and Obama on health care reform is that there were fewer moderate Republicans for Obama to court. This was due to the ongoing evolution of conservative Republicanism, which sees the congressional GOP ever more firmly under the influence of conservatives. This level of influence helps to dictate the GOP message, which according to political sociologist Theda Skocpol allows them to “denounce Democratic efforts as ultra-“liberal” even when those efforts were fairly moderate”.<sup>42</sup>

Another point to consider, as stated by political scientist Jacob Hacker, was the relative unity of Democrats who were willing to work with Obama.

No less consequential was the *composition* of the Democratic majority with which that Democratic president [Obama] was able to work. As recently as the fight over the Clinton health plan, the Democratic caucus featured a substantial southern conservative bloc that posed serious hurdles to intraparty agreement on health care. . . . This time after the loss of more seats in conservative Southern regions and the strengthening of the Democratic positions in more liberal regions, a more homogenous, though far from unified, caucus greeted the president.<sup>43</sup>

The South was a Democratic one-party region from the post-Reconstruction Era (1877) to 1964, and remained a Democratic congressional stronghold until the 1994 midterm elections.<sup>44</sup> Conservative Democrats have since switched allegiances to become conservative Republicans. And due to population shifts, the South is an increasingly important electoral factor for both presidential and House congressional elections.<sup>45</sup> It is also the most

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<sup>41</sup>Jonathan Alter, *The Promise: President Obama, Year One* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011), 433.

<sup>42</sup>Theda Skocpol, with commentaries by Larry M. Bartels, Mickey Edwards and Suzanne Mettler, *Obama and America's Political Future* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 29.

<sup>43</sup>Hacker, “The Road to Somewhere”, 863.

<sup>44</sup>Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>45</sup>Earl Black and Merle Black, *Divided America: The Ferocious Power Struggle in American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2008), 62.

conservative region in America, as well as the most religious.<sup>46</sup> Even though the issue of race sparked the exodus of southern conservatives to the GOP, shared social values have kept them loyal to the party.<sup>47</sup>

Due to the vast ideological divide amongst the parties, Obama's first term's (as well as his second thus far) domestic agenda was extremely partisan.<sup>48</sup> Although the rise in partisanship started well before the Obama presidency, it has gotten much worse during his presidency<sup>49</sup> and has given way to hyperpartisanship.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, in 1950 the American Political Science Association called for the political parties to be *less* ideologically harmonious as a way to offer the public *more* choice amongst opposing platforms and

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<sup>46</sup>Glenn Feldman, "Status Quo Society, Rope of Religion, and New Racism", in *Politics and Religion in the White South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), ed. Glenn Feldman, 288-289. For more on race, religion and politics in the South, see: Lyman A. Kellstedt et al., "The Soul of the South: Religion and Southern Politics in the Twenty-first Century", in *The New Politics of the Old South: An Introduction to Southern Politics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), eds. Charles S. Bullock III and Mark J. Rozell, 301-320; and Feldman, "Status Quo Society, Rope of Religion, and New Racism"; and J. David Woodward, *The New Southern Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 131-181, 185-227.

<sup>47</sup>David Lublin, *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), xvi-xvii. For more on the historical significance of race on southern politics, refer to: Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, new ed. (1949; repr., Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Alexander P. Lamis, *The Two-Party South*, 2<sup>nd</sup> exp. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Richard K. Scher, *Politics in the New South: Republicanism, Race and Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997); Black and Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans*; and Joseph E. Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>48</sup>For more, see: Richard M. Skinner, "Barack Obama and the Partisan Presidency: Four More Years?" *Society* 49, no. 5 (September 2012): 423-429, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12115-012-9577-1> (accessed 17 January 2015); George C. Edwards III, "Obama's Burden: Governing in Polarized Times", in *Obama's Washington: Political Leadership in a Partisan Era* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2014), ed. Clodagh Harrington, 41-70; and Christopher H. Foreman, Jr., "Ambition, Necessity, and Polarization in the Obama Domestic Agenda", in *The Obama Presidency: Appraisals and Prospects* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2012), eds. Bert A. Rockman, Andrew Rudalevige and Colin Campbell, 244-267.

<sup>49</sup>For more how this relates to presidential support in Congress, refer to: Edwards, "Obama's Burden: Governing in Polarized Times", 56-57; Matthew J. Dickinson, "The President and Congress", in *The Presidency and the Political System*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2014), ed. Michael Nelson, 412-417, 431-440; as well as Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 156-164.

<sup>50</sup>Barbara Sinclair, "The President and the Congressional Party Leadership in a Hyperpartisan Era", in *Rival for Power: Presidential-Congressional Relations*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), ed. James A. Thurber, 113-136.

policies.<sup>51</sup> Although the parties are without a doubt more ideologically opposed than was the case in 1950, it is worth asking if this level of partisanship is healthy for public policy and the American political system.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the hostility between the parties is at a level that has not been reached since the 1890s.<sup>53</sup>

The lack of bipartisanship on a regular basis made it vital for Democrats to first compromise amongst themselves before reaching out to Republicans. Even then, once a compromise was reached, conservative Republicans would still be in a position to gain further concessions in order to support a piece of legislation. This means the more conservative the GOP is, the more it will make concessions extremely difficult for Democrats, especially liberals, to accept.<sup>54</sup> This problem did not go away and, in fact,

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<sup>51</sup>“Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties”, *The American Political Science Review* 44, no. 3, part 2, supplement (September 1950), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/i333592> (accessed 13 March 2015).

<sup>52</sup>For more, consider: William A. Galston, “Can a Polarized Party System Be ‘Healthy’?” *Issues in Governance Studies*, Brookings Institute, no. 34 (April 2010), [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/4/polarization-galston/04\\_polarization\\_galston.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/4/polarization-galston/04_polarization_galston.pdf) (accessed 12 March 2015); David W. Brady, John Ferejohn and Laura Harbridge, “Polarization and Public Policy: A General Assessment”, in *Red and Blue Nation? Consequences and Corrections of America’s Polarized Politics*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), eds. Pietro S. Nivola and David W. Brady, 185-212; as well as Michael Barber and Nolan McCarthy, “Causes and Consequences of Polarization”, *Negotiating Agreement in Politics* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 2013), eds. Jane Mansbridge and Cathie Jo Martin, 19-53, [http://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/publications/MansbridgeTF\\_FinalDraft.pdf](http://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/publications/MansbridgeTF_FinalDraft.pdf) (accessed 12 February 2015).

<sup>53</sup>For more, see: David W. Brady and Hahrie C. Han, “Polarization Then and Now: A Historical Perspective” in *Red and Blue Nation? Characteristics and Causes of America’s Polarized Politics*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), eds. Pietro S. Nivola and David W. Brady, 119-151.

<sup>54</sup>The 2010 tax compromise is one example where this is the case. The Bush tax cuts were extended for two years, as well as an extension of unemployment benefits and a two percent social security payroll tax cut. Many liberals, as well as some conservatives, did not support this compromise. For more, see: Lori Montgomery, Shailagh Murray and William Branigin, “Obama Signs Bill to Extend Bush-era Tax Cuts for Two More Years”, *Washington Post*, 17 December 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/16/AR2010121606200.html> (accessed 21 May 2013); and The CNN Wire Staff, “Obama Signs Tax Deal Into Law”, *CNN*, 18 December 2010, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/12/17/tax.deal/index.html> (accessed 21 May 2013). Likewise, the fiscal cliff showdown during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress is an example where many House Tea Party conservatives were not willing to compromise. This point is further analysed later on in this chapter. For more, also see: Michael Espinoza, “Myth, Memory and the Reagan Legacy: Taxes and the GOP”, *49th Parallel*, Issue 31 (Spring 2013): 19-26, <http://www.49thparallel.bham.ac.uk/back/issue31/Espinoza.htm> (accessed 30 May 2013).

became much worse once the Tea Party element became part of the GOP – moving the party even further to the right.

### **The Tea Party and Republican Conservatism**

*I hope that commonsense patriots will join me in applauding the real heroes of this election year: the Tea Party Americans. In 2008, we were told that we had to “move beyond Reagan.” Well, some of us refused to believe that America chose big-government European-style socialism. American voters elected a politician who cloaked his agenda in the language of moderation. Once the mask was removed, Americans rejected his “fundamental transformation.” The Tea Party reminded us that Reaganism is still our foundation.*

-Sarah Palin<sup>55</sup>

Sarah Palin’s quotation underlines contemporary conservative rhetoric and its claim that the modern day GOP is still constructed in Reagan’s image.<sup>56</sup> What many Americans and conservatives view as some of the key elements of “Reaganism” include limited government and a strong national defence. A centrepiece of the conservative perspective on Reagan and limited government includes tax cuts, deregulation and the US economic revival of the 1980s – also known as Reaganomics, or supply-side economics.<sup>57</sup> The Tea Party emerged at the forefront in 2009 and in the 2010 midterm elections, albeit with mixed success. The 112<sup>th</sup> Congress saw many Tea Party Republicans who wanted to radically shrink government, but this was much easier said than done, for even if a member of Congress is elected to limit government, a congressman/woman is still expected to govern.

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<sup>55</sup>Sarah Palin, “The Midterms: Lessons Learned and the Way Forward”, 4 November 2010, *National Review Online*, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/252477/midterms-lessons-learned-and-way-forward-sarah-palin> (accessed 23 July 2014).

<sup>56</sup>For more, see: Ronald T. Libby, *Purging the Republican Party: Tea Party Campaigns and Elections* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 69-70.

<sup>57</sup>For an overly positive perspective on Reagan and supply-side economics in general, refer to: Brian Domitrovic, *Econoclasts: The Rebels Who Sparked the Supply-Side Revolution and Restored American Prosperity* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2009); however, for a more balanced perspective on the Reagan presidency and supply-side economics in the 1980s, consider: Iwan Morgan, *The Age of Deficits: Presidents and Unbalanced Budgets from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 82-121, 271; W. Elliot Brownlee, *Federal Taxation in America: A Short History* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 137, 142-143, 147-181; and Doug Rossinow, *The Reagan Years: A History of the 1980s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 32-35, 58-65, 84-100, 280-283.

