The Vietnam War was the central political issue of the 1960s and 1970s. This study by Seth Offenbach explains how the conflict shaped modern conservatism. The war caused disputes between the pro-war right and libertarian conservatives who opposed the war. At the same time, Christian evangelicals supported the war and began forming alliances with the mainstream, anti-communist right. This enabled the formation of the New Right movement which came to dominate U.S. politics at the end of the twentieth century. *The Conservative Movement and the Vietnam War* explains the right's changes between Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan.

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The Conservative Movement and the Vietnam War
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Seth Offenbach
To my family. I love you.
## Contents

*Acknowledgments*  
viii

Introduction: The Other Side of Vietnam  
1

**SECTION I**  
Conservatives and the Vietnam War  
23

1 The Long 1964  
25

2 United by Strategy  
53

**SECTION II**  
Problems  
81

3 Dissent of the Libertarians  
83

4 Negative Conservatism  
109

5 The Problem of Richard Nixon  
132

**SECTION III**  
Redemption  
153

6 Christianity and Conservatism  
155

Conclusion: From Goldwater to Reagan  
185

*Index*  
197
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Introduction
The Other Side of Vietnam

On the evening of Monday, September 7, 1964, millions of Americans turned on their televisions to watch a rerun of *NBC Monday Night at the Movies*. In its final week of summer reruns, NBC selected the 1951 classic *David and Bathsheba*, starring Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward. At the time, NBC was competing against a heavy-hitting CBS Monday night lineup that included *The Lucy Show*, one of the most popular programs on television. Despite its comparatively lower ratings, this edition of *NBC Monday Night at the Movies* made television history, not for the movie it aired, but because of a 60-second advertisement. During a commercial break, an adorable 3-year-old girl with flowing brown hair and pale freckled skin, wearing a sleeveless white shirt and shorts, was standing in a non-descript field pulling petals from a flower. As she pulled off each petal, and with birds chirping in the background, she counts: “one, two, three, four, five.” Suddenly, without missing a beat, and in the way that only an innocent child could do, she makes a mistake but continues counting “seven, six, six, eight, nine.”¹ This is a beautiful moment that would make any parent smile, as surely they would have seen their children make similar mistakes. However, accurate accounting skills were not the purpose of this advertisement. Suddenly, instead of her voice saying ten, the audience hears a man speaking over a loudspeaker and beginning a familiar countdown: “ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero.” As this second countdown continues, the camera violently zooms into the child’s eye, and at the end viewers witness a nuclear explosion. Following the full explosion is the familiar tagline: “Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd; the stakes are too high to stay home.” The message was unmistakably clear; voting for Lyndon Johnson’s opponent, Republican Senator Barry Goldwater, in the upcoming presidential election would mean risking nuclear Armageddon.²

Though the advertisement aired only once, during the rerun of a program that garnered middling ratings, the ‘Daisy’ ad was known by almost everyone throughout the nation. Television news programs replayed the ad. The Republican Party denounced it as blatant hysteria-inducing nonsense. However, the ad grasped the American imagination. Two and a
half weeks after airing on NBC, *Time* put a still-frame image of the ad on the cover of its magazine. In the lead story, “Nation: The Fear & the Facts,” *Time* proclaimed that Goldwater “has, in many ways, given the impression of a man who does not really know what he is talking about, and should not, therefore, be permitted to put his atomic ignorance into effect as national policy.”\(^3\) Johnson’s strategy of painting Goldwater as a warmongering, anti-communist, nuclear extremist was among the many factors that helped Johnson win the 1964 presidential election with over 90% of the electoral votes.

The ‘Daisy’ ad was a response to nationally televised comments made by Goldwater three months earlier. In May 1964, on a Sunday morning news program on ABC, Goldwater mulled the possibility of “defoliation of the forests [in Indochina] by low yield atomic weapons.” These bombs could disrupt the routes which the Vietnamese communists were using to bring supplies into South Vietnam in its fight against the anti-communist government.\(^4\) Almost immediately after Goldwater made the comments, he seemed to recognize that discussing the use of a nuclear bomb as a first-strike weapon against a significantly weaker opponent to destroy ‘supply routes’ was inhumane and politically untenable to most Americans, and he began backtracking. He claimed he was merely passing along a suggestion he heard in a military briefing and that he was not advocating the use of nuclear weapons.\(^5\) Goldwater’s explanation offered cold comfort. As soon as the interview aired, most of the media portrayed the comments as an endorsement of using atomic weapons in a fight against the much weaker North Vietnam.\(^6\) Goldwater’s error served to underline Johnson’s overall argument—as indicated by the ‘Daisy’ campaign commercial—that Goldwater could not be trusted to control the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The media’s reaction to Goldwater’s comments, along with the ‘Daisy’ ad, helped establish a national consensus that a Goldwater presidency could lead to nuclear war. This fear resulted in Goldwater’s historic defeat that November, which injured the conservative movement.

Prior to 1964, the conservative movement was as cohesive as any national movement could be. Members of the movement agreed on basic ideas of how they would like to reshape society and the ideological disagreements (which all movements have) were discussed in a respectful tone. Part of the reason for its cohesion was its shared goal of electing Goldwater president. Though not all conservatives agreed on everything, Goldwater’s ideology and personality helped him appeal to the vast majority of conservatives and served as a point of unity among movement members. His vision for the United States was aided by the conservative intellectual elite who wrote, published, and mass distributed his book *The Conscience of a Conservative*. Despite this questionable provenance, the book left a clear and lasting impression on millions of conservatives, helping to unify the movement behind a radically different vision
Introduction

of the nation than the one presented by President Johnson. With Goldwa-
ter’s defeat, the right needed to regroup. As this book demonstrates, the
decade following Goldwater’s defeat was a time when the conservative
movement fractured—and the debate surrounding the Vietnam War was
at the heart of this disunity.

The Vietnam War, once labeled the United States’ longest war, changed
the nation’s history, and yet no historian of conservatism has set out to
fully understand and analyze how the multiple reactions by conservatives
to the war changed the movement’s identity or ideology. Sandra Scanlon’s
*The Pro-War Movement* demonstrates that right-wing pro-war groups
supported the war by promoting patriotism. She also analyzes how Rich-
ard Nixon, while in the White House, was able to use his position to
manufacture support for the war, which helped him retain support from
average Americans, including members of the conservative grassroots. At
the same time, Nixon engendered much opposition from conservative
elites who were frustrated by his foreign policy and war plans. During
the same period when conservative elites were fighting Nixon, at the start
of the 1970s, as shown in Nicole Hemmer’s *Messengers of the Right*,
conservative intellectual leaders lost touch with the grassroots activists.
Scanlon’s work demonstrates that Nixon used the pro-war protests to
gain support among grassroots conservatives for his war policies. *The
Conservative Movement and the Vietnam War* builds upon Scanlon’s and
Hemmer’s work by explaining how the reaction by the movement’s intel-
lectual elite to Nixon drove a wedge between various strands of conserv-
ative thought. The movement’s elite, which was no longer unified, could
not figure out how to get past the problems of the Vietnam War. It was
not until after the war ended in 1973 that they reformulated the move-
ment and become the more powerful and unified group known as the
New Right.7

Prior to the Americanization of the Vietnam War in 1965, conserva-
tives were working together toward the goal of nominating and then
electing Goldwater as president. Conservatives succeeded in surprising
the political world by taking over the Republican Party from Goldwa-
ter’s moderate opponents such as New York’s Governor Nelson Rock-
efeller and Pennsylvania’s Governor William Scranton. Once the election
ended with disastrous results, conservatives did not disappear, but the
movement began to fissure. Conservative intellectuals tried to keep the
movement alive by promoting aggressive anti-communism and pro-war
advocacy. However, uniting in support of an unpopular war proved
untenable as conservatism failed to act as a unified movement. Instead,
libertarian anti-war advocates were marginalized within the conservative
movement and Christian evangelical anti-communists started to identify
more closely with the mainstream right. At the same time, a malaise set
in whereby conservative intellectual leaders felt constrained by the never-
ending and unpopular war. All of these changes figured in the creation of
the New Right coalition that came to dominate U.S. politics during the last quarter of the twentieth century and beyond.

The New Right would not have been possible without the period of fracture which occurred within the conservative movement during the Vietnam War years. Historians such as Neil Young, Daniel Williams, and David Courtwright have analyzed how culture and religion helped conservatives create the New Right political movement. But it took mainstream conservative support for the unpopular war, coupled with libertarian opposition to the war and Christian evangelical support for the war, to truly change the nature of conservatism. Additionally, Nixon’s Vietnam policies set the movement back even further as the intellectual elite fell into a malaise, unable to respond to the Republican president whose policies they disapproved of. This set the stage for the movement to be reborn with a stronger focus on religion and morality once the Vietnam War ended in 1973.

All of this occurred as a result of a conflict which was started by a liberal Democratic president. In 1965, Johnson and members of his administration drove foreign policy, while Goldwater and the conservative movement were responding to events beyond their control. Certainly, conservatives backed the fighting in Vietnam, but this support came after Johnson increased the U.S. military presence there in 1965. During the presidential campaign, Johnson presented himself as a dove, while simultaneously planning for an escalated military encounter; Goldwater portrayed himself as a hawk, while expressing uncertainty about the wisdom of sending U.S. troops to Vietnam. This stereotype that Goldwater supported the war and Johnson was a reluctant commander-in-chief was reinforced by events that followed the 1964 presidential campaign. After the election, Goldwater granted ex post facto support for Johnson’s military expedition while advocating for Johnson to fight the war more aggressively than he was. By comparison, Johnson fought the war with frequent pauses and promises that peace was around the corner. Because of their actions after 1964, it was easy to assume that conservative support for the Vietnam War was simplistic and unwavering; this view is false, as libertarian conservatives opposed the war and pro-war conservatives often recognized the limits of U.S. firepower in winning the war.

The consequences of the movement’s support for the war were more far-reaching than previous historians have recognized. This book offers a new historical understanding of the relationship between the conservative movement and the Vietnam War. Whereas previous accounts focused on the right’s support for the war and the troops, this book adds the voices of the anti-war right to the mix. It also explains how intellectual conservatives were dissatisfied with their decision to support the increasingly unpopular war, especially while they opposed the military strategies used to fight the war. This caused conflict between the anti-war right and the rest of the movement and between the intellectual elite and many grassroots members. By focusing on conservative intellectual leaders who
vied for the support of a fracturing movement, and by analyzing how those intellectuals understood events on the ground, historians are better able to explain the changes which took place within the movement during the decade that followed Goldwater’s defeat.

For many conservatives, Vietnam was the central issue which drew them to the movement, making it an important event which must be studied. Despite the war’s important role in shaping modern conservatism, only one other work, Scanlon’s *The Pro-War Movement*, explains conservatives’ support for the Vietnam War. Scanlon’s work serves as the basis for my study, as I further her line of inquiry to better understand how support for ‘America’s Longest War’ altered conservatism. By focusing on the conservative movement and its leaders, this book is better able to explain how the war changed U.S. politics.

Rather than chronicling the many military suggestions made by conservatives, which Scanlon covers well, this book delves into the diverse ways in which the movement fought to stay relevant in the face of rising anti-war sentiment throughout the nation. Additionally, the book inspects how the intellectual elite focused more energy on reacting to the rising liberal anti-war movement than to fomenting a renewed and unified conservative movement. Complicating matters for the right was the increasingly acrimonious dispute between pro- and anti-war conservatives. At the same time, the mainstream right’s support for the war helped Christian evangelical anti-communists recognize that the two groups might have many shared interests. As conservatives fought about the war, the movement suffered through what many elites described as a ‘malaise’ in the late 1960s and early 1970s that temporarily stunted the growth of conservatism in the United States. Most secondary works do not address this crisis within conservatism, likely because it cannot be easily explained within the larger context of the right’s ascent from Goldwater to Nixon to Reagan. But, as this book demonstrates, the assent was not uniform, and the problems were real.9 The crisis the movement encountered resulted from debates about the Vietnam War, and those debates ultimately changed the nature of conservatism in the United States.

**Defining Conservatism**

The conservative movement of the late 1960s was not comprised of a monolithic group of individuals with identical beliefs. The movement was made up of a large coalition of disparate individuals who self-identified as conservatives. They understood that within the broadly accepted spectrum of political ideologies, they were on the right; for this reason, I use the terms ‘conservative movement’ and ‘the right’ interchangeably throughout my study. Though part of a shared political group, the members of the conservative movement had different guiding philosophies and different intellectual leaders who inspired each sect.
Introduction

Generally, post-World War II conservatism grew out of four groups which were guided by different ideologies:

- **Libertarians** supported small government policies to limit the amount of federal intervention in everyday life, which they understood as leading to increased individual choice and freedom. Libertarians were often inspired by writings such as Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* and Ayn Rand’s *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*.

- Big business **capitalists** often cared most about minimizing government regulations to maximize private profit, justified with arguments that private profit improves national economic output. This philosophy grew out of the anti-New Deal ideas of industrialists Pierre and Irénée du Pont, and other members of the du Pont family, as well as Ohio Senator Robert Taft. This was also the branch of conservatism most closely allied with the Republican Party.

- **Traditionalists** believed that their broad understanding of community values was necessary for society and they wanted to inject a discourse of Christian religious morality about good and evil into public policy debates. Leo Strauss and Russell Kirk were two influential thinkers within traditionalist conservatism.

- **Muscular anti-communists** argued that the Soviet Union was an existential threat to liberty worldwide and called on the United States to achieve victory in the Cold War. Though many non-conservatives considered themselves muscular anti-communists, this group of conservative anti-communists did not always view liberal and Republican anti-communist activists as being strong enough to fight the communists. Because the Soviet Union represented a big government, anti-capitalist, atheistic, and expansionist power, most conservatives supported muscular anti-communism. Despite anti-communism’s prevalence in U.S. society, muscular anti-communism still served as the glue which helped keep many conservatives united. Pundit James Burnham was an example of an influential muscular anti-communist.

Though not diametrically opposed to one another, each group had its own area of focus, be it government regulation, individual freedom, morality and religiosity within society, or an interventionist anti-communism. Despite their independent areas of focus, members of the right often had shared values which served to bind them together in reaction against a more liberal society. These are generalizations which help us better understand the past.

Some conservatives, such as *National Review*’s Frank Meyer, made explicit efforts to unite the movement under the banner of fusionism. This was Meyer’s way of finding common ground among all the sects of the conservative movement by highlighting their similarities. This concept was nicely articulated in his book *What is Conservatism?* Though
fusionism’s influence on the movement is debatable, elite conservatives often used the term to describe themselves in the 1960s, demonstrating that they believed there was overlap and respect among the different groups of conservatives.

To better understand the different groups and their roles in shaping the movement, this book breaks them into three basic parts: intellectual leaders, grassroots followers, and the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), the organization whose primary aim was to connect the elite to the movement. This study focuses on the intellectual leaders whose goals were to shape the movement’s ideas in a non-academic manner and to change society’s culture and laws. Individuals such as William F. Buckley, Jr., William Rusher, Henry Hazlitt, Allan Ryskind, Phyllis Schlafly, Clarence Manion, Ralph de Toledano, James Burnham, and Walter Judd, all played an outsized role in the national conservative media and political organizations and fall into this category. This book then traces local and regional activists’ responses to those ideas by examining the stories, anecdotes, and ideas which were bandied about by local and regional leaders whose influence was felt exclusively within that person’s community. By unearthing these previously buried sources, this book demonstrates that conservative intellectual leaders were not whistling in the wind. Local papers and pamphlets, along with several oral interviews which I conducted with former activists, offer a view of the mindset of some non-national activists. Each chapter references the role played by YAF in order to supplement our understanding of the goals of the national grassroots. This youth organization aimed at politicizing the younger generation to the conservative cause. YAF never set about creating intellectual ideas for the conservative movement; instead, its goal was to galvanize individuals to big-tent conservatism as outlined by both Goldwater’s Conscience and the intellectual standards of the National Review. Virtually all of the former YAFers whom I interviewed praised Conscience as an influential work, and the majority noted the role of Buckley and the National Review in shaping the organization’s overall philosophy. YAF was important because it organized foot soldiers for Goldwater’s 1964 campaign and its leaders eventually played a role in reshaping the conservatism which bloomed by the end of the 1970s.

One of the reasons for Barry Goldwater’s popularity among conservatives is that he was the first of only two politicians of the twentieth century to transcend the different right-wing ideologies and speak to all of the segments of the movement. Aside from Goldwater, Ronald Reagan was the only other politician who inspired and united these various factions of conservatives in the twentieth century. Without Goldwater leading the way, it is doubtful that there would have been a coalition for Reagan to lead.