However, given the extreme rhetoric touted by the Tea Party, it makes it extremely difficult to govern cooperatively and constructively when only the House of Representatives is under GOP control. What ensues is partisan gridlock that suits the needs of a minority party more than a majority party.<sup>58</sup> But what about a divided government? The government shutdown of a GOP controlled Congress versus President Clinton in 1995-1996 ended in political victory for the Democratic president. How could the GOP expect to fare any better when they controlled only the House in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress?<sup>59</sup>

Political scientist Arthur Cyr takes a different approach and states that the Tea Party is not part of the GOP but is instead a third party in coalition similar to the current Liberal Democrat and Conservative Party coalition government in the UK. However, whereas Liberal Democrats are a viable third party, the Tea Party is much weaker by comparison.<sup>60</sup> Although this is an interesting comparison, it misses the greater differences between the two. The Tea Party was much stronger in the sense that it was not elected to govern, whereas the Liberal Democrats entered into the coalition to provide stability and avoid a Conservative led minority government. This made Liberal Democrats more inclined to support the Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron more than the Tea Party supported House GOP Speaker John Boehner.<sup>61</sup> The Tea Party in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress also had no incentive to

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<sup>58</sup>Nolan McCarthy, Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 165-166, 175-186; Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 165-172; Sarah A. Binder, *Stalemate: Causes and Consequences of Legislative Gridlock* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); Donald C. Baumer and Howard J. Gold, *Parties, Polarization, and Democracy in the United States* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2010), 141-142; David W. Brady, John Ferejohn and Laurel Harbridge, "Polarization and Public Policy: A General Assessment" in *Red and Blue Nation? Consequences and Corrections of America's Polarized Politics*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), eds. Pietro S. Nivola and David W. Brady, 195-205.

<sup>59</sup>The same could be said for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.

<sup>60</sup>Arthur I. Cyr, "Third Parties and Political Dynamics in the UK and the US", in *The Legacy of the Crash: How the Financial Crisis Changed American and Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), ed. Terrance Casey, 139-158.

<sup>61</sup>The Tea Party's lack of unity behind Boehner will be analysed in more detail later on in this section.

support President Obama or the Democratic controlled Senate. The Tea Party, the antithesis of stability, wanted radical change, and the 2010 midterm election results became its claimed mandate for change.

Politics professor John White compares the 2010 midterm elections, not to the 1994 election, but to the midterm elections of 1938.<sup>62</sup> Similarities had to do with recession and economic uncertainty, as well as the GOP electoral comebacks after “Democratic landslides”. “The year 2010 marked the first time since 1938 that an incumbent party (Democrats) would lose more than sixty congressional seats”, results that signified the public demand for FDR and Obama to move away from big government liberalism.<sup>63</sup> Whereas the 1938 midterm elections proved only a setback to FDR and the New Deal order, how the 2010 midterms affect Obama and his party in the long-term has yet to be determined.<sup>64</sup> Whilst the Tea Party helped win enough House seats to give the GOP a majority, its impact on the Senate is mixed. The Tea Party did not help deliver a Senate majority in 2010, but it still helped to get more conservative members elected into the upper house.

Political scientists William Miller and Jeremy Walling argue that

Contrary to the predictions of many, the Tea Party had a clear impact on the 2010 elections. Whether it be by helping to unseat Democratic senators or forcing moderate Republican hopefuls to become more conservative in their beliefs, the Tea Party showed the potential to be a lasting political force within our nation’s politics. . . . When the more conservative, Tea Party-supported candidates proved victorious

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<sup>62</sup>John K. White, “Caught between Hope and History: Obama, Public Opinion, and the 2010 elections”, in *Barack Obama in the White House: Transforming America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), ed. Steven E. Schier, 43-62.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 46-48, 55-57. For an even a more historical backdrop, comparing Obama’s 2010 midterm setback to Lincoln’s in 1862, see: William D. Pederson, “Obama’s Lincoln: Image to Ideology”, in *The Obama Presidency: A Preliminary Assessment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), eds. Robert P. Watson, Jack Covarrubias, Tom Lansford and Douglas M. Brattebo, 37-50.

in primaries across the country, moderate Republicans realized that they had been stuck in the middle to lose.<sup>65</sup>

They go on to state that the Tea Party did not cost the GOP the Senate, even though they admit the movement cost the GOP Senate seats in Nevada, Delaware and Colorado. They conclude, however, that the only difference would have been in the size of their Senate minority, one that “would have been less conservative than the one we have today”.<sup>66</sup>

Political sociologist Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson echo this argument on the importance of the Tea Party moving the GOP further to the right.<sup>67</sup> Unlike Miller and Walling, they assert that the importance of the Tea Party in the 2010 midterms is debatable. Whilst more extreme conservatives were elected, the Tea Party GOP pickups, in the House and Senate, were mostly in Republican areas, not swing districts or states, which resulted in Republican defeats in winnable seats in areas such as New York, Connecticut, Colorado and Nevada.<sup>68</sup>

A larger minority would have been an asset to the GOP, especially to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) and House Speaker John Boehner (OH), but Tea Party Republicans and their congressional allies like Sen. Jim DeMint (SC) and Rep. Michelle Bachmann wanted to adhere to a more ideological approach that favoured extreme

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<sup>65</sup>William J. Miller and Jeremy D. Walling, “Tea Party Redux: Making Sense of the Midterm Senate Elections”, in *Tea Party Effects on 2010 U.S. Senate Elections: Stuck in the Middle to Lose* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), eds. William J. Miller and Jeremy D. Walling, 351.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 352. On this point, also consider: Charles S. Bullock III, “Conclusion: Evaluating Palin, the Tea Party, and DeMint Influences”, in *Key States, High Stakes: Sarah Palin, the Tea Party, and the 2010 elections* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), ed. Charles S. Bullock III, 217.

<sup>67</sup>Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 155-188. However, some, like political scientists Christopher Parker and Matt Barreto, consider the Tea Party to be more ‘reactionary conservative’ rather than ‘mainstream conservative’; for more, see: Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can’t Believe In*, 45-52. Also, consider: Edward Ashbee, “The Rise of the Tea Party Movement and American Governance”, in *Broken Government? American Politics in the Obama Era* (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2012), eds. Iwan Morgan and Phillip Davies, 170-173.

<sup>68</sup>Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 157-168. A similar viewpoint can also be found in Bullock, “Conclusion”, 215, 217, 223.



conservative tenets over helping the party leadership challenge the Obama administration and Senate Democrats.<sup>69</sup> In many regards, Tea Party Republicans were uncontrollable, especially considering Boehner's dilemma of having to contend with them as well as Obama and the Democratic Senate.<sup>70</sup> Geoffrey Kabaservice considers this strategy to be a *Rule and Ruin* approach that is hampering the ability of the GOP to function as a governing party.<sup>71</sup> He also notes that the latest evolution of conservative Republicanism now makes past conservative icons, such as Barry Goldwater and Reagan, too moderate for the Tea Party,<sup>72</sup> and made a similar comment about William F. Buckley.<sup>73</sup>

It is important to consider how the purity factor of conservative Republicanism is challenged once it achieves power. The Republican Congress during the Clinton administration and the middle four years of Republican control of the executive and legislative branches during the George W. Bush presidency are two relevant examples.<sup>74</sup> At times, both were criticized for abandoning conservative principles along the way. Many even question if the Bush administration was conservative at all. This was also true during the

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<sup>69</sup>Robert Draper, *Do Not Ask What Good We Do: Inside the U.S. House of Representatives* (New York: Free Press, 2012).

<sup>70</sup>For more, see: Walter J. Stone, L. Sandy Maisel and Trevor C. Lowman, "Boehner's Dilemma: A Tempest in a Tea Party?" In *The Parties Respond: Changes in American Parties and Campaigns*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), eds. Mark D. Brewer and L. Sandy Maisel, 213-235.

<sup>71</sup>Geoffrey Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). He also considered the Paul Ryan GOP Vice President Nomination the death nail of the GOP as a moderate party; Geoffrey Kabaservice, "Paul Ryan's V.P. Nomination Kills Off Moderate Republicanism For Good", *New Republic* blog, 12 August 2012, <http://www.newrepublic.com/blog/plank/106064/paul-ryans-vp-nomination-kills-moderate-republicanism-good> (15 April 2013).

<sup>72</sup>Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin*, 391, 395.

<sup>73</sup>Geoffrey Kabaservice, "Paul Ryan's V.P. Nomination Kills Off Moderate Republicanism For Good"; and Kabaservice, "What William F. Buckley Would Think of Today's GOP", *New Republic*, 2 April 2012, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/politics/102241/what-william-buckley-american-conservatism> (accessed 21 April 2013). Likewise, James Patterson made a similar remark about Robert Taft; James T. Patterson, "Why Taft was no Tea Party Icon", *New York Times*, 20 July 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/07/20/presidents-and-their-debts-fdr-to-bush/why-taft-was-no-tea-party-icon> (accessed 4 November 2013).

<sup>74</sup>It will be interesting to see how the GOP congressional majority will fare during the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Reagan administration, but those years are now looked upon as the ideal conservative blueprint – the achievement of Reaganomics via tax cuts, deregulation and robust economic growth.<sup>75</sup> However, Reagan’s disinterest in pursuing a social conservative agenda and his acceptance of raising taxes have been swept away and replaced with the notion that Reagan *was* the ideal conservative. Given the evolution of conservatism, Republicans such as Paul Ryan, Sen. Rand Paul (KY) and Jim DeMint *now* comprise the prototypical conservative.<sup>76</sup> Paul came to Congress as part of the Tea Party movement, and DeMint was very influential in helping to get Tea Party senators elected to Congress via his Senate Conservatives Fund, whose beneficiaries included Paul and others like Marco Rubio (FL).<sup>77</sup> Many, especially within the conservative elite, made the case that the Tea Party movement was a peoples’ movement, a form of populism.<sup>78</sup> But was this really the case?

Historian Charles Postel is one who does not believe that this perception of the Tea Party movement is accurate, arguing, “It is difficult, however, to trace Populist ancestry in the Tea Party because it belongs to a different branch on the tree of American politics. While pundits and media analysts may describe the Tea Party as populist, the Tea Parties call

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<sup>75</sup>For more, refer to: Espinoza, “Myth, Memory and the Reagan Legacy”.

<sup>76</sup>Scott Rasmussen and Doug Schoen, *Mad as Hell: How the Tea Party Movement Is Fundamentally Remaking Our Two-Party System* (New York: Harper, 2010), 191-192; Katie Zernike, *Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America* (New York: Times Books, 2010), 162-181; and Eliza Newlin Carney, “The Promise And Peril Of Jim DeMint”, *National Journal* (19 June 2010): 14, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 4 April 2013).

<sup>77</sup>Jim DeMint, *Now or Never: Saving America From Economic Collapse* (New York: Center Street, 2012), 209-214, 216-218; Bullock, “Conclusion”, 211-225; as well as Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 38. DeMint’s Senate Conservatives Fund gave the most financial support to Rubio at over \$390,000, whereas Paul received only slightly over \$39,000; Eliza Newlin Carney, “Spreading His Influence”, *National Journal* (19 June 2010): 5, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 4 April 2013). The amount of financial support to DeMint’s organisation illustrates how badly he wanted Rubio – who could possibly help broaden the GOP appeal to Hispanics – to win the vacant Senate seat over the centrist Republican Charlie Crist, who ended up running and losing against Rubio as an Independent.

<sup>78</sup>Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad as Hell*, 19-20; Dionne, *Our Divided Political Heart*, 191-192, 206; Charles Postel, “The Tea Party in Historical Perspective: A Conservative Response to a Crisis of Political Economy”, in *Steep: The Precipitous of the Tea Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), eds. Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost, 25-46; and Ashbee, “The Rise of the Tea Party Movement and American Governance”, 160-161, 163-164.

themselves conservatives”.<sup>79</sup> In upholding the conservative tradition, the Tea Party should be compared to previous conservative elements like the Liberty League, Robert Taft and Joe McCarthy and the John Birch Society – all of whom were staunch opponents of the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy – which Postel believes is best summarised as a movement that has recycled support for issues such as a return to a constitutional limited government and “The denunciation of a moderate president as a socialist tyrant”.<sup>80</sup>

Ironically, conservative pollsters Scott Ramussen and Doug Schoen agree with Postel that the Tea Party is “upholding the conservative tradition” although the tradition in their argument is one that focuses on mainstream conservatism, not the extremist right-wing examples Postel gives – which they consider to have been a hindrance, not an asset.<sup>81</sup> Ramussen and Schoen view the Tea Party’s conservatism as a form of “right-wing populism” that combines “economic conservatism, small-government libertarians, and social conservatism”. They also regard the Tea Party movement – not Reagan’s presidential election in 1980 nor even the 1994 GOP takeover of Congress – as the first time the three

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<sup>79</sup>Postel, “The Tea Party in Historical Perspective”, 29. Also see: Dionne, *Our Divided Political Heart*, 29-51.

<sup>80</sup>Postel, “The Tea Party in Historical Perspective”, 29-32. Right-wing populism, however, has elements that are considered to be on the “extreme right”, with the likes of the John Birch Society, Klu Klux Klan (KKK), Liberty League, McCarthyism and Neo-Nazis; for more, consider: Martin Durham, *White Rage: The Extreme Right and American Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007); Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995); Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000); and Arthur Goldwag, *The New Hate: A History of Fear and Loathing on the Populist Right* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012). For more on the John Birch Society, see: Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 56-66; Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 13-17, 54-55, 62-63, 77, 80, 94, 109-110, 114, 129, 136; Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 62-99; and Gregory L. Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 80-83, 102-105. For an example of the John Birch Society at a local level in Orange County, southern California, see: Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 34, 53, 56, 59-60, 70-71, 75-79, 87, 114, 127-129, 144-146, 218-223.

<sup>81</sup>Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad as Hell*, 75.

have united under one banner.<sup>82</sup> The difference in the two arguments is that Postel looks for the negative influences of the Tea Party, whilst Rasmussen and Schoen focus on the positive.<sup>83</sup> What is evident from both perspectives is how the mainstream and extreme conservative elements have been influenced by the Tea Party,<sup>84</sup> a view that some argue represents historian Richard Hofstadter's work on *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*.<sup>85</sup>

The importance of the Tea Party movement to the GOP was that it allowed for conservatism to regain the popularity it lost during the George W. Bush administration, due to the decrease in popularity of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well with the political defeat of losing control of Congress to Democrats after the 2006 midterm elections.<sup>86</sup>

However, the Tea Party movement would not have been as successful without the help of conservative organisations such as FreedomWorks,<sup>87</sup> as well as the conservative media,

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 115. However, E. J. Dionne disagrees with their argument, he considers the Reagan conservative coalition to be very similar to the Tea Party coalition. For more, see: Dionne, *Our Divided Political Heart*, 191.

<sup>83</sup>Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad as Hell*, 51. For more on conservative populism, consult: Dominic Sandbrook, *Mad as Hell: The Crisis of the 1970s and the Rise of the Populist Right* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012); Berlet and Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*; and Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 245-266.

<sup>84</sup>For a more comprehensive analysis, consult: Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*; Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*.

<sup>85</sup>Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*, 20-65; Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 77-82; Robert B. Horwitz, *America's Right: Anti-Establishment from Goldwater to the Tea Party* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 157-201; Clodagh Harrington, "Never Mind the Details: Here's the Tea Party", in *Issues in American Politics: Polarized Politics in the Age of Obama* (London: Routledge, 2013), ed. John Dumbrell, 122-123, 132; and Goldwag, *The New Hate*, 3-51. For more on "the paranoid style in American politics", consider: Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 94, 151; John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Why America is Different* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 348, 380; Sandbrook, *Mad as Hell*, 12, 344; Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 285; Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason*, 14; and especially, Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966).

<sup>86</sup>Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 5-10; and Dionne, *Our Divided Political Heart*, 247.

<sup>87</sup>For more on the importance of FreedomWorks to the Tea Party, consider: Dick Armey and Matt Kibbe, *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto* (New York: William Morrow, 2010); Ronald P. Formisano, *The Tea Party: A Brief History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 38, 67-70; Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 86-87, 104-106, 178; Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 33-48; as well as Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*, 195-197.

especially Fox News.<sup>88</sup> FreedomWorks was largely responsible for helping to organise the Tea Party message and Fox News was vital to its dissemination. The importance of FreedomWorks – at the time – was the role played by Dick Armey, who was also instrumental in composing the *Contract With America*, which served as a manifesto for the GOP to use against both Clinton and the Democratic controlled Congress.<sup>89</sup> However, Armey (and co-author Matt Kibbe) had a clear goal in mind on the importance of the Tea Party movement, which was for Tea Party conservatism to become the driving force within the GOP.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, Jim DeMint had a similar notion.<sup>91</sup> Many Tea Party conservatives were more loyal to DeMint than they were to either McConnell or Boehner.

According to journalist Robert Draper, from the very beginning of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Tea Party House Republicans presented a big problem for Boehner. Even during the first Continuing Resolution (CR) they were making demands to the party

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<sup>88</sup>Roger Ailes was very influential in making Fox News a conservative media outlet. For more, refer to: Tim Dickinson, "How Roger Ailes Built the Fox News Fear Factory", *Rolling Stone*, 25 May 2011, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/how-roger-ailes-built-the-fox-news-fear-factory-20110525> (accessed 23 July 2014); David Brock, Ari Rabin-Havt and Media Matters for America, *The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012); Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room: Roger Ailes, Fox News and the Remaking of American Politics* (London: Virgin Books, 2013). For more on the conservative media, see: Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella, *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Robert Brent Toplin, *Radical Conservatism: The Right's Political Religion* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 237-264. For more on Fox News and the Tea Party, consult: Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 134-138; Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad as Hell*, 5; as well as Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*, 52, 99, 196, 200, 213-214, 241. Aside from Fox, other media organisations also gave the Tea Party plenty of coverage; Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 138-140; and Anthony DiMaggio, *The Rise of the Tea Party: Political Discontent and Corporate Media in the Age of Obama* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011), 103-123.

<sup>89</sup>Armey left FreedomWorks after the 2012 elections; for more, see: Alex Pappas, "Why Dick Armey Resigned from His Tea Party Organization", *The Daily Caller*, 5 December 2012, <http://dailycaller.com/2012/12/05/why-dick-armey-resigned-from-his-tea-party-organization> (accessed 27 April 2013). It can be argued that Armey left FreedomWorks 'guns a blazing'; for more, see: Amy Gardner, "FreedomWorks Tea Party Group Nearly Falls Apart in Fight between Old and New Guard", *Washington Post*, 26 December 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freedomworks-tea-party-group-nearly-falls-apart-in-fight-between-old-and-new-guard/2012/12/25/dd095b68-4545-11e2-8061-253bccfc7532\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freedomworks-tea-party-group-nearly-falls-apart-in-fight-between-old-and-new-guard/2012/12/25/dd095b68-4545-11e2-8061-253bccfc7532_story.html) (accessed 27 April 2013).

<sup>90</sup>Armey and Kibbe, *Give Us Liberty*, 97, 120-143.

<sup>91</sup>This will be analysed in more detail in the next section.

leadership to draft a CR with at least \$100 billion in spending cuts.<sup>92</sup> Although Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) encouraged and supported the Tea Party freshmen, this did not ensure that he had their loyalty in the way that House Speaker Gingrich and his whip Tom DeLay (R-TX) had with the freshmen House members during the early stages of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>93</sup> In comparing the two whips, Draper observed that “the most important distinction between the two whips was this: Tom DeLay’s seventy-three freshmen were thoroughly beholden to Newt Gingrich – their Speaker, but also their guru. Kevin McCarthy’s eighty-seven freshmen had no particular allegiance to John Boehner, or even to the Republican Party. He had no leverage over them”.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, there was more unity in supporting House policies that attacked both big government and spending.

One example was when McCarthy was able to persuade Paul Ryan to lobby the Tea Party conservatives on why they should support his “Path to Prosperity” budget.<sup>95</sup> Ryan’s budget called for cutting taxes, deficit reduction, repealing Obamacare and reforming Medicare.<sup>96</sup> Likewise, an example where the Tea Party would not support Boehner was during the fiscal cliff,<sup>97</sup> where a majority of the GOP (including Tea Party freshmen) voted against extending most of the Bush era tax cuts on a permanent basis.<sup>98</sup> This vote, however,

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<sup>92</sup>Draper, *Do Not Ask What Good We Do*, 74-83; and Erik Wasson, “Not Good Enough: Tea Party Freshman Sink Republican Spending Plan, *The Hill*, 10 February 2011, <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/143229-under-pressure-from-tea-party-house-approps-delays-funding-bill-scrambles-for-deeper-cuts> (accessed 29 April 2013).

<sup>93</sup>Draper, *Do Not Ask What Good We Do*, 78-79, 81.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 81. Whilst this is true in comparison, however, even Gingrich’s influence was limited – his freshmen were also against pragmatic compromises, and could side with Armev and DeLay instead of him.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 139-140, 150-151.

<sup>96</sup>Paul Ryan, “The Path to Prosperity: A Blueprint for American Renewal”, <http://budget.house.gov/uploadedfiles/pathtoprosperity2013.pdf> (accessed 10 July 2014).

<sup>97</sup>For more on the fiscal cliff, consider: Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, “Congress at the Precipice: The 2012 Elections and the Fiscal Cliff”, in *Congress Reconsidered*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2013), eds. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, 467-469, 481-491.