Goldwater’s big-tent conservatism is on display in his book Conscience of a Conservative. Although Conscience was ghost-written for
Goldwater, the Arizona senator certainly endorsed the book’s arguments as they represented his political beliefs. In *Conscience*, Goldwater argues for as small of a federal government as possible. In the book’s colloquial tone, he declares that the best way to achieve this is for politicians to “understand that their first duty as public officials is to divest themselves of the power they have been given.”11 *Conscience* wove this idea of small government ideology with libertarian ideals of individual freedom. Goldwater’s first chapter also discusses the nature of man using words and ideas about good, bad, and tyranny which appeals to traditionalists. Additionally, later chapters counter integrationist and feminist arguments about the role of the federal government in promoting rights for non-white males. Finally, Goldwater’s family history of owning a department store in Arizona, and his personal antagonism toward New Deal-style government intervention in his family business, made him favored by business owners and capitalists.

Goldwater’s popularity also stemmed from his image as someone who was a pure political thinker and a man of principle, an image which *Conscience* furthered. The starkest example of this is his view about race and states’ rights. In chapter 3 of *Conscience*, he argues that:

> Not only [does states’ rights] prevent the accumulation of power in a central government that is remote from the people and relatively immune from popular restraints; it also recognizes the principle that essentially local problems are best dealt with by the people most directly concerned.12

In the subsequent chapter, Goldwater applies his logic of states’ rights to civil rights law by arguing that the federal government has no right to force the integration of Southern public schools. Goldwater states that racial integration should be promoted by state and local governments, even though these were the same groups maintaining the system of violent racial segregation. Despite Goldwater’s belief that the federal government should not override state-based segregation laws, he still proclaims that “it is both wise and just for negro children to attend the same schools as whites.”13 Goldwater’s stance on civil rights and states’ rights allowed him to try to have it both ways; he received the Endorsement of segregationist Southerners who supported small government policies when it regarded race relations, while also publicly supporting the theoretical idea of racial desegregation which was popular among Northeastern conservatives who claimed to not be racist (a large group in the 1960s).14 In short, *The Conscience of a Conservative* is a political manifesto which offered some support to virtually all conservatives and held great sway in shaping future conservative principles.

Despite Goldwater’s big-tent approach to philosophical conservatism, it is the communist menace that helped him serve as a unifying figure among
Introduction

conservatives. Chapter 10, a seminal chapter that takes up approximately one-third of the ten-chapter book, focuses on this topic, opening with Goldwater’s declaration that the big difference between the United States and Soviet Union was that the Soviets “are determined to win the conflict, and we are not.” Goldwater firmly believed that the United States needed a clearer and more aggressive plan for victory over the Soviet Union and the international communist system. This call for the defeat of the Soviets helped unite conservatives in the early 1960s. It also helped raise Goldwater’s profile within the movement; after all, libertarians, traditionalists, and capitalists all hated communism. Anti-communism in the early 1960s was a unifying force within U.S. conservatism.

Despite being a unifying force, anti-communism was not the exclusive purview of the right in the 1960s. Many Democratic, liberal, and left-wing intellectuals, politicians, and political organizations strenuously opposed communism throughout the twentieth century. These anti-communists worked in the Democratic administrations of Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson, backed the liberal organization Americans for Democratic Action, and wrote for left-wing political magazines. Despite this, as political historian Donald T. Critchlow writes: “postwar conservatives turned the Communist issue against the liberals and the Democratic party, even as Democrats pursued and supported Cold War policies.” Often conservatives viewed their own anti-communist approach as superior and believed that too many on the other side of the political spectrum were unwilling to do what was necessary to achieve victory in the Cold War. To many of these muscular anti-communist conservatives, anything short of victory was unacceptable.

This anti-communist philosophy by conservatives meant that they found themselves fighting against liberal and leftist anti-communists almost as much as they opposed communists and communist sympathizers. While the majority of Americans opposed communism throughout the twentieth century, the right and left often fought about the best methods to oppose Communist International. For example, conservative muscular anti-communists supported Senator Joseph McCarthy long after he was discredited by the national media. In comparison, left-wing anti-communists such as Arthur Schlesinger and James Wechsler believed that McCarthy went too far in his anti-communist actions. As historian Kevin Mattson describes, conservatives believed that U.S. anti-communism should be “fixated and hardened,” whereas liberal anti-communists thought it should be “a starting point to prompt a broader debate about the future of American politics.” The two anti-communist groups had fundamentally different ideas about how to oppose communism.

In practice, this meant that right-wing anti-communists such as James Burnham endorsed the idea that the United States needed a plan for victory which included aggressively supporting the United States’
international allies. As Goldwater wrote in his best-selling book *Why Not Victory?:*

There can no longer be any doubt about our situation in today’s world: we are at war; not a cold war but a real war—we can call it the Communist War. . . . We may well be now engaged in a phase of World War III which if we lose will mean the end of freedom as we know it. . . . Victory is the key to the whole problem; the only alternative is—obviously—defeat.18

Comparatively, many Democratic, left-wing, and liberal anti-communists often endorsed ideas such as containment and a more nuanced discussion of anti-communist policies throughout the world. Most Americans opposed communism, but what that meant, and the methods they endorsed—varied widely across the political spectrum.

Aside from opposing communism, the conservative movement was reacting to the politics and ideas of the time. Specifically, the right was in constant conversation with and reacting to the ideas promoted by the left and liberals. In the 1960s, many on the left were trying to form a national coalition which would reshape society using new ideas of economic, racial, and gender equality. The left, as described by scholars such as Terry Anderson, Van Gosse, John Andrew, and others, was focused on sharing the growing wealth in the United States with those left behind. This meant using federal government programs to support a redistribution of funds to the poor while increasing taxes on the rich. Additionally, others on the left supported amplifying the political voices of minorities, including (but not limited to) African Americans, Latinos, homosexuals, prisoners, and Native Americans. Throughout all of this, feminists, who mostly associated with the left, tried to change gender relations by promoting female equality in all facets of society. Had liberals and the left been able to unite into one powerful movement, and had it encountered no opposition, the United States would have looked radically different by the end of the 1960s compared to how it looked at the beginning of the decade.19

Conservatives regularly argued that the left’s frequent critiques of the United States at times made it appear to be more critical of the United States than of the Soviet Union. In the words of *National Review* publisher William Rusher: “To the New Left arch-villain, quite simply, is the United States of America. They loathe it with a passion that disdains disguise . . . they root for an American military defeat in Vietnam.”20 This grim description was part of a larger view of the entire left, which included liberals, Democrats, and the New Left, all of which were being painted with the same brush. To Rusher and many conservatives like him, their political opponents could not be trusted to fully defend either the nation or the Constitution.
To conservatives, it often appeared as though left-wing Americans were looking for large-scale solutions to rectify social ills. This meant support for national civil rights legislation, federal protections for women in the workplace, more power for labor unions, and an expansion of welfare programs. Although there were serious debates and divisions between the left, liberals, Democrats, and the New Left, these were glossed over by conservatives who simply saw all four groups threatening the right’s worldview. That the conservative movement was dominated by white males who came from the middle and upper income bracket is not a surprise, since they were often fighting against people who threatened their status within society. Conservatives, however, did not see their achievements as a result of a racist or sexist society; instead, they believed that it was through their hard-earned efforts. These conservatives feared that by giving up local control through federal civil rights or women’s rights legislation, the nation was enabling the government to pick ‘winners’ at the expense of other members of society. Additionally, any change to gender relations served to threaten traditional norms and alter the nation’s moral center, which Frustrated traditionalist conservatives who believed that long-standing gender roles were part of the national culture. Regarding liberal unionization efforts, the right had long claimed that unions hurt businesses by making hiring and firing decisions difficult while increasing costs and limiting workplace opportunities for strong and competent workers. Finally, federal anti-poverty programs, epitomized by Johnson’s Great Society programs of the era, were a central bane of many conservatives. His programs were often described as expensive patronage projects which helped get Democrats elected but did little to get people jobs or improve their lives, thus demoralizing and infantilizing poor Americans while raising taxes on hard-working individuals. In the minds of conservatives, liberal America was a place which infringed upon personal liberty while discouraging hard work.

In addition to their social and economic agendas, a faction within the New Left began advocating for an international revolutionary struggle against the capitalist world powers. This meant that while the U.S. military was fighting communists in Vietnam—and largely as a response to the war—some New Lefters were advocating for an American revolution. Following in the footsteps of Hollywood icon Jane Fonda, some New Left leaders traveled to Hanoi to promote the causes of worldwide revolution. Scholars Judy Wu and Lien-Hang Nguyen have skillfully argued that the North Vietnamese government successfully used the destruction wrought by the U.S. bombs to create an international feeling of comradery between members of the revolutionary Global South and the U.S. New Left. For conservatives, the existence of these radicals and their international connections during a time of war meant that all on the left were on the side of treason. This helped unite many conservatives, but as
this book explains, it also pushed some libertarians out of the movement while limiting conservatism’s ascent.

**Divisions Over Vietnam**

Following Goldwater’s 1964 defeat, there was no national leader or issue to rally around and support. The closest conservatives came to a unifying political leader was Ronald Reagan. However, he was a retired actor without any political experience in 1965, and it took another decade until he became a serious presidential candidate. At the precise moment in history when the right found it hard to unite around politics and policies, it also found itself leaderless; the movement suffered. Political activists began disagreeing with greater furor as the movement risked succumbing to infighting which could have led to a splintering of the right and historical irrelevance. During the decade which followed Goldwater’s defeat, those on the right of the political spectrum failed to act as a unified movement.

Following the 1964 election, the right’s intellectual leadership began searching for something which could help keep the movement united. At first, they believed that the Vietnam War could serve as a point of unification; after all, conservatives believed that victory in the Cold War meant never giving up to communist aggression. These conservatives began arguing that the United States could not afford to lose the Vietnam War. Their logic was simple: the United States was the stronger nation, and the only way to fight communism was to demonstrate strength. To them, only a lack of willpower or a poor military strategy could sabotage the U.S. effort. Transforming into a pro-war movement fell in line with the right’s muscular anti-communism. Additionally, many feared that if Vietnam fell, then all of Indochina and eventually Southeast Asia would be susceptible to communist aggression.

While most of the right’s leadership was pro-war, this stance was not unanimous. A growing group of conservatives opposed U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. These anti-war conservatives, who were often libertarians, were a small and silent minority at the start of the war, but as it dragged on, they became louder. Many of these libertarians, led by the political activist Karl Hess and intellectual Murray Rothbard, began sounding similar to the war’s leftist opponents, decrying the draft as an anti-democratic institution and labeling the United States an imperialist nation, while also opposing the war because it increased the power of the military-industrial complex and national security state. These individuals refused to continue supporting a war which risked the lives and liberty of millions of Americans while also expanding the power of the U.S. government.

Complicating matters further, there were others on the right who opposed the war because they thought it was a distraction from the main targets of the Cold War: China and the Soviet Union. These conservatives were a minority within the movement, and are exemplified by Phyllis
Schlaflty. They believed that the United States was wasting time by fighting the Vietnamese, who were mere stooges of the Communist International menace. Instead, the United States needed to confront the Sino-Soviet threat. These conservatives argued that in order for the United States to prepare for victory in the Cold War, it needed to spend more money on the military-industrial complex to improve its offensive and defensive weaponry. The Vietnam War was a waste of resources. Once the war ended, this group effortlessly rejoined the mainstream right, but while the war was ongoing, they refused to agree that Vietnam was a logical place for the United States to spend its resources. The differences between the pro- and anti-war conservatives started to fracture the movement, which ultimately was only saved once the war ended and other issues such as culture came to dominate the movement.

Despite the problems facing conservatism, the right’s shift to becoming a pro-war movement meant that it became an increasingly hospitable home for Christian evangelical anti-communists, who fought to push the United States into a more religious and anti-communist direction. As the war dragged on, they recognized that they had much in common with the pro-war, mainstream conservative movement. Prior to the war, evangelicals were not closely associated with the right, but by the time the war ended in 1973, it was clear that conservatism provided a natural political home for this group. By 1974, the New Right, which integrated Christian evangelicals, was starting to form.

**Vietnam and the Birth of the Reagan Revolution**

Fundamental disagreements about the war altered the conservative movement and its ideology, leading to the newly reformulated conservative movement known as the New Right. One of the biggest differences between the New Right and the conservatism of the early 1960s (Goldwater’s era) was the role of Christian evangelicals. The departure of many libertarians and the realization of many evangelical anti-communists that they had similar Cold War views as the mainstream right created the space for the conjoining of evangelical anti-communists into the right and the formation of the New Right. This study argues that the New Right rose as a direct response to the failure of the 1960s conservatism and the divisions concerning the Vietnam War.

The New Right was made up of politically active individuals who opposed the anti-war movement even after the war itself was over. They fought against many of the left’s social values of the era, including abortion rights, gay rights, affirmative action, welfare, and feminist-endorsed government policies. These New Right activists were united by their moral values, religious beliefs, class consciousness, anti-communism, racial identity, and their feeling of ‘being left behind.’ In short, they disliked the changing values of the 1960s.
Religion was not a new part of the conservative identity in the 1970s, as traditionalists were long-standing members of the right. However, religion’s influence grew proportionally as the anti-war movement increased in the United States. One of the few groups which was not closely affiliated with conservatism but which staunchly supported the Vietnam War was anti-communist evangelical Christians. As this book explains, evangelical support for the war, coupled with the libertarian opposition to it, transformed the conservative ideology in a way that had serious implications for the New Right movement of the 1970s and beyond.

The Christian evangelicals who supported the war identified themselves as anti-communist. Many of these Christian evangelicals viewed the world through the teleological lens of the ‘end of days,’ waiting for the return of Jesus Christ. Part of this theology includes an active opposition to the Devil. These individuals saw the Soviet Union as an aggressively atheistic nation which denied freedom of religion to its citizens. Thus, they concluded that if the Devil sided with communism, then certainly the United States should work to support South Vietnam with as much gusto as possible.

The changes taking place within the national political discourse helped foster the changes within the movement. During Goldwater’s two-year campaign, the welfare state redistribution programs and the Civil Rights Movement were the prominent issues in society. The libertarian philosophy which opposes large government programs and supports states’ rights was a necessary component to conservatism in the early 1960s. But by the early 1970s, cultural changes were speeding up. This, coupled with the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision which legalized a woman’s right to an abortion, led to a more powerful feminist movement. Religion and morality were necessary to oppose these movements. With more grassroots evangelicals involved in both politics and conservatism, and with fewer libertarians associating with conservatism, the movement needed to change. Individuals in leadership positions found the right’s ideology slowly shifting as grassroots conservatives cared more and more about culture and religion.

The Conservative Movement and the Vietnam War

The politics surrounding the Vietnam War can never be fully removed from the politics of the decade in question. Other issues helped to shape the future of modern conservatism and modern politics that had little to do with the Vietnam War. During this period, the Great Society was reshaping how Americans viewed the government. At the same time, and for reasons unrelated to the war, Christian evangelicals were slowly increasing their involvement in politics. However, it is crucial to understand the effects of the war and how it shaped the rise of modern conservatism. The politics surrounding the Vietnam War both divided and
united the movement, while explaining how the right was able to succeed in U.S. politics.

The six chapters which follow are divided thematically into three sections. Section I, which comprises Chapters 1–2, focuses on the specific policy proposals of the conservative movement and what various elite conservatives were saying about the Vietnam War. Section II, which comprises Chapters 3–5, focuses on major problems facing conservatism: the libertarian anti-war activists, an oppositional identity, and Nixon’s retaking control of the Republican Party. Section III, which comprises Chapter 6 and the Conclusion, will examine how the movement was able to recover through an infusion of Christian anti-communism and create the New Right.

Chapter 1, ‘The Long 1964,’ covers the right’s response to the war in Vietnam up to the point of Americanization in March 1965. Prior to this, the movement’s intellectual energy was focused on other Cold War hotspots. As this chapter demonstrates, the Vietnam War was not a war of the right’s choosing. Subsequent chapters demonstrate the consequences of this.

Chapter 2, ‘United by Strategy,’ focuses on the right’s varied strategy suggestions throughout the war. Many elite conservatives argued that the United States needed to exert just a little more effort to achieve victory. Upon the election of Richard Nixon, many on the right were excited by the thought that he would follow through with his promise for peace with honor, but their hopes were soon disappointed. The chapter focuses on the ‘winning’ formula, as articulated by elite conservatives, who thought they had the solution to the war. This detailed analysis of these pro-war arguments grounds the rest of the book and explains why the majority of conservatives were deeply frustrated by the nation’s failure in the Vietnam War.

Chapter 3, ‘Dissent of the Libertarians,’ highlights libertarian opposition to the war, along with the general libertarian response to the changing political culture of the late 1960s. Many grassroots libertarians believed that the war, and the draft system that supported it, was morally wrong. This set the group on a path toward a collision with the general conservative movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Chapter 4, ‘Negative Conservatism,’ explores how the movement’s leadership created a virulent anti-Johnson and anti-left identity to compensate for the 1964 election defeat. This anti-Johnson identity kept the passions high among many grassroots supporters. It also fed into the idea that the right opposed Johnson’s military strategy, even while endorsing his war. As the war continued, it became increasingly hard for the right’s leaders to justify their support for the war and simultaneously oppose the strategy.