<sup>98</sup>Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, “Final Vote Results for Role Call 659”, <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2012/roll659.xml> (accessed 23 July 2014).

split even the Republican House leadership. Some like Ryan sided with Boehner, whilst others sided with the Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) and McCarthy.<sup>99</sup> There was less of an upheaval in the Senate. Of the eight no votes, five were Republican, with Paul, Rubio and Mike Lee (UT) representing the Tea Party, and DeMint was one of three who abstained.<sup>100</sup>

The broad Tea Party support for Ryan's budget was due to its agenda of deficit reduction, Medicare entitlement reform, repealing the ACA and cutting taxes – all of which would decrease the size and scope of government. Also, Tea Party Republicans adhered to the conservative Republican desire to eliminate the New Deal legacy – especially social security and Medicare – which the “Path to Prosperity” budget set out to accomplish via healthcare.<sup>101</sup> Whilst the ACA also reformed Medicare, by way of addressing the doughnut hole in Medicare Part D, it also reduced payments to providers of private plans in Medicare Advantage (Part C), as well establishing an Independent Payment Advisory Board with the power to devise ways to save on expenditures. Meanwhile, the Ryan plan wanted to reduce payments to recipients via vouchers to encourage them to purchase more personalized private plans, thus transforming Medicare from a defined benefit to a limited defined contribution where any other costs were to be paid out of pocket.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>For more, consider: Espinoza, “Myth, Memory and the Reagan Legacy”, 24-26.

<sup>100</sup>U.S. Senate, 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, Roll Call Vote 251, [http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_lists/roll\\_call\\_vote\\_cfm.cfm?congress=112&session=2&vote=00251](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=112&session=2&vote=00251) (accessed 23 July 2014). What was the purpose of DeMint not voting? Was he attempting to provide political cover for the Tea Party senators who voted yes – which included Pat Toomey (PA), Ron Johnson (WI) – since the bill was going to pass anyway whether they voted in favour or against the bill? If not, then why did he take such a passionate opposition against any agreement that raised revenues? For more, refer to: Espinoza, “Myth, Memory and the Reagan Legacy”, 20-22, 25.

<sup>101</sup>Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 174-176.

<sup>102</sup>Daniel Béland and Alex Waddan, *The Politics of Policy Change: Welfare, Medicare, and Social Security in the United States* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 113-119.

If the Tea Party displayed any level of congressional partisan allegiance at all, the most likely beneficiary was Senator DeMint, who was labelled the “godfather” of the South Carolina Tea Party House freshmen.<sup>103</sup> However, what is evident with Draper’s assessment is that if the Tea Party viewed their own Republican House leadership with some disdain, they also regarded the Democratic leadership, in the Senate and the White House, with even more. Furthermore, the Tea Party did not go to Washington to govern, but instead to limit government no matter the cost.<sup>104</sup> For them it was more important to battle both the size and spending of government. One such member who followed this mantra is Senator Rand Paul.

Paul argues that “the Tea Party sees no distinction between big government Republicans and big government Democrats, drawing a new dividing line between those who want to limit government and those who want it to be unlimited”.<sup>105</sup> He considers both to be enemies of true Republican conservatism.<sup>106</sup> Regarding big government Republicans, he declares: “The Tea Party is now a threat to the old Republican guard because its stated principles prevent it from being brought into the [progressive] neoconservative fold”.<sup>107</sup> However, even a conservative such as Paul views big government Democrats more negatively than their Republican counterparts. He avowed, “If President [George W.] Bush expanded government more so than any president since LBJ, Obama has now expanded government even more than Bush”.<sup>108</sup> He claims his ideological views follow in the footsteps of past conservatives like Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, as well as current

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<sup>103</sup>Draper, *Do Not Ask What Good We Do*, 126-135, 156-161, 240-242, 251-252, 262-265.

<sup>104</sup>The 2010 Tea Party platform was called the “Contract From America”. It was inspired by the 1994 “Contract with America”. Both FreedomWorks and the Republican Study Committee supported the Contract. For more, see: Libby, *Purging the Republican Party*, 54-59.

<sup>105</sup>Rand Paul, *The Tea Party Goes to Washington* (New York: Center Street, 2011), xii.

<sup>106</sup>He also argues the notion that Bush was not a conservative, and was instead a progressive neoconservative. For more, consult: *Ibid.*, 54-57, 142-147, 150-152-156.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.



ones such as Jim DeMint.<sup>109</sup> He describes his views not as libertarian, but instead as a “constitutional conservative” who is supportive of “libertarian principles”, such as “limited government, self-reliance and respect for the Constitution in the mould of the Founding Fathers” – who were “clearly libertarians”.<sup>110</sup>

Paul, like many conservative Republicans, supports limited government. He also views the crowning achievements of the New Deal, social security, and the Great Society, Medicare, to be un-American. He states: “The fundamental reason why Medicare is failing is why the Soviet Union failed – socialism doesn’t work”, as well as advocating for the “privatization” of social security.<sup>111</sup> This is similar to statements made by conservatives in every chapter of this thesis, including Goldwater and Reagan. Others such as Tom DeLay and Dick Armey have directly accused Democrats of being socialists for their steadfast support of the American welfare state. Although Paul is not as hostile in his rhetoric towards Democrats, other Tea Party Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress were not as reserved. For example, Rep. Allen West (FL) was consistent in his allegations that liberal House Democrats in the “Progressive Caucus” had un-American sympathies. “At the turn of the century here in the United States of America”, he asserted, “American communists renamed themselves progressive, but the strategy and the tactics and the ideology still remains the

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 80-82, 105-128.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 112; also see: Rand Paul, “Rand Paul, Libertarian? Not Quite”, *USA Today*, 9 August 2010, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-08-10-column10\\_ST2\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-08-10-column10_ST2_N.htm) (accessed 23 April 2013).

<sup>111</sup>Evan McMorris-Santoro, “S\*\*t My Rand Says: A Compendium Of Paul’s Wacky Quotes”, *Talking Points Memo*, 21 June 2010, <http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/06/st-my-rand-says-pauls-long-history-of-wacky-quotes.php> (accessed 2 May 2013); and Rachel Slajda, “Rand Paul In The ‘90s: Medicare Is Socialism And Social Security Is A Ponzi Scheme”, *Talking Points Memo*, 12 July 2010, <http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/07/rand-paul-in-the-90s-medicare-is-socialism-and-social-security-is-a-ponzi-scheme-video.php> (accessed 2 May 2013).

same”. He refers to them using a variety of labels like “Communist progressive, Marxist, socialist, [or] statist”.<sup>112</sup>

Conversely, Paul’s critique of the ongoing political legacy of the New Deal is less inflammatory and more structured because he believes that programmes such as social security and Medicare are best left to be administered within the free-market. However, in his book, Paul’s argument omits any of his remarks that Medicare was a failed socialist ideal, and instead focuses on the free-market aspects for the programme, as well as for social security and Obamacare.<sup>113</sup> This rationale is how many conservative Republicans currently argue for entitlement reform. On the other hand, he offers some positions that definitely provide a respite from the George W. Bush presidency, and possibly the GOP altogether, which may lead into the next evolution of Republican conservatism – albeit an evolution that may revert it to a less aggressive foreign policy, as well as supporting less pro-state social-moral values. But how much of a change will they undergo? On foreign policy issues, the Tea Party is split, with the more isolationist position versus the more standard conservative Republican nationalistic tendencies.<sup>114</sup> There is only so much gradual change that can occur without causing a major fracture amongst conservatives, as well as the party in general – which is why neoconservatives and southern conservatives abandoned the Democratic Party

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<sup>112</sup>“West Doubles Down: Stand Up To Communist, Progressive, And Statist Politicians”, *Real Clear Politics*, 19 April 2012, [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2012/04/19/west\\_doubles\\_down\\_stand\\_up\\_to\\_communist\\_progressive\\_and\\_statist\\_politicians.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2012/04/19/west_doubles_down_stand_up_to_communist_progressive_and_statist_politicians.html) (accessed 2 May 2013). For a response on how West overlooked the fact the vast majority of ties to communism and socialism in Congress was with the GOP, refer to: John Nicols, “What Allen West Does Not Know About Communists and Congress”, *The Nation* blog, 13 April 2012, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/167380/what-allen-west-does-not-know-about-communists-and-congress> (accessed 2 May 2013).

<sup>113</sup>Paul, *The Tea Party*, 193-213.

<sup>114</sup>For more, consult: Walter Russell Mead, “The Tea Party and American Foreign Policy: What Populism Means for Globalism”, *Foreign Affairs* 90, no.2 (March/April 2011): 28-44, [http://www.heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/fora90&div=24&collection=journals&set\\_as\\_cursor=15&men\\_tab=srchresults](http://www.heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/fora90&div=24&collection=journals&set_as_cursor=15&men_tab=srchresults) (accessed 13 March 2013).

for the GOP.<sup>115</sup> The same is also true for social issues. Some issues may allow flexibility, such as marijuana,<sup>116</sup> but others like immigration,<sup>117</sup> gay marriage,<sup>118</sup> and especially abortion, may not.<sup>119</sup> Although the party may modify some of its views, in sum it will still be *more* conservative than it was in the Reagan era.

The Tea Party views Obama and Democrats as liberals/socialists who support big government, in part due to their perception of the evolution of conservative Republicanism. As the gap between the parties increased, and the GOP moves further to the right, Republicans accuse Democrats of moving further to the left.<sup>120</sup> Yet once in power, conservatives are faced with a dilemma; to compromise or to strive for purity that places

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<sup>115</sup>For more on how this pertains to Paul and foreign policy, consider: Robert Kagan, "Rand Paul's Conventional Stance on Foreign Policy", *Washington Post*, 7 February 2013, [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-07/opinions/36973004\\_1\\_foreign-policy-rand-paul-cold-war](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-07/opinions/36973004_1_foreign-policy-rand-paul-cold-war) (4 May 2013); Andrew C. McCarthy, "Two Sides of Rand Paul", *National Review Online*, 16 March 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/343128/two-sides-rand-paul-andrew-c-mccarthy> (accessed 4 May 2013); and Bill Scher, "Rand Paul: The Next and Last GOP Nominee?" *The Week*, 2 May 2013, <http://theweek.com/article/index/243485/rand-paul-the-next-and-last-gop-nominee> (accessed 4 May 2013).

<sup>116</sup>Josh Harkinson, "A GOP Bill to End the War on Pot", *Mother Jones* blog, 20 April 2013, <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2013/04/republican-bill-could-end-war-pot-dana-rohrabacher> (accessed 4 May 2013).

<sup>117</sup>David Grant, "Rubio Crafts Conservative Argument for Immigration. Will It Sell?" *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 April 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2013/0417/Marco-Rubio-crafts-conservative-argument-for-immigration-reform.-Will-it-sell?> (accessed 4 May 2013); Lisa Mascaro and Rick Pearson, "Republican Lawmakers Show Their Division on Immigration Reform", *Los Angeles Times*, 22 April 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/apr/22/nation/la-na-immigration-congress-20130423> (accessed 4 May 2013); and M. Stanton Evans, "Is Immigration Reform Political Suicide for GOP?" *Human Events*, 30 April 2013, <http://www.humanevents.com/2013/04/30/is-immigration-reform-political-suicide-for-gop/> (accessed 4 May 2013).