Chapter 5, ‘The Problem of Richard Nixon,’ explains how the right’s leadership struggled to respond to Nixon’s electoral victory in 1968.
Introduction

Nixon, though he did not support most conservative policy ideas, was still a Republican. This created disagreement between many of the conservative leaders, who were disappointed with his policies, and the movement followers who supported the Republican president. During the Nixon years, there was frequent discussion among the right’s leadership about a malaise within the movement. They were unable to fully break out from beneath the shadow of the president, while also being incapable of altering his foreign policies. This exacerbated the split between the elite and grassroots. This chapter focuses on this split.

Chapter 6, ‘Christianity and Conservatism,’ explains the ardent anti-communist roots of modern conservatism and the Religious Right’s support for anti-communism in the 1960s. Christian language and imagery proved to be potent features of anti-communism in the 1960s. By making the right a more hospitable place for Christian anti-communism, conservatives offered a more welcoming ideology for religious groups in the future. This commixing of support for the Vietnam War, fear of the ‘communist menace,’ and an ever-prominent religious discourse within society, explains the crucial role of Christian evangelical anti-communism in changing the conservative movement.

This examination of conservatism’s ideals, the reasons for the right’s struggle with the Vietnam War, and the nature of libertarians’ disagreement with the war will provide historians with a deeper and clearer picture of the turmoil and change that occurred within conservatism in the years following Goldwater’s 1964 defeat. Despite the right’s problems, the movement's anti-liberal identity kept it alive while Christian anti-communism revitalized the movement. When the New Right was born in the mid-1970s, it was a formidable political movement. The Vietnam War altered the conservative movement, allowing for a new political ideology to rise after the war’s conclusion.

Notes

1. The actor who played the child already knew how to count to 50 by the time the ad was filmed. She was specifically trained for the ad to make mistakes to increase the appeal she would have on the audience. Dan Nowicki, “‘Daisy Girl’ Political Ad Still Haunting 50 Years Later,” USA Today, September 7, 2014, www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2014/09/07/daisy-girl-political-ad-still-haunting-50-years-later/15246667/.


6. Some examples of the negative press Goldwater received following his nuclear comments:


9. One of the few secondary works which mentions the malaise is Hemmer, Messengers of the Right. She focuses her analysis on the media landscapes of this period.
12. Ibid., 22.
13. Ibid., 31 (emphasis in original).
14. There was a great tension in the early 1960s between segregation supporters in the South and the rest of the conservative movement. Though both supported ideas of states’ rights, many conservatives who hailed from the Northeast and West disapproved of the South’s Jim Crow segregation. In addition, many segregation supporters in the South were not small government conservatives; they were happy to support federal anti-poverty programs which sent money to their states. This tension made for awkward and uncomfortable bedfellows in the early 1960s. It is a topic which deserves further attention from scholars. However, this meant that segregationists were limited in their ability to lead and influence the movement outside of their home-bases in the South (with the exception of a few Southern elected politicians who brought important votes to the table).
19. This summary does not suffice to describe the complexity of the liberal and left worldviews. For a more complete description, see: Terry H. Anderson, The Movement and the Sixties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); John A. Andrew, Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee,
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21. The Great Society is the name of Johnson’s domestic policy proposals. In general, they included expanded the role of the federal government and promoting a stronger social safety net. The right strenuously opposed the majority of the Great Society, including its underlying principle.


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**Books and Journal Articles**


a guerrilla war in a ‘far-off’ nation. Conservatives were correct, as all of these proved to be insurmountable stumbling blocks, helping to explain why the war lasted as long as it did. Because they recognized these problems, many on the right refused to recommend or push Johnson into sending in a large contingent of troops. Bluntly stated, Vietnam was never the war that the right was itching for.

That conservatives did not always push the president to send in more troops does not mean that they were willing to see South Vietnam fall, quite the opposite. There is no doubt that the conservative movement’s anti-communist rhetoric and ideals helped convince Johnson that he needed to do anything in his power to protect the Republic of Vietnam. After all, the right was unwilling to consider the idea that a U.S. ally could ever fall to communist aggression. This was one of the major contradictions within the conservative discourse during the long 1964. There was the clear understanding that the United States had already lost South Vietnam, coupled with the claim that the United States could not allow any ally to fall. Johnson had, in the words of the National Review, a “cruel [choice], for there are fearful difficulties, costs and dangers along either horn of the dilemma: either in withdrawal or in the war’s enlargement.”55 Lacking a good option, the right put Johnson into a corner and no matter what happened they were going to blame him. While the movement was clearly reluctant to advocate for the Americanization of the war, it also could not endorse a troop withdrawal. This was the heart of the right’s Vietnam paradox.

Notes

2. This book will interchange the formal name Republic of Vietnam and the colloquial South Vietnam. It will also interchange North Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, as well as China and the People’s Republic of China.
3. This term was coined by Fredrik Logevall, Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of a War in Vietnam (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).
8. This is based on reviewing Human Events, National Review, and the Manion Forum in 1963 and 1964.


22. Ibid., 167.


28. In the 1960s, Vietnam was usually written as Viet Nam. This book preserves this earlier spelling when quoting documents from the era.

29. Letter from Judd to Goldwater, 1964, Box 30, Folder 5, Judd Papers.

32. For more on Lodge’s long-stating relationship with conservative Republi-
cans, see: Michael Bowen, The Roots of Modern Conservatism: Dewey, Taft,
and the Battle for the Soul of the Republican Party (Chapel Hill, NC: Univers-
33. Some examples: “Ideas for LBJ: Do We Have a Foreign Policy?,” Human
Events, March 14, 1964, 12; “This Week in Washington: Real Change on Viet
Nam?,” Human Events, March 14, 1964, 5; “Vietnamese Schizophrenia,” National
Review, March 10, 1964, 186.
34. “Vietnamese Schizophrenia,” 186; May Craig, “Our Country Needs A
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36. The ad was reprinted “without charge” in full in Human Events, May 30,
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dential Archives and Library, Austin, Texas. Hereafter referred to as WHCF,
LBJL.
Replace Fictions Fed Us from Our Asian Front Line,” Manion Forum,
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27, 1964, 22.
42. One of the most poignant examples of media tensions with Goldwater
about using nuclear weapons can be seen here: Art Buchwald, “Atomic Defo-
43. Victor Wilson, “A-Attack on Viet Jungle Proposed by Goldwater,” Washing-
44. Robert Alan Goldberg, Barry Goldwater (New Haven, CT: Yale University
Press, 1995), 221. “Text of Goldwater’s Speech Formally Opening Presiden-
45. Barry Goldwater, “Where I Stand on the Issues,” Human Events, October 24,
1964, 11.
46. Lyndon Johnson, “Report on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident,” Miller Center
president/lbjohnson/speeches/speech-3998.
47. Bruce Russett, Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of
48. Telegram. Daniel F. Foley, National Commander of the American Legion, to
Lyndon Johnson, August 5, 1964, Box 214, WHCF LBJL.
49. Détente was the policy of easing the Cold War tensions between the United
States and Soviet Union. Primary means of promoting détente were promot-
ing trade, increased bi-lateral summits, and negotiating international treaties


For examples of conservatives advocating attacking China, see:


54. Examples of historical works which offer some blame toward conservatives or Republicans are: Francis M. Bator, “No Good Choices: LBJ and the Vietnam/Great Society Connection,” *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 3 (June 2008): 329.


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Books and Journal Articles


government, which would allow communists and anti-communists to
form one government, in South Vietnam. To the conservative movement,
which based its ideology on the idea that anti-communist governments
could not give an inch to communist insurgents, accepting a unity gov-
ernment was tantamount to surrender.59

Three days before the presidential election, the front page of Human
Events again focused on the peace negotiations instead of on the elec-
tion. This time it bluntly called the rumored peace agreement “a dip-
losmatic and military disaster.”60 The editorial explained the agreement
would require the United States to leave South Vietnam, while the North
Vietnamese military would stay in the territory it controlled. Addition-
ally, the amount of U.S. supplies to South Vietnam would be limited, but
there would be no limits on the amount of supplies the North Vietnamese
could give to the South Vietnam communists. After eight years of war, the
Paris Peace Accords represented defeat for the United States.

Aside from the libertarian anti-war contingent, few conservatives
supported the Paris Peace Accords, signed in January 1973. Arguments
against the accord were scattershot. Some argued that victory for the
United States remained a possibility, while others wanted a stronger
demilitarized zone to help keep North Vietnamese troops away from
Saigon.61 Regardless, the private letters of conservatives and the con-
servative media indicate that there was widespread disapproval of the
agreement. They believed that fighting against communists required per-
severance and strength, and they held fast to the idea that the United
States could not give up the battle. After eight long years, they wanted
to see the United States victorious, regardless of the overall costs. In an
unfortunate twist for these conservatives, their decision to support Nixon
instead of Reagan in 1968 might well have precipitated defeat in the war
which they had steadfastly supported for so long.

Notes

1. Lyndon Johnson, “Address at Johns Hopkins University,” Miller Center Presi-
presidential-speeches/april-7-1965-address-johns-hopkins-university.
2. Ibid.
3. Joyce Mao, Asia First: China and the Making of Modern American Conser-
4. James Burnham, Containment or Liberation? An Inquiry into the Aims of
United States Foreign Policy (New York: J. Daly, 1953). Primary articles used:
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8. YAF Membership Numbers, Box 2, Folder 1, Patrick Dowd Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. Hereafter referred to as Dowd Papers.

There are some questions about the accuracy and meaning behind YAF’s membership numbers; however, historian Gregory L. Schneider makes a strong argument that it is a good representation for the amount of national support YAF likely received: Gregory L. Schneider, Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 40–41.


13. One of the most vocal proponents of this strategy, but not the only one, was retired General Thomas A. Lane, who wrote several articles about it in Human Events in December 1965 and January 1966.


Red China Grovels in Socialism,” Manion Forum, February 2, 1969, Box 84, Folder 1, Manion Papers.


21. First quotes from Thomas Lane, “The Peace Talks Are Immoral,” Human Events, July 6, 1968, 14 (430); last quote from Thomas Lane, “Hanoi's Escalation Requires Resumption of U.S. Bombing,” Human Events, June 8, 1968, 6 (358).

22. See Inter-office Memo Folder 1968, Buckley Papers.


32. Robert Kennedy’s illegal tracking of conservative groups via an IRS audit attack is understudied by historians. For more about it, see John A. Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), chap. 7.


34. I did not uncover any official documents demonstrating that Taiwan offered substantive troop support to the United States. According to secondary sources, the maximum contingent of non-U.S. troops assisting the South Vietnamese was 71,000 in 1969, and this number included Taiwan’s contribution of “small, highly trained units for covert operations.” George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002), 181.

Even if Taiwan’s offer was real, Nixon wrote to Albert Wedemeyer in 1965 that the South Vietnamese people would never accept help from a substantial contingent of Taiwanese soldiers because of the effects of colonization. Letter. Nixon to Wedemeyer, March 16, 1965, Box 53, Folder 30, Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.


Schlafly also wrote an article in *Human Events* on May 24, 1969 with Rear Admiral Chester Ward, “Are Soviets Planning Nuclear First Strike?” (7–10), and she helped sponsor a contest with YAF for the best essay on the topic “Should America Restore Its Nuclear Weapons Superiority?,” as noted in Box 341, YAF Folder, Group Research Papers.


42. “Sloganeering” quote from memo written by Teague to National Board of Directors, May 15, 1970, Box 2, Folder 3, Dowd Papers. Membership numbers from Box 2, Folder 1, Dowd Papers.
43. Letter. Toledano to Buckley, August 6, 1970, Box 1, Folder 12, Ralph de Toledano Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.
46. Letter. Judd to Emmet, July 1, 1970, Box 30, Folder 2, Judd Papers.
49. Ibid.
51. Three examples of the Right’s belief that the United States might lose the war:

In a letter from Christopher Emmet to Henry Kissinger, Emmet complains that Nixon should not appear optimistic in future predictions because there was already a large enough “so-called credibility gap.” Letter. Emmet to Kissinger, May 29, 1970, Box 83, Folder 15, Emmet Papers.


52. This meeting solidified the role of the VVAW as one of the more effective anti-war organizations, and introduced the nation to future Secretary of State and Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, who testified in Congress on behalf of the VVAW against the war in April 1971.
57. Although disapproval of détente is explicit in the preceding quote, it is also covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

61. An example of a conservative who believed that the United States could still win is:


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William F. Buckley Papers

**Books and Journal Articles**


biting sarcasm. The magazine also attacked the press for bothering to write about Hess, claiming the media covered his statements because he makes “good copy because he denounces his former comrades at every turn and claims, over and over, that his personal brand of libertarianism/anarchism is the only real conservatism.”49 National Review’s Frank Meyer, who helped coin the term fusionism, also chastised these libertarians because they refused to compromise, disregarded reality, and used rhetoric that was indistinguishable from the New Left. For Meyer, these individuals were not true conservatives; they were heretics.50

Grassroots conservatives joined the fracas. In March 1970, Stephen J. Sniegoski, writing in The Conservative, a student publication of the American University YAF, wrote an article titled “Libertarianism” wherein he opposed the anti-draft and anti-war crowd. “In this age,” he wrote, “the task of the conservative is to defend society and the principles of ordered community, not to quibble about the perfect freedom for the individual. Such idyllic talk should be consigned to the utopian ideologues of the Left.”51 In the same issue, Jay Mooney sarcastically suggested that the right should support legalization of drugs in order to help control the population—insinuating that drug users (including libertarian drug users) would eventually die of an overdose.52 Mooney’s and Sniegoski’s articles demonstrate the lack of respect emanating from grassroots traditionalists toward their former comrades. For the first time, conservatives expressed the same hatred and rage normally reserved for the left towards their former comrades. There remained little affection between traditionalists and libertarians.

Despite the differences between the leadership of the two groups, conservatives did not suddenly forget their libertarian roots. Many traditionalists still believed in a smaller federal government, even if they were not dogmatic about it. Thus, there were still many instances throughout the remainder of the 1970s, and through to contemporary times, when the conservative movement endorsed libertarian principles. However, while traditionalists retained their views about small government in some areas, as the decade wore on, they were unable to maintain the fusionism philosophy without a strong libertarian influence. This dichotomy served conservatism well as morality-based issues began to enter the national political discourse. Issues such as abstinence education, abortion, public displays of religion, and more were thrust into the public sphere. As the early 1970s progressed, there was a greater focus within conservative literature on morality, Christianity, and order within society. During these debates, libertarians had less influence on the movement’s leadership than they did before the Vietnam War. Over the long term, this affected the movement’s ideology.53

Notes
6. Sainsbury was one of the few libertarians who supported the Vietnam War. However, because he sided with many other libertarians on other issues, he was part of a larger contingent that was removed from YAF in 1967 and 1968. This is partially explained in Wayne Thorburn, A Generation Awakes: Young Americans for Freedom and the Creation of the Conservative Movement (Ottawa, IL: Jameson Books, 2010). Information from John Sainsbury, telephone interview with Seth Offenbach, June 28, 2012.
7. Rand had her own unique brand of libertarianism known as Objectivism. Many who read her works considered themselves Objectivists and were largely on the periphery of the conservative movement. Many others, however, sampled her work, along with that of other libertarians. This latter group is the one under discussion in this book because these people were more closely aligned with the Goldwater campaign in 1964, and also the group most likely to leave the right in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
14. Burns, Goddess, 144.
15. Rothbard’s articles appeared in innumerable newspapers and magazines ranging from the mainstream New York Times to the small and eccentric New Individualist Review. He also published more than a dozen books by several publishing houses including the small D. Van Nostrand Company and
the mainstream Macmillan Publishers. Finally, Rothbard was involved in the libertarian Society for Individual Liberty, the Ludwig von Mises Institute, and the founding of the Cato Institute.


27. Letter from Steel to Buckley, October 12, 1967, Correspondence Folder, William Steel, William F. Buckley Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. Hereafter referred to as Buckley Papers.

28. Letter from Steel to David Keene, November 13, 1969, Correspondence Folder William Steel, Buckley Papers.


33. There was much debate within YAF in 1969 and 1970 regarding the future of libertarianism in the movement. Libertarians often initiated this broader
debate. One example of this is a memo from Don Feder, State Chairman of Massachusetts YAF and a member of the National Board of Directors to the Libertarian Caucus, July 17, 1969. In this memo, Feder chides the LC for promoting a new ideology which would have “no place in it for Traditionalists.”

Feder to Libertarian Caucus, July 17, 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Down Papers. Quote from Letter from Allen Brandstater to Misc, November 26, 1969, Box 341, YAF Folder, Group Research Papers.

34. Letter from Don Feder to the Libertarian Caucus, July 17, 1969, Patrick Dowd Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. Hereafter referred to as Dowd Papers.

35. Follow-up email correspondence from Donald Ernsberger to Seth Offenbach, July 12, 2013.

36. “Rightists to Fight Student Left,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 31, 1969, 3A.

37. “Young Conservatives Hear Buckley Speech,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 29, 1969, 8A.

38. “Rightists to Fight Student Left,” 3A.