<sup>118</sup>Zeke J. Miller, "Republican Party Says No to Same Sex Marriage", *Time* blog, 12 April 2013, <http://swampland.time.com/2013/04/12/republican-party-says-no-to-same-sex-marriage/> (access 4 May 2013); and Sean Sullivan, "Meet the Billionaire Hedge Fund Manager Quietly Shaping the GOP Gay Marriage Debate", *Washington Post* blog, 3 May 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/05/03/meet-the-billionaire-hedge-fund-manager-quietly-shaping-the-gop-gay-marriage-debate/> (4 May 2013).

<sup>119</sup>Michael Cooper, "G.O.P Approves Strict Anti-abortion Platform in Party Platform", *New York Times* blog, 21 August 2012, <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/g-o-p-approves-strict-anti-abortion-language-in-party-platform/> (accessed 4 May 2013); Elise Viebeck, "Paul Ryan: Republicans Must Stay Strong on Abortion to Win Elections", *The Hill* blog, 11 April 2013, <http://thehill.com/blogs/healthwatch/abortion/293499-paul-ryan-gop-must-stay-strong-on-abortion-to-win-elections> (accessed 4 May 2013).

<sup>120</sup>For more on how the Tea Party contends Obama adheres to socialism, see: Parker and Barreto, *Change They Can't Believe In*, 21, 46-47, 55, 91, 96, 100, 196-199, 231-232, 270, 291.

ideology over the duty and ability to govern. This is compounded by the fact that American conservatism is at its strongest when articulating what it is against rather than how it proposes to govern. For example, Reagan, the Republican controlled Congress during the Clinton administration and the George W. Bush presidency all faced circumstances where pragmatism, rather than ideology, was necessary to govern. The importance of the Tea Party is that they were not elected to govern, but instead vowed to reduce the scope of government, especially the latest addition to state power by way of the ACA. Holding control of only the House during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, as well as the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, still made conservative Republicans a governing minority versus a Democratic President and Senate, but it was a minority that burdened them with having to articulate some kind of governing philosophy. The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress will allow a GOP congressional majority the opportunity to limit government, but they will have to be pragmatic in order to so.

### **The Importance of Jim DeMint to the Evolution of Republican Conservatism**

*Collectivism is anathema to freedom and prosperity. . . . forcing citizens into dependency on collectivist government programs.*

-Jim DeMint<sup>121</sup>

Jim DeMint's statement reveals his views on the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy, especially Medicare and social security. He and many conservative Republicans believe the American welfare state was the beginning of a divergent path that transformed America from a country of small and limited government to one of large and practically limitless government. His influence on conservative Republicanism needs to be considered alongside other contributions by the likes of Herbert Hoover, Robert Taft, Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan, Newt Gingrich and George W. Bush, as well as many others who also deserve recognition for their contributions to American conservatism. DeMint's goal has

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<sup>121</sup>DeMint, *Now or Never*, 71.

been to use a conservative populist approach to effect change, a mixture of the economic conservatism of past conservative Republicans such as Hoover, Taft, Goldwater and Reagan, infused with the white conservative (southern Democratic) populist appeal of George Wallace.<sup>122</sup> I use DeMint as a case study, because he is now president of the Heritage Foundation. Understanding his perspective will shed significance on how he helped GOP conservatism to evolve, as well as how he will direct an increasingly partisan approach towards influencing conservatism for years to come.<sup>123</sup>

DeMint has been an influential figure within the GOP and its dominant conservative wing. Not only have his views helped to shape conservative positions, but they have also fuelled his support for Tea Party candidates who shared many of his views. He was very supportive of the Tea Party cause from the beginning, using the movement to prop up conservatives who had similar ideological views. His reluctance to compromise also called into question whether or not his (and the Tea Party's) extreme conservative views would help or hinder the party, views that led him to assert that he would "rather have 30 Republicans in the Senate who believe in the principles of freedom than 60 who don't

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<sup>122</sup>Ben Domenech, "Jim DeMint's Triumph", *Real Clear Politics*, 7 December 2012, [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2012/12/07/jim\\_demints\\_triumph\\_116364.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2012/12/07/jim_demints_triumph_116364.html) (accessed 20 March 2013). For more on Wallace, consult: Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 221-242; Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 88-90, 113-115, 142-146; Berlet and Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism In America*, 4-6, 199, 202-205; Perman, *Pursuit of Unity*, 307-319; and Thomas Byrne Edsall with Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), 10, 12, 66, 74, 77-79, 85, 96-97. For more on Wallace and the 1968 presidential election, refer to: Lewis L. Gould, *1968: The Election That Changed America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993); and Dennis Wainstock, *Election Year 1968: The Turning Point* (New York: Enigma Books, 2012).

<sup>123</sup>However, at times, the Heritage Foundation under DeMint's leadership may also ruffle a few feathers within the GOP. For an example, see: Anna Palmer, Lauren French and Jake Sherman, "GOP Lawmakers Confront DeMint over Ratings", *Politico*, 27 January 2015, <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/01/gop-lawmakers-jim-demint-heritage-foundation-ratings-114672.html> (accessed 22 July 2015).

believe in anything”.<sup>124</sup> His departure from the Senate to become president of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, will likely not diminish his influence. This move may even make him more influential than his time in Congress.<sup>125</sup>

DeMint’s conservatism best encompasses the post-Cold War evolution of American conservatism, fiercely anti-government economically and staunchly pro-statist on social issues, which he defines as “the conservative principles of decentralized federal power, free market economics, and individual responsibility”.<sup>126</sup> His conservative pedigree maintains that compromising with Democrats leads to “compromise between freedom and socialism, between centralized economic planning and decentralized free markets; between collectivism and individualism”.<sup>127</sup>

DeMint’s influence, however, like Taft and Goldwater (and also Wallace), did not contribute to conservatism as a governing philosophy, Instead it was an evolution of a more rigid ideological conservatism, within the confines of the American governing system, and ideological purity does not equate to governing. That is because it is much easier to declare what one is against instead of offering an alternative to the status quo. In terms of the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy, once a new programme has been established, an alternative programme must become the focus point. For example, Reagan and George W. Bush were conservative presidents who governed, yet the former is idolised as the ideal

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<sup>124</sup>Carney, "The Promise And Peril Of Jim DeMint", 14.

<sup>125</sup>For more, consider: Margot Sanger-Katz, "What Jim DeMint Wants to Do at Heritage", *National Journal* (December 15, 2012): 12, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 4, 2013); and Domenech, "Jim DeMint’s Triumph". Political scientist Ronald Libby is of the notion that “DeMint’s resignation from the Senate to take up the presidency of the Heritage Foundation in January 2013 strengthened Tea Party influence in the Senate and the House”; Libby, *Purging the Republican Party*, 126.

<sup>126</sup>DeMint, *Now or Never*, 240.

<sup>127</sup>For more, refer to: *Ibid.*, 93-117, 238. The quote is from page 238.

conservative and the latter is vilified for abandoning it.<sup>128</sup> Both were pragmatic. Reagan raised taxes in 1982 to help offset a growing deficit, in 1983 to reform social security, as well as in 1986 to simplify the US tax code, whereas Bush never raised taxes but he did achieve bipartisanship with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Neither one, however, turned conservatism into the equivalent of the New Deal political order, but conservatives attained much more political power under Bush than they did under Reagan. Bush was able to benefit from the post-Cold War transformation to four-party politics, which allowed him the flexibility to adhere more to ideology than Reagan, although Bush was still limited in how he could attack the New Deal legacy of Medicare and social security.

Nevertheless, DeMint and many conservative Republicans regard the Reagan presidential years as the guiding light of conservatism, one of limited government, strong national defence and social values. In attempting to form an argument for conservatism as a governing philosophy, he emphasised his support of a “big tent” approach to the GOP: “But big tents need strong poles, and the strongest pole of our party – the organizing principle and the crucial alternative to the Democrats – must be freedom”.<sup>129</sup> His concept of freedom calls for a weaker national government in favor of stronger states’ rights. However, in many regards he seemed to be doing just the opposite, going out of his way to open the “big tent” only to the most right-wing conservative Republicans, and viewing those who did not support his key issues as opponents of freedom.<sup>130</sup> He had even more disdain for Democrats, particularly Obama, labelling them collectivists who wanted to turn American into a socialist

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<sup>128</sup>For more on DeMint’s take on Reagan and Bush, see: DeMint, *Now or Never*, 83, 111-112; and Jim DeMint, *Saving Freedom: We Can Stop America’s Slide Into Socialism* (Nashville: Fidelis Books, 2009), 23-27.

<sup>129</sup>Jim DeMint, “How Republicans Can Build a Big-Tent Party”, *Wall Street Journal*, Eastern ed., [New York, NY] 02 May 2009: A.9, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/399103332?accountid=14511> (accessed 29 April 2013).

<sup>130</sup>Alan K. Ota, “Jim DeMint’s Mission: To Strike the Big Tent”, *CQ Weekly*, 18 January 2010, 163-164; and Jim DeMint, *Now or Never*.

state similar to Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and post-war Europe.<sup>131</sup> Whilst not adamantly opposed to a less hawkish foreign policy, DeMint was less flexible on social issues, particularly gay marriage and abortion, as well as on economic issues such as tax increases and the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy.<sup>132</sup>

DeMint blamed FDR, like many conservative Republicans do, for igniting socialism in America. “President Franklin Roosevelt (1933-1945) used America’s vulnerability during the Depression to implement his New Deal. This new social agenda created the Social Security program, provided extensive protections of unions, and began the farmer assistance program. The seeds of socialism took root”.<sup>133</sup> He also declared, “Medicare demonstrates why socialized medicine does not work. The expertise of doctors and the needs of patients are secondary to a dehumanizing, bureaucratic, inefficient government system. Medicare . . . forces patients and physicians to become dependent on the government”.<sup>134</sup> Regarding social security, he stated: “The politics of social security are essentially the politics of socialism; dependent voters reward those candidates who promise more spending and more government-sponsored security”.<sup>135</sup> Additionally, he considered the Obama presidency to be

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<sup>131</sup>DeMint, *Now or Never*; DeMint, *Saving Freedom*. However, it has been suggested that DeMint has modified his economic conservatism, whilst also focusing on economics over social conservatism. For more, see: Kalefa Sanneh, “The Evolution of Jim DeMint”, *New Yorker* blog, 8 December 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2012/12/the-evolution-of-jim-demint.html> (accessed 16 March 2013). I propose that he has not, although he is using an economic argument to unite conservatives against the state, he is not deemphasising social values or changing his economic views. His economic argument in favour of the free-market has increased due to how he (and other conservatives) blame the government for making the debt worse as a result of getting involved, instead of letting the market correct itself.