Still, historian Jonathan Schoenwald claims that the organization’s influence essentially disappeared in 1971 because of dramatic declines in membership numbers: Schoenwald, “No War, No Welfare, and No Damn Taxation,” 37–38.

The movement’s relative absence from historical records and publications throughout the late 1970s and into the 1990s indicates that Schoenwald was accurate, though the organization existed on paper for many years after its decline.


44. When arguing that libertarians should not try to rejoin YAF in 1970, Jerome Tuccille claimed that reconciliation was impossible since 78% of YAFers supported the Nixon administration’s policies, especially with regard to Vietnam.


47. Liberty League Pamphlet, undated [probably from early 1970s], Box 2, Folder 6, American Subject Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.


53. This theme is continued in Chapter 6, but it is also echoed in Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warrior: The Origins of the American New Right*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), where she discusses the transitional focus of conservatism from focusing on external to internal enemies.

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**Books and Journal Articles**
alliances libertarians proposed. Karl Hess’s 1969 announcement that he had more in common with the New Left than the right stung. Most conservative groups responded angrily to Hess, and their anger stemmed partially from Hess’s role in helping raise the profile of their political icon and then leaving the movement for the political enemies. It was one thing for Hess to become disillusioned with conservative thinking, but it was quite another for him to join the other side.

Libertarians joined hand in hand with the anti-war left at the same time that Richard Nixon was gaining power and influence in the Republican Party. Beginning around 1966, conservatives started to recognize that Nixon was the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 1968. They started discussing supporting the man whom they opposed in 1960. That they considered Nixon a potential ally is proof enough that conservatism was in trouble. As Chapter 5 demonstrates, the Nixon-conservative relationship of the late 1960s and early 1970s was turbulent and ultimately further divided the movement.

Notes

1. Memo from William Rusher to the Editors of National Review, April 7, 1969, Box 119, Folder 2, Rusher Papers.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
5. Memo from Teague to the National Board of Directors, May 15, 1970, Box 2, Folder 3, Patrick Dowd Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University [emphasis added]. Hereafter referred to as Dowd Papers.

14. As previously mentioned, Goldwater described the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used, if the military thought it necessary. The press described it as an explicit endorsement of using nuclear weapons in Vietnam. In reality, both Goldwater (who downplayed it) and the media (which hyped it) were not being accurate.


22. One example of the ad was on the back page of Human Events, February 7, 1970.


24. First quote from: Doug Black, Co-Chairman of Free Campus Coalition to Patrick Dowd, July 31, 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Dowd Papers.

Second quote from: Alan MacKay and Randal Teague to YAF Leaders, January 21, 1969, Box 1, Folder 12, Dowd Papers.

25. Letter from Wayne Thorburn to Roy Lewis, March 12, 1969, Box 1, Folder 1, Dowd Papers.

26. YAF membership numbers per state and region from 1965 and 1969, Box 2, Folder 1, Dowd Papers.

27. YAF membership numbers per state and region from 1969, Box 2, Folder 1, Dowd Papers.

28. Thor F. Nelson, President of YAF Merced, to Patrick Dowd, undated but clearly in 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Dowd Papers.

29. “Had Enough” poster, undated but likely from 1969, Box 1, Folder 12, Dowd Papers.

30. “Buckley, Al Capp to Speak at Youth Convention Here,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 20, 1969, 14A.


33. Number of chapters from David Keene speech reproduced as “YAF Celebrates 10th Anniversary,” Human Events, September 26, 1970, 8(752). Finances from CPA paperwork 1970, Box 3, Folder 2, Dowd Papers.

34. YAF Chapters 1970, Box 2, Folder 1, Dowd Papers.
   The number of YAF chapters went from 481 in January 1970, to 516 in April 1970, back down to 483 in October 1970. This rise, then fall, indicates that the chapters opened and closed frequently, likely because they were small and unstable. Unfortunately, there is no document naming which chapters opened or closed, nor explaining why they closed.

35. YAF finances from records reported by certified public accountants based on year ending July 31, 1970, Box 3, Folder 2, Dowd Papers.
   YAF chapter records from a count of YAF Chapter from April 15, 1970, Box 2, Folder 1, Dowd Papers.
   There is no record of who donated the extra $500,000 which YAF received in 1970, but speculation comes from an interview follow-up email correspondence with Randal Teague, July 14, 2016.


37. Memo from McCaffrey to William Buckley, William Rusher, and Jim McFadden, McCaffrey Correspondence 1966, William F. Buckley Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.


39. For more about Meyer’s relationship with the rest of the conservative movement, see Kevin J. Smart, Principles and Heresies: Frank S. Meyer and the Shaping of the American Conservative Movement (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2002).


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Recognizing that the end of the war created an opportunity for the right to grow, Jeffrey Bell, in his unusually long four-page article in *Human Events*, reminded his readers that the long-term prognosis for the movement remained positive and that conservatives must begin focusing on the tremendous opportunities presented to them by the end of the war. Libertarians had disagreed with the war. Many conservatives had lost faith in the war. Some organizations had stopped growing because of popular opposition to the war. Overall, focusing on Vietnam was self-defeating for conservatives, but at last it was over and “the conservative opportunity is greater than at any time in two generations.” Bell’s article turned out to be prophetic.

Notes
4. Quote from: Sarah Katherine Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 14. For a more complete look at the right’s relations to Nixon prior to the election, see Mergel, chapter 1.
   The reference to Munich is a reference to England and France’s appeasement of Hitler in the 1938 Munich Conference. Here, Goldwater was referring to the idea that conservatives gave up policy positions before the convention fight even started.
6. Buckley to Mark Burlingame, April 18, 1968, Inter-Office Memos, Correspondence 1968, William F. Buckley Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. Hereafter referred to as Buckley Papers.
   For a more complete look at this debate, see Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon*, chap. 1.
11. Memo from Bryce Harlow to Lyn Nofziger, September 18, 1969, Box 52, Folder 7, White House Special Files, Richard Nixon Presidential Papers, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Hereafter referred to as Nixon Papers.
12. One example is a meeting between the Nixon Administration and William F. Buckley, Jr.:
   Memo from Mr. Ehrlichman to Kissinger, August 4, 1969, Box 8, Folder 1, Nixon Papers.
13. Nixon archives and papers indicate that he set up frequent meetings between National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and Special Assistant Patrick Buchanan and various conservative leaders in order to cultivate close ties between the White House and the right. One example is: Memo from Mr. Ehrlichman to Kissinger, August 4, 1969, Box 8, Folder 1, Nixon Papers.
14. This was an especially important program because it was one of the few wherein Manion focused on Vietnam, indicating that he held great respect for Lyons (a regular guest).


19. William Rusher to Ted Robertson, August 18, 1969, Box 76, Folder 10, General Correspondence, Rusher Papers.

20. Examples of articles pressuring Nixon to spend more on national defense:


32. Congressional conservatives tended to mute their criticism of Nixon, largely because of party loyalty and because Nixon controlled the Republican National Committee, which controlled money flowing to congressional campaigns. Meanwhile, conservatives were outraged by the idea of recognizing China (which Nixon did not do), and they attacked the idea before it was even public. For instance, see: James Burnham, “The Protracted Conflict: How to Solve the China Problem,” *National Review*, June 29, 1971, 693; David Brudnoy, “Nixon Risks Losing Conservative Votes on Red China,” *Human Events*, May 22, 1971, 9(417).

33. Ping-pong diplomacy was particularly symbolic because the U.S. and Chinese national teams played one another in an attempt to demonstrate the warming relations between the two nations.

DC YAF Pamphlet, Box 340, Young Americans for Freedom Folder, Group Research Papers.


35. One example comes from the Russell J. Fuhrman to Buckley, March 5, 1972, Personal Correspondence, Buckley Papers.

Historian Kevin J. Smart records that the letters were divided, with about a quarter strongly supporting the president, about half opposing his moves but supporting him as president, and a quarter wanting conservative leaders to help push him from office. Kevin J. Smart, *Principles and Heresies: Frank S. Meyer and the Shaping of the American Conservative Movement* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2002), 317–318.


37. Most likely, this was because Nixon’s prestige as president was greater than the prestige of editing a magazine or appearing on a television show (such as Buckley did).

*Human Events* circulation numbers from Survey of Far Right Wing Organizations, 1971, Box 406, Group Research Papers.

38. By early 1972, articles within the conservative press began appearing such as: James Burnham, “The Protracted Conflict: I’ll Tell You a Secret,” *National Review*, February 18, 1972, 144. This article explained why the United States was about to lose the Vietnam War.


41. One example is a letter from Rusher to Frank Masland arguing that *National Review* was correct in pushing Ashbrook’s candidacy even though the editors knew he could not win. Rusher to Masland, February 4, 1972, Box 57, Folder 3, William Rusher Papers.

42. Letter from Rusher to Ted Robertson, August 15, 1972, Box 76, Folder 10, William Rusher Papers.

43. McCaffrey to Rusher, July 17, 1972, Box 57, Folder 7, William Rusher Papers.


This belief held true even after the election, an example of that is: Front-Page Editorial, “Last Chance for Tough Viet Agreement,” *Human Events*, November 25, 1972, 1(889).


47. There was suspicion among conservatives that Buckley enjoyed being wooed by Kissinger since he was in power and Buckley enjoyed the idea of being close to power. Quote from: John B. Judas, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 300.

48. Romney and the right had an especially tense relationship because he attempted some last-minute maneuvers to keep Goldwater from winning the 1964 primary. Survey from: Membership Survey of Conservative Book Club, 1969, Box 368, Conservative Book Club Folder, Group Research Papers.

49. Letter from Loeb to Brown, February 16, 1971, Box 2, Folder 24, Churchill Brown Papers.


54. Jeffrey Bell, “The State of Conservatism: Conservatives Have Suffered an Unpleasant Four Years, but the Opportunities Are Enormous If They Can Resist the Lures of ‘Pseudorealism,’” *Human Events* 8–11, February 24, 1973, 8–11 (152–155).

55. Rusher to Priscilla Buckley, November 17, 1972, Box 123, Folder 3, Rusher Papers.

56. Jeffrey Bell, “The State of Conservatism: Conservatives Have Suffered an Unpleasant Four Years, but the Opportunities Are Enormous If They Can Resist the Lures of ‘Pseudorealism,’” *Human Events*, February 24, 1973, 8–11 (152–155).

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William F. Buckley Papers

Books and Journal Articles

an editor at the magazine, believed that the best solution to gain interest in conservatism again was to completely change the subject. Borrowing Neil McCaffrey's idea from a few years earlier, McFadden argued that the magazine needed to begin publishing “matching articles for and against abortion, both written by noted conservatives (ideally both non-Catholics).” McFadden believed this would be a “tremendous draw;” after all, whenever *National Review* wrote about abortion, it often saw more letters to the editor and sold slightly more subscriptions. In this instance, the editors were listening to their readers when they made the decision to devote more ink to the abortion issue.

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, legalizing abortion. This ruling brought a storm of anger from Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists, many of whom had opposed laws which legalized abortion. Five days later, on January 27, the Paris Peace Accords were signed, bringing to a close U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. After agreeing, in principle, that the United States needed to fight and win the Vietnam War, and after jointly experiencing the pain of defeat when the United States lost the war, the evangelical anti-communist community and the conservative movement now found another issue on which to agree.

The following year, evangelical anti-communists and the conservative movement burst into the national spotlight in the most unlikely of places: Charleston, West Virginia. As discussed earlier, in September 1974, hundreds of Christian activists closed down the Kanawha school district because the district had integrated several books which these activists deemed immoral. This protest represented the culmination of much effort on the part of local conservative activists and major national conservative organizations. Together, these groups identified a moral society as one of the most powerful forces propelling the burgeoning New Right. Though the movement’s leaders were not solely responsible for the change—in many respects, they were responding to changes from below—the movement’s decision to begin to focus more attention on morality, religion, and abortion reflected the changes that were occurring in the early 1970s. With the conclusion of the Vietnam War, the right needed a new topic that could agitate the grassroots—and abortion burst into the national political debates at precisely the right time for the right to rally against abortion rights and the pro-choice laws of the early and mid-1970s. It is likely that the Kanawha protests would not have occurred without the conservative movement shifting its focus from foreign policy to religion in the early 1970s.

Notes


15. This work defines Christian evangelicals as the large segment of the Christian population which believes in the centrality of conversion, a literalist interpretation of the Bible, and a commitment to evangelizing their message. Fundamentalists are a subset of Christian evangelicals who read the Bible more literally (with fewer metaphors), and in the early post-World War II era, fundamentalists often tried to remove themselves from those who refused to be born again.

   For a classic definition of terms, see: David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

   For a further discussion of the differences between Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, see: Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 33–45.

Though he only spends about three pages on the Vietnam War, Williams does an excellent job of describing the distrust and how it broke down in his book. He also explains how anti-communism helped bring together evangelicals and the mainstream right: Williams, *God’s Own Party*.

The only two occasions in the post-World War II era when Democrats received more than 60% of the Catholic vote in a presidential election were 1960 and 1964. Jeffrey M. Jones, “The Protestant and Catholic Vote,” *Gallup Poll*, June 8, 2004. www.gallup.com/poll/11911/Protestant-Catholic-Vote.aspx.


Young, *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics*, chaps. 1 & 2.


Even today, more than 20 years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Schwarz Report website proclaims that Schwarz “had the courage to tell the naked truth about [communism] while The New York Times lied about it for nearly the whole 20th century.” “About The Schwarz Report,” www.schwarzreport.org/about.


Gifford, “Girded.”

Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 40.


W. S. McBirnie, “How Real Is the Internal Menace of Communism?,” undated [probably late 1960s], Box 34, McBirnie, W. S. Folder, Radical Right Papers.
39. Telegram from McIntire to Johnson, May 10, 1965, McIntire, Carl (Dr.) Folder, White House Central Files, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Archives and Library, Austin, Texas. Hereafter referred to as WHCF, LBJL.
40. Telegram from Hargis to Johnson, February 25, 1965, Hargis Folder, WHCF, LBJL.
41. Interview between Billy Graham and Max Goldberg of the North American Newspaper Alliance, September 25, 1965, Box 217, WHCF, LBJL.

43. Most likely, the Christian evangelical anti-communist organizations were able to insulate themselves from the rest of the movement partially because of their focus on religion, which is by definition an exclusive pious belief. Throughout this period, there were many references in the mainstream conservative literature where organizations and presses dismissed the Christian evangelical anti-communist organizations as fraudulent extremists. Additionally, there was no discernible attempt by Christian evangelical anti-communist organizations to moderate their rhetoric. This strain between the mainstream right and extremists groups is a central focus of Jonathan M. Schoenwald, A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

47. The memo was discussed in Chapter 4. Memo from Neil McCaffrey to William F. Buckley, Jr., William Rusher, and Jim McFadden, April 19, 1966, Inter-Office Memo 1966, William F. Buckley Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. Hereafter referred to as Buckley Papers.

48. Focusing more on the Cold War: Correspondence from Neal Freeman to William F. Buckley, Jr., October 1966, Correspondence 1966, Buckley Papers.


Memo from Marvin Liebman to Don Lipsett, May 15, 1965, Box 7, Folder 7, Marvin Liebman Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.


52. Letter from John Davenport to Brent Bozell, April 21, 1969, Box 2, Folder 6, John Davenport Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. Hereafter referred to as Davenport Papers.
54. Two specific examples of Buckley using religion to defend the Vietnam are: 
   Response from Buckley to questionnaire of Cecil Woolf and John Bagguley, September 18, 1967, Name Files, Buckley Papers.
57. One person wrote about the editorial, according to: Memo from Kevin Lynch to the Editorial Board, July 6, 1970, Inter-Office Memos 1970, Buckley Papers.
60. Memo from Linda Bridges to the Editorial Board, January 8, 1971, Inter-Office Memos 1971, Buckley Papers.
64. Randal Teague, telephone interview by Seth Offenbach, July 2, 2012.

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Books and Journal Articles


while never questioning the motives and actions of the Russian government. He opposes military intervention, except against those whom he claims are responsible for Islamic terrorism. He also claims to speak for (and has much support from) white evangelical Americans, though he is less comfortable talking about religion than any previous modern Republican presidential candidate. In short, neither Trump’s ideas nor his ideology have roots in the New Right’s brand of conservatism; the times are changing.

President Trump is fostering a rising fear of Muslim terrorists (both real and imagined) and immigrants. This likely signals a shift in the thinking and ideology of the Republican Party, and a change in the ideological makeup of the conservative movement as it becomes rooted in ethnonationalism and less doctrinaire. As with the 1960s, the conservative movement will adapt. Though scholars cannot predict the future—and at present, do not know how Trump will change the movement—a transformation is undoubtedly taking place. In the meantime, historians can take comfort in knowing that we can dissect the New Right and the modern conservative movement from start to finish, as any future conservatism will be a different movement altogether.

Notes
3. The ad was reprinted “without charge” in full in *Human Events*, May 30, 1964.
8. Goldwater actively campaigned for gay rights and supported the right to abortion in the early 1990s, long after he retired from the Senate. He was not outspoken about either issue while active in politics.
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Books and Journal Articles