<sup>132</sup>Three of the most important point views that a candidate seeking DeMint’s backing must support include being pro-life, as well as standing against tax increases and gay marriage. For more, consult: DeMint, *Now or Never*, 220-225. For more on his endorsement of Tea Party senators Ron Johnson (R-WI), Mike Lee (R-UT), Rand Paul, Marco Rubio and Pat Toomey (R-PA), refer to: *Ibid.*, 216-219; Libby, *Purging the Republican Party*, 71-72.

<sup>133</sup>DeMint, *Saving Freedom*, 33.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.



“anti-American”, because it “is disdainful of individual decision making, the hallmark of a free society, yet lauds collectivist policies that create one-size-fits all solutions”, which “has effectively socialized American health care and nationalized our banking system”.<sup>136</sup>

DeMint’s importance to conservative Republicanism is twofold: firstly, the rhetoric he emphasizes has shaped the rhetoric of the Republican Party, and secondly, he was pivotal in moving the GOP further to the right with his support of the Tea Party – which has made those influenced by Gingrich, especially in the Senate, the *new* Republican voices of moderation.<sup>137</sup> The emphasis he places on the socialist label drives the conservative Republican mantra. Such an emphasis assists them in their political battle against the Democratic Party, a party that they maintain is dominated by big government liberals. Thus what ensues from the conservative perspective is a conflict between the American party (Republican) versus the un-American party (Democrats) – i.e. conservatives against liberals.

Conservative rhetoric is employed to control the means of debate. Therefore, anything conservatives deem to be liberal can simultaneously be considered socialist and un-American. The conservative message is one of freedom from government (individual liberty) which tars the opposing liberal message as serfdom via government dependency. However, the conservative concepts of freedom and individualism differ on issues of economics versus social morals. Even though freedom from government is consistent with both arguments, it is tied into the context of the individual. Economically this stands for freedom from

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<sup>136</sup>*ibid.*, 251.

<sup>137</sup>Sean M. Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators: The Roots of Partisan Warfare in Congress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 162-165.

government, but the socio-moral meaning involves government mandating individual freedom (or responsibility).<sup>138</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter addresses how conservative Republicanism has evolved from what it was originally in the 1930s. What has been consistent is their opposition to the New Deal and its ongoing legacy. And stuck within the confines of the welfare state and the popularity of social security and Medicare entitlements, the only realistic option is not to undo the programmes but instead to privatise and reduce benefits, moving them from defined benefits to defined contributions and thus making the individual *more dependent on the free-market in lieu of government*. On the other hand, their position on social values has evolved – moving from the original libertarian position to one that is more evangelical.<sup>139</sup> Although many in the Tea Party, as well as other conservatives, claim that Obama and the Democrats are changing America into an impious and un-American socialist state, this belief is far from original and has been the consistent view of the GOP right. Instead of attempting to purge radical views from the conservative Republican fold, as the previous chapters have illustrated, the goal has to been to adapt their rhetoric to form the basis for a more viable attack against big government. However, in doing so, the extreme conservative views on issues such as race, voting rights, marriage and personal choice are being pushed further to

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<sup>138</sup>For more on DeMint and individual responsibility, consider: Jim DeMint and J. David Woodard, *Why We Whisper: Restoring Our Right To Say It's Wrong* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008); and DeMint, *Saving Freedom*, 62-70, 154-174.

<sup>139</sup>Although more influential to the right, evangelicalism also has a place on the left. For more on American evangelicalism, see: Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in the Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); and Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

the forefront – which, mixed with their economic views, makes the Democratic Party seem that much further to the left.

## Conclusion – Unfinished Business: Conservative Republicans and the New Deal

### Legacy

*Social security is a collectivist system. It's a welfare transfer system. . . . It will bring more government, more collectivism, more centralized government if we do not succeed in switching these programs and reforming these programs from what some people call a defined benefit system to a defined contribution system – and . . . I am talking about health care programs as well – from a third-party socialist-based system to an individually owned, individually prefunded, individually directed system.*

-Paul Ryan<sup>1</sup>

Conservative Republicans, as Paul Ryan's quotation highlights, still regard the New Deal legacy as socialist, and want to reform entitlement programmes to integrate them into the free-market. But as the previous chapters have illustrated, conservative Republicanism has evolved from the 1930s to present day. The GOP has also evolved into a conservative party that whilst benefits their ideology, also hinders their capacity to carry it out.

The intent of this research has been to analyse why conservative Republicans use the socialist label to denigrate liberalism, and to assess the effectiveness of such a strategy. Socialism is a lightning rod word that they employ to discredit an opponent or issue by attempting to incite an emotional response to dictate political discourse. Updating James Burns' four-party model was very insightful in establishing how Republicans are now comprised of a right-of-centre presidential wing and a right-wing congressional party. This presents a conservative-dominated Republican Party opposite a Democratic Party, where in

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<sup>1</sup>Ryan's remarks are from a February 2005 Atlas Society Event; Andrew Kaczynski, "Paul Ryan's Ayn Rand Moment", BuzzFeed, 21 September 2012, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/paul-ryans-ayn-rand-moment> (accessed 21 March 2014). For more on Ryan's connection to Rand, consider: Jennifer Burns, "Atlas Spurned", *New York Times*, 14 August 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/15/opinion/ayn-rand-wouldnt-approve-of-paul-ryan.html>; Tim Mak "Vice President Nominee Paul Ryan's Love-Hate with Ayn Rand", *Politico*, 11 August 2012, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0812/79597.html>; and Anne C. Heller, "What Paul Ryan Learned From Ayn Rand", *The Daily Beast*, 16 August 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/08/16/what-paul-ryan-learned-from-ayn-rand.html>; Jonathan Chait, "Paul Ryan and the Republican Vision", *New Republic* blog, 11 March 2010, <http://www.newrepublic.com/blog/jonathan-chait/paul-ryan-and-the-republican-vision>. All were accessed 25 March 2014.

the congressional wing is left-of-centre whilst the presidential wing is squarely in the centre. Yet what is important is how both Democratic parties are clearly to the left of the GOP. This means it is still relevant for conservative Republicans to use the socialist and liberal labels interchangeably. Nevertheless, this does not imply that this strategy is entirely successful nor is it without potential future problems. One notable issue that may become a problem for them is that the more rightward they move, the more they run the risk of using the label too many times. This is especially likely if used against fellow Republicans,<sup>2</sup> similar to when Robert Welch of the John Birch Society accused Dwight Eisenhower of being “a dedicated conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy”.<sup>3</sup>

Conservative rhetoric is helpful in establishing a clear contrast between the Republican Party and Democratic Party, a contrast that is bolstered when conservatives claim there is evidence that “liberal” Democrats support socialism.<sup>4</sup> However, a negative

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<sup>2</sup>Michelle Bachmann has been the only notable conservative Republican to attempt this so far, presumably at Mitt Romney – boldly asserting, “We cannot preserve liberty for ourselves and our posterity if the choice in next November is between a frugal socialist and an out-of-control socialist.” However, this backfired and was part of her downfall in her bid to win the 2012 GOP nomination, as well as to barely being re-elected in 2012. She became toxic even to conservative Republicans, and finally decided against standing for re-election in 2014. For more, refer to: Trip Gabriel, “Michele Bachmann Warns Against Supporting ‘Frugal Socialists’”, *New York Times* blog, 7 November 2011, <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/07/michele-bachmann-warns-against-supporting-frugal-socialists/> (accessed 27 March 2014); Paul Kane, “Rep. Bachmann Will Not Run for Reelection in 2014”, *Washington Post*, 29 May 2013, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/rep-bachmann-will-not-run-in-2014/2013/05/29/eba51652-c840-11e2-8da7-d274bc611a47\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/rep-bachmann-will-not-run-in-2014/2013/05/29/eba51652-c840-11e2-8da7-d274bc611a47_story.html) (accessed 27 March 2014); Jason Rich and Brandy A. Kennedy, “Early to Rise, Early to Fall: The Short Lived Hope of Michelle Bachmann”, in *The 2012 Nomination and the Future of the Republican Party: The Internal Battle* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), ed. William J. Miller, 77-101.

<sup>3</sup>David W. Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 174; Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), 28; as well as Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 180.

<sup>4</sup>This is a notion aided by opinion polling data, which supports the claims of conservatives that liberals have a positive view of socialism – yet they also support capitalism, but this does not deter them from making such claims. This also affects the public perception towards Obama and the Democrats. For more, see: “‘Socialism’ Not So Negative, ‘Capitalism’ Not So Positive”, Pew Research Center, 4 May 2010, <http://www.people-press.org/2010/05/04/socialism-not-so-negative-capitalism-not-so-positive/>; Carroll Doherty, “Describing Obama, Bush in a Word”, Pew Research Center, 1 July 2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/07/01/describing-obama-bush-in-a-word/>; “Midterm Election Challenges for Both Parties”, Pew Research Center, 12 February 2010, <http://www.people->

outcome allows Republicans to be viewed as ultra-conservative, even more so than the average American. Moreover, when conservative Republicans are in a position to dictate possible reforms, they still have to grapple with pragmatism versus ideological purity.

The efforts of conservative Republicans to use the socialist label to attack “liberal” Democrats encourages partisanship above all else – a stance that political scientist Thomas Langston views as evidence of “one-sided” polarisation, where “the Right . . . continues to be substantially far to the Right of center, while the “Left” can only be spoken of in association with the Democratic Party through the use of quotation marks”.<sup>5</sup> This has led some, like political scientists Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, to state: “The Democrats under the presidencies of Clinton and Obama, by contrast [to Republicans] have become the more status-quo oriented, centrist protectors of government”.<sup>6</sup> Views such as these can lead to a belief that Democrats are embracing centrism whilst Republicans are embracing conservatism. Yet this notion, whilst correct in my view, overlooks how conservative Republicanism has been *moving further to the right*. But what is also striking is how

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press.org/2010/02/12/section-3-views-of-the-parties/; “Little Change in Public’s Response to ‘Capitalism’, ‘Socialism’”, Pew Research Center, 28 December 2011, <http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/>; Frank Newport, “Democrats, Republicans Diverge on Capitalism, Federal Gov’t”, *Gallup Poll*, 29 November 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/158978/democrats-republicans-diverge-capitalism-federal-gov.aspx>; Lydia Saad, “Obama Praised for Efforts, Knocked for Spending”, *Gallup Poll*, 15 July 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/121685/Obama-Praised-Effort-Knocked-Spending.aspx>. Examples of the conservative media using polling data as proof that liberals support socialism include: Jennifer Harper, “Gallup: Yes, Democrats, Liberals Favor Socialism”, *Washington Times* blog, 30 November 2012, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/blog/inside-politics/2012/nov/30/gallup-yes-democrats-liberals-favor-socialism/>; Andrew Rugg, “Gallup: Half of Democrats Think Positively About Socialism”, American Enterprise Institute, 30 November 2012, <http://www.aei-ideas.org/2012/11/gallup-half-of-democrats-think-positively-about-socialism/>; Guy Benson, “Poll: 53 Percent of Democrats Hold Favorable View of Socialism”, *Townhall* blog, 29 November 2012, [http://townhall.com/tipsheet/guybenson/2012/11/29/53\\_percent\\_of\\_democrats\\_threeCheers\\_for\\_socialism](http://townhall.com/tipsheet/guybenson/2012/11/29/53_percent_of_democrats_threeCheers_for_socialism) (all links accessed 31 March 2014).

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Langston, “Making Stale Debates Fresh Again: The Causes and Consequences of the Defense of Ideology as a Regime Imperative”, 20; a paper from the “Governing the U.S. in Polarized Times” conference, Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford, 17 April 2013, <http://www.rai.ox.ac.uk/sites/rai/files/Langston%20paper%20040313.pdf> (accessed 10 March 2014).

<sup>6</sup>Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It’s Even Worse than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 56.

conservative positions that were once deemed to be part of the radical right in the 1960s are now accepted as centrist, helping the conservative push to privatise social security and Medicare.<sup>7</sup>

The outcomes of the 2012 presidential and congressional elections further illustrate this trend. Obama was re-elected as president and the outcome of the 2010 midterm elections, a Democratic controlled Senate and a Republican controlled House, remained the same. Furthermore, it is unlikely that anything besides continuous Democratic victories for the presidency combined with a Democratic dominated Congress will force the GOP to completely rethink how the party should adapt and change. I am not suggesting that no change will occur, but it could take at least eight years of total Democratic dominance (and possibly more), and very little else will force them to do anything more than soften their image just enough to win elections. A change to embrace immigration reform is one topic they would be wise to consider – following in the footsteps of previous conservative Republicans who supported such a measure, including Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. However, immigration reform was a toxic issue for the GOP leading into the 2014 midterm elections,<sup>8</sup> and continues to trouble the new GOP congressional majority.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the 2014 midterm election results do not suggest any drastic changes in ideology, policy or rhetoric.

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<sup>7</sup>For more, see: David Plotke, "Introduction to the Transaction Edition", in *The Radical Right*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), ed. Daniel Bell, xxx-xxxiii, lxvii-lxx.

<sup>8</sup>An August 2014 *Gallup Poll* survey highlighted that Republican supporter's listed immigration as the most important problem America had to address. For more, refer to: Frank Newport, "Republicans More Focused on Immigration as Top Problem", *Gallup Poll*, 22 August 2014, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/175310/republicans-likely-view-immigration-top-problem.aspx> (accessed 1 September 2014).

<sup>9</sup>Alex Isenstadt and Kyle Cheney, "The Anxieties of the GOP Majority", *Politico*, 23 November 2014, <http://www.politico.com/story/2014/11/the-anxieties-of-the-gop-majority-113113.html> (accessed 24 November 2014).

Regarding the implication that liberals are socialists, Langston rightly criticises conservative Republicans for their “rhetorical campaign to equate modern liberalism with socialism and Leftism” as an absurd claim that is only possible due to the lack of an influential American Socialist Party.<sup>10</sup> This argument, however, has been important to them since the FDR presidency, evolving over time as the two political parties have changed throughout contemporary America. Conservative Republicans and other members of the conservative elite, William F. Buckley and the *National Review* in 1955, for example, wanted to transform the GOP into a conservative party, a feat that was largely accomplished after the 1994 midterm elections. However, during that period, conservative Republicans came to embrace the conservative label whilst also attacking the liberal label and “me-too” Republicanism. Reagan was very important in this regard.

Reagan’s long career, as an actor, business spokesman for GE, as well Governor of California and president of the United States, presented him with the time and experience to establish conservative Republican talking points, a type of rhetoric, so to speak. His career spanned more than four decades and helped to hone his fervour in attacking Democrats for implementing socialist policies like “the progressive income tax” and “socialized medicine” (what later became Medicare). Reagan was also the party leader as president and his rhetoric successfully merged liberalism with socialism. When discrediting liberalism proved successful for the GOP, they learned to embrace it. As moderates have left the Republican Party, a conservative led GOP can use the liberal/socialist label(s) to smear the entire Democratic Party, even though this tactic is far from being accurate. Therefore, when

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<sup>10</sup>Langston, “Making Stale Debates Fresh Again”, 21, 23-24.



conservative Republicans use the liberal label, they are also referring to the socialism label – for they consider them to be one and the same.

The rise of conservative media outlets, especially AM talk radio and Fox News<sup>11</sup> helps to further support this strategy by spreading this view across the country – and in some instances this rhetoric has even crossed the Atlantic.<sup>12</sup> Where Reagan left off, Newt Gingrich and the Conservative Opportunity Society continued in the House, followed by the George W. Bush presidency and four years of a conservative led GOP Congress (2002-2006). Now the Tea Party continues to alter the GOP with the likes of Rand Paul and Ted Cruz<sup>13</sup> in the Senate, the GOP House majority of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, as well as a new GOP congressional majority for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.

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<sup>11</sup>Fox News became a vital conservative media outlet during the Clinton presidency, where the new Fox News started out as an “anti-Clinton news network”. For more, see: Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room: Roger Ailes, Fox News and the Remaking of American Politics* (London: Virgin Books, 2013), 223-256.

<sup>12</sup>For an example, see: Robert Winnett, “‘Socialist’ Vince Cable Is Not Fit For Office, Says Adrian Beecroft”, *Telegraph*, 22 May 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9283748/Socialist-Vince-Cable-not-fit-for-office-says-Adrian-Beecroft.html> (accessed 25 March 2014).

<sup>13</sup>Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) continues to be a thorn in the side of the Republican congressional leadership, even for House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH). He encouraged and assisted GOP House members of the Tea Party Caucus in refusing to support the Senate immigration bill and instead pressured Boehner to pass an alternative bill that more than likely squandered any chance for immigration reform before the 2014 midterm elections. Although popular with the grassroots, he is making enemies within the GOP establishment. For more, consult: Jeffrey Toobin, “Ted Cruz’s Canny Strategy”, *The New Yorker*, 7 August 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/ted-cruzs-canny-strategy> (accessed 7 August 2014); and Jay Newton-Smith, “Republicans Seek Revenge Against Ted Cruz”, *Time*, 8 June 2014, <http://time.com/2842539/ted-cruz-republicans-2016/> (accessed 5 August 2014). Toobin also has an interesting article on Cruz’s brash and confrontational persona; for more, see: Jeffrey Toobin, “The Absolutist”, *The New Yorker*, 30 June 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/06/30/the-absolutist-2> (accessed 7 August 2014).

How long the Tea Party will remain relevant is debatable.<sup>14</sup> Challenging the conservative GOP establishment is not a long-term political strategy,<sup>15</sup> although Richard Viguerie believes this is a viable strategy.<sup>16</sup> Yet even though former House Majority leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) was defeated in the 2014 Virginia primary,<sup>17</sup> another target Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) defeated his Tea Party challenger.<sup>18</sup> However, it is without a doubt that Tea Party members in Congress have made the GOP more conservative, as well as a more confrontational.<sup>19</sup>

Even more remarkable is how the conservative elite is working to make conservative Republicanism a viable alternative to Democrats and moderate Republicans. In order to

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<sup>14</sup>For an example, consider: Christopher S. Parker, "Wither the Tea Party? The Future of a Political Movement", Brookings Institute, no. 66 (June 2014), [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/04-tea-party-parker/parker\\_teaparty.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/04-tea-party-parker/parker_teaparty.pdf) (accessed 17 January 2015); and Rupert Cornwell, "Lost? The Tea Party Has Already Won, and Its Influence Will Be Felt for Years to Come", *The Independent*, 11 May 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/lost-the-tea-party-has-already-won-and-its-influence-will-be-felt-for-years-to-come-9349649.html> (accessed 17 January 2015).

<sup>15</sup>For examples of the GOP establishment pushing back against Tea Party Republicans, see: Manu Raju and Burgess Everett, "Senate Smackdown: Ted Cruz, Mike Lee Efforts Squelched by Leaders", *Politico*, 26 July 2015, <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/07/senate-obamacare-repeal-ted-cruz-mike-lee-120637.html> (accessed 27 July 2015); as well as Jake Sherman and Anna Palmer, "Behind Boehner's Crackdown on Conservatives", *Politico*, 24 June 2015, <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/06/john-boehner-crackdown-conservatives-richard-nugent-gop-119389.html> (accessed 25 June 2015).

<sup>16</sup>Richard A. Viguerie, "We're Coming for You, John Boehner", *Politico Magazine*, 17 April 2014, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/04/were-coming-for-you-john-boehner-105781.html> (accessed 10 July 2014).

<sup>17</sup>Gloria Berger, "How Eric Cantor's 'House of Cards' Fell Apart", *CNN*, 12 June 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/06/11/opinion/cantor-house-of-cards-shakespeare/index.html> (accessed 7 August 2014); Jay Newton-Small, "How Eric Cantor Lost", *Time*, 10 June 2014, <http://time.com/2854761/eric-cantor-dave-brat-virginia/> (accessed 11 June 2014); as well as Jack Fitzpatrick and Alex Roarty, "Eric Cantor Falls to Shock Defeat in Primary", *National Journal*, 10 June 2014, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/politics/eric-cantor-falls-to-shock-defeat-in-primary-20140610> (accessed 14 August 2014). For more on Cantor's loss, also consider: David Wasserman, "What We Can Learn From Eric Cantor's Defeat", *FiveThirtyEight*, 20 June 2014, <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/what-we-can-learn-from-eric-cantors-defeat/> (accessed 14 August 2015).

<sup>18</sup>Larry J. Sabato, Kyle Kondik and Geoffrey Skelley, "'Thank God for Mississippi!'", *Politico Magazine*, 25 June 2014, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/mississippi-thad-cochran-108289.html> (accessed 10 July 2014).

<sup>19</sup>Margaret Carlson, "The Tea Party Is Still at the Kids' Table", *Bloomberg View*, 17 June 2014, <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-06-17/tea-party-is-still-at-the-kids-table> (accessed 18 June 2014).

accomplish this, conservative Republicanism has had to shrink its tent and exclude the fringe, but as the tent expanded in size, the fringe has been welcomed back into the tent with open arms. This party would now be alien to conservative Republicans from previous eras like Herbert Hoover, Robert A. Taft, Barry Goldwater and Reagan, and more at home to those from the South like Strom Thurmond (SC), Jesse Helms (NC) and Phil Gramm (TX) – southern conservative Democrats who later became Republicans. Hoover, Taft, Goldwater and Reagan stressed economic conservatism (classical liberalism), whereas Thurmond, Helms and Gramm stressed traditionalism via social (class) conservatism – which has included issues such as segregation, states’ rights, voting rights, unions, abortion and homosexuality. The latter five are becoming *more* important to the GOP nationally as it continues to become an increasingly conservative party.

Southern traditionalism supports both economic and social conservatism – with Reagan serving as a bridge between the two – a mixture of *Suburban Warriors*, *White Flight*, southern rage, the *Silent Majority* and the rise of the Sunbelt.<sup>20</sup> But what unites them all is the disregard for the New Deal and its ongoing political legacy, a view that remains unchanged, but has progressed over time as four-party politics has evolved and altered the

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<sup>20</sup>References to the above include, amongst others: Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism: Phoenix and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counter Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Michelle Nickerson and Darren Dochuk, eds., *“Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Place, Space, and Region* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); and Sean P. Cunningham, *American Politics in the Postwar Sunbelt: Conservative Growth in a Battleground Region* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Democratic and Republican Parties, as well as how America has changed from the 1930s to the post-Cold War era.

The goal of the previous chapters was to address how the socialist label is more than mere vernacular; it is strategic. At a secondary, but still important, level is the relationship between how the socialist label, polarisation and four-party politics presents opportunities for conservative Republicans to grasp power and change America into a socio-moral and free-market society. However, there are important challenges that need to be overcome. When conservatives control both the executive and legislative branches, they can be at odds with one another. I discussed in chapter four how this was the case with Bush and the GOP majority Congress. Furthermore, conservative rhetoric is strongest when it opposes something, usually big government in some way, such as opposing national health care reform. On the other hand, once conservative Republicans are in a position of power, they have to scale back their anti-statist rhetoric in order to focus on legislation that can lead to lasting accomplishments, instead of railing against government and shirking the responsibilities of governing.

As I progressed with this scholarship, there were other points I wanted to address – but due to the word limit, and my approach, I had to exclude – that would make for interesting future research. Firstly, how does four-party politics correspond to other countries, particularly, countries that use the Westminster model, especially Canada? Due to its close proximity to the United States, and how I interpret the current Conservative majority government, this would be a very interesting project. Secondly, the “fear” factor is still very relevant to conservative Republican rhetoric. I am not implying that Democrats are immune from this tactic, but conservatives use this emotion as an important part of their strategy. This was a vital part of the (RNC) Republican National Committee’s financial

strategy approach for the 2010 midterm elections – which involved a combination of fear, anger and the socialist label,<sup>21</sup> an agenda that many in the RNC consider a mainstream party message.<sup>22</sup>

Thirdly, given the polling data I have read, it is clear that the American public does support government, and government programmes in general.<sup>23</sup> However, its lack of trust in government casts an ominous shadow over what can be accomplished. As mentioned in the introduction, this is a continuation of the contradicting dual “symbolic conservative” and “operational liberal” public mindset. Political scientist Marc Hetherington in *Why Trust Matters* highlights how Americans’ decrease in trust hinders what government can do to help a misanthropic public. He also argues that the rise in distrust relates to a decrease in trusting liberalism, and not a rise in trusting/supporting conservatism.<sup>24</sup> Yet I want to stress how important the combination of fear and mistrust of the liberal label is used to great

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<sup>21</sup>Ben Smith, “Exclusive: RNC Document Mock Donors, Plays on ‘Fear’”, *Politico*, 3 March 2010, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0310/33866.html>. The article contains the following link: [http://www.politico.com/static/PPM136\\_100303\\_rnc\\_finance\\_leadership.html](http://www.politico.com/static/PPM136_100303_rnc_finance_leadership.html). Refer to slides 29-31. Both links were accessed 9 December 2013. For more on fear, see: David H. Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); and Corey Robin, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>22</sup>Liz Halloran, “Top Republicans: Yeah, We’re Calling Obama Socialist”, *National Public Radio*, 5 March 2010, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124359632> (accessed 9 December 2013).

<sup>23</sup>For example, Clinton’s stated objectives for health care reform, and public support for government to do more in health care remained high, even as support for his health care reform plan declined. Moreover, in a slightly different but related way, the labels that are used are also controlling the public perception towards Obama’s health care reform. In a September 2013 *CNBC* opinion poll, Obamacare was viewed more negatively than the Affordable Care Act (ACA), forty-six percent for Obamacare compared to thirty-seven percent for ACA. For more, see: “Gloomy Doctors and “Scared Public” Spurn Clinton Plan but Favor Reform Principles”, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 14 July 1994, <http://people-press.org/1994/07/14/gloomy-doctors-and-scared-public-spurn-clinton-plan-but-favor-reform-principles/> (accessed 28 August 2014); and Steve Liesman, “What’s in a Name? Lots When It Comes to Obamacare/ACA”, *CNBC*, 26 September 2013, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/101064954> (accessed 28 August 2014).

<sup>24</sup>Marc J. Hetherington, *Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

influence when not enough Democrats are willing to defend the label and the GOP has carte blanche to attack it, enhancing the negative perception of the label.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, given how the conservative message is dominant, anything tainted with the liberal/socialist big government agenda takes precedence over actual policy proposals.<sup>26</sup> Even conservative academics are not immune from making such allegations. A comment made during the Clinton presidency in 1998 by conservative political scientist Charles Kesler compares liberalism to communism:

A great deal of the galvanism of the conservative movement was in this combination of its opposition to Communism abroad and to liberalism at home, which was seen as a kind of domestic version of Communism abroad. . . .

After Communism's collapse, beginning in 1989, this link with liberalism — this link between Communism and liberalism — began to decay. . . .

Therefore, many American conservatives were led to believe that the decisive, political contest had already been won, or at least was about to be won . . .

It has become clear now that these conservative optimists, of whatever stripe, overestimated conservatism's successes.

. . . One of the great failures of conservative statesmanship today is to underestimate our enemy, to not see how deeply American politics and society have already been transformed by a century of liberalism.<sup>27</sup>

A more recent example is from another conservative political scientist, Paul Kengor. During the 2013 government shutdown, he claimed “Obama’s exploitation of the government shutdown (never let a good crisis go to waste) is a classic old method mastered by the likes of CPUSA [Communist Party USA]. It’s standard operating procedure. What you’re witnessing is Barack Obama’s “shutdown campaign” -- and with the liberal media dutifully

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<sup>25</sup>Also consider the view of Howard Gold in *Hollow Mandates* where he asserts that any shift to conservatism was done so by politicians and not the public; Howard J. Gold, *Hollow Mandates: American Public Opinion and the Conservative Shift* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 145-161. However, William Mayer in *The Changing American Mind* contends that the change from economic liberalism to socio-cultural liberalism benefited conservatives due to the natural conservatism of Americans on non-economic issues; William G. Mayer, *The Changing American Mind: How and Why American Public Opinion Changed Between 1960 and 1988* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 318-340.

<sup>26</sup>For examples, refer to footnote four for more on how the public perceives Obama and Democrats, as well as how conservatives further push this view.

<sup>27</sup>Charles R. Kesler, "Statesmanship for America's Future: The Value of Conservatism." *Vital Speeches of the Day* 64, no. 20 (1 August 1998): 616 and 620, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/221463666?accountid=14565> (accessed 12 April 2014).

on his side to amplify the effort”. He went on to state: “So, enjoy the spectacle of Obama’s shutdown campaign. For the extreme left, it’s really nothing new -- though, sadly, it’s totally new to have this emanating so egregiously from the White House. But, hey, this is the fundamental transformation that oblivious Americans elected”.<sup>28</sup>

Kengor’s dismissive comment of elector intelligence rejects the GOP’s claim to be the voice of the American people, and in fact highlights the party’s disdain for the public it allegedly represents. In sum, Americans do not share GOP hatred of government, but they fear it enough to oppose legislation that is associated with big government liberalism. Nonetheless, conservative Republicanism does have an Achilles’ heel, and it is the possible over dependency on southern conservatism.

In 1949, political scientist V.O. Key stated in *Southern Politics in State and Nation*: “The South may not be the nation’s number one political problem, as some northerners assert, but politics is the South’s number one problem”.<sup>29</sup> Whilst his statement referring to a one-party white minority dominance over southern politics may be outdated, the rationale for it remains a concern. According to journalists John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldrige, there “is a recurring fear that an overdominant Southern wing will drag the GOP onto the cliffs of extremism in the same way that the McGovernite wing pulled the Democrats too far Left during the 1970s”.<sup>30</sup> Journalist Michael Lind echoes this sentiment: “The failure of the Nation to Americanize the South has made it possible for the South . . . to attempt to

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<sup>28</sup>Paul Kengor, “Obama’s Shutdown Campaign”, *American Spectator*, 7 October 2013, <http://spectator.org/articles/56009/obamas-shutdown-campaign> (accessed 7 October 2013).

<sup>29</sup>V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, new ed. (1949; repr., Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 3.

<sup>30</sup>John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Why America is Different* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 263.

Southernize the United States”.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, any discussion on the South, conservatism and politics would be incomplete without noting the importance of race in America – as well as during the Obama presidency and into the future.<sup>32</sup>

As stated in this thesis, Republican conservatism now embraces *both* economic and social conservatism, placing it in line with traditional southern conservatism. Whilst the elitist views of conservatism have more opponents than supporters, conservatism itself still garners more support than liberalism as an ideology.<sup>33</sup> Without an unlikely liberal resurgence, the onus remains that conservatives have to deter enough voters to support Democrats in the House, Senate and White House on a consistent basis. And with the new GOP congressional majority of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, Republican conservatism is still stronger in Congress than the presidency. Nevertheless, the ongoing power struggle with the Tea Party may help to decide if the GOP becomes too extreme for America.

In the end, unless extreme socio-morals or changing demographics lead conservatism into political oblivion for a prolonged time, fear and distrust of government will be enough to make GOP conservatism a force to be reckoned with. Moreover, in combination with four-party politics, conservatism remains both the GOP’s strength and its weakness. Yet how

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<sup>31</sup>Michael Lind, *Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 193.

<sup>32</sup>For more, see: Doug McAdam and Karina Kloos, *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Enid Logan, *“At this Moment”: Barack Obama’s Presidential Candidacy and the New Politics of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 107-128; M.V. Hood III, Quentin Kidd and Irwin L. Morris, *The Rational Southerner: Black Mobilization, Republican Growth, and the Partisan Transformation of the American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); as well as Matthew W. Hughey and Gregory S. Parks, *Wrongs of the Right: Language, Race, and the Republican Party in the Age of Obama* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

<sup>33</sup>For more on southern elitism, consider: Augustus B. Cochran III, *Democracy Heading South: National Politics in the Shadow of Dixie* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 30-33, 41-43, 48-49, 61-63; and David Lublin, *The Republican South: Democratization and Partisan Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 2, 15-20, 28, 66, 70-72, 93-95, 113-115, 132, 159-162, 189-192, 218-219.



successful conservatism becomes will be determined in part by its rhetoric and how it will adapt to change and opportunity.

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