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Global versus National

From Goldwater to Bush

While Eisenhower led the GOP to accept a global foreign policy, some of the most conservative Republicans remained unreconciled to existing continuities with FDR and Truman. Indeed the modern conservative intellectual movement grew in reaction to Eisenhower's balancing acts. Classical liberals or libertarians, conservative traditionalist authors, and anti-Communist writers all agreed that Marxist-Leninism represented the antithesis of common American values. Those with personal experience as former Marxists—such as James Burnham and Whittaker Chambers—described quite persuasively the implacable expansionist nature of Soviet-backed Communism, and recommended strategies of rollback or liberation rather than of containment. This was enough to convince most conservative intellectuals of the need for an aggressively anti-Communist US foreign policy. Classical liberal and traditionalist writers remained deeply concerned by the spectacle of expanding federal government power, but crucially, most of them walled off anti-Communist efforts from a continuing opposition to the domestic welfare state. The various strains of a synthesized self-conscious American conservatism were brought together by William F. Buckley in his new journal, *National Review*, which announced its position on the Cold War struggle: "We consider coexistence with communism neither desirable nor possible, nor honorable; we find ourselves irrevocably at war with communism and shall oppose any

substitute for victory." Many grassroots conservatives by the end of the 1950s agreed, and believed they had located their champion in Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona.[1]

Since his election to the US Senate in 1952, Goldwater had acquired a reputation as an honest, crisp, uncompromising spokesman for the right wing of the GOP. Even Eisenhower's relative fiscal conservatism was inadequate for Goldwater, who opposed the entire direction of expanded federal government powers since the 1930s as incompatible with the system of the American founding—a "system of restraints against the natural tendency of government to expand." He proposed not to accommodate this expansion but to drastically roll it back, removing the federal government from areas "in which it has no legitimate business." He was skeptical of federal legislation to enforce school desegregation in Southern states, for the very same reason—not out of racial bigotry, but because of his thoroughgoing commitment to local self-government, including on issues of civil rights.[2]

With regard to US foreign policy, Goldwater felt that neither Eisenhower nor Kennedy had pushed back hard enough against Communist advances in Cuba, Indochina, and Berlin. The Arizona senator favored a hard tug in a conservative nationalist direction, combined with a more aggressive anti-Communist approach. He criticized the United Nations as an "international debating forum" potentially "leading to an unconditional surrender of American sovereignty," and US foreign aid as largely "waste and extravagance." He was, however, willing to offer limited loans to those allies prepared to better defend themselves. International Communism Goldwater described as "a revolutionary world movement that possesses not only the will to dominate absolutely every square inch of the globe, but increasingly the capacity to do so." He dismissed containment, peaceful coexistence, arms control, and superpower summitry as futile, defensive, and mainly advantageous to the Soviet Union. He recommended alternative US strategies, "primarily offensive in character . . . to engage the enemy at times and places, and with weapons, of our own choosing." On defense spending, he was "not in favor of economizing." Rather, the goal was to "achieve and maintain military superiority." His preference was "a war of

attrition . . . to bring about the internal disintegration of the Communist empire." Under strategies of rollback, liberation, and "victory" in Asia, Cuba, and Eastern Europe, the United States would "encourage the captive peoples to revolt," and "be prepared to undertake military action against vulnerable Communist regimes," while at the same time "discouraging premature uprisings." Washington would further withdraw formal recognition from the USSR, as an "outlaw" power "neither legitimate nor permanent."[3]

Goldwater's fierce anti-Communism and hard-edged conservatism had considerable support not only among the new intellectual movement on the right, but within the nation's emerging Sunbelt. Rapidly expanding suburbs in states like Florida, Texas, California, Arizona, and Virginia had created an overlooked demographic and regional base for a potentially powerful faction of the Republican Party—more hawkish than the old Taft wing, but equally conservative, and used to local success. At the same time, the Northeastern moderate to liberal wing of the GOP remained significant throughout the 1960s, led by figures such as New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Aided by a network of leading foundations, newspapers, banks, law firms, and corporations, Northeastern GOP moderates like Rockefeller tended to be staunch internationalists, favorable toward NATO, the UN, and foreign aid programs. They joined this international stance to one supportive of civil rights and welfare expenditures at home. Traditional Midwestern congressional conservatives like Senator minority leader Everett Dirksen (R-IL) were caught in between the party's Sunbelt and Northeastern wings, but under Eisenhower's tutelage the Illinois senator no longer opposed either a strong presidency, a mixed economy, or a global foreign policy. And as a matter of fact Dirksen, Rockefeller, and Goldwater all concurred on foreign policy fundamentals of hawkish anti-Communism and high defense expenditures. The main question was implementation.[4]

In 1963, a group of well-organized conservative businessmen, politicians and strategists drafted Goldwater to run for the Republican presidential nomination. Unlike most observers at the time, they understood that the rise of the Sunbelt, new alignments on civil rights,

and local party weaknesses—combined with continuing grassroots conservatism—might allow a more hardline candidate to defeat the GOP's relatively moderate northeastern internationalist wing for the first time in a generation. And on this basis, they proceeded to do so. In the 1964 Republican primaries, Eastern moderates like Rockefeller were divided, outmaneuvered, and defeated. Having captured his party's nomination, Goldwater proceeded to run as Barry Goldwater. He denounced diplomacy with Moscow, and recommended a more aggressive anti-Communist worldwide strategy of "eventual liberation," including support for "freedom fighters," along with decisive "victory" in South Vietnam. He made offhand remarks about the possible use of nuclear weapons. He called for a rollback of FDR's New Deal. He took a clear stance against the 1964 civil rights bill, even as most congressional Republicans supported it. And he clarified his view that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice." Stunned by this shift in tone and substance, numerous GOP liberals and moderates deserted their party's nominee altogether. Some of them even went so far as to compare Goldwater and his supporters to Nazis—a false comparison also made by leading journalists, Democrats, and civil rights activists. The politically savvy presidential incumbent, Lyndon Johnson, had little difficulty portraying his opponent as a dangerous, unstable, and possibly warmongering radical. And since Goldwater really did offer a conservative nationalist alternative outside the postwar bipartisan consensus of the time, the portrayal had teeth.[5]

Apart from significant losses in the Deep South, Johnson won reelection in a landslide. In the immediate aftermath, it was hardly clear that Goldwater's brand of conservatism would recover. But in the long run, the Arizona senator had indicated the late-twentieth-century direction of the Republican Party. The Goldwater campaign made explicit a new GOP coalition based in Southern and Western states: racially and economically conservative, insurgent, sharp-edged, and hawkish on national security. Nor were these new Sunbelt grassroots networks about to disappear. The eventual result was to bundle together support for military intervention, defense spending, the Republican Party, social and

economic conservatism, more tightly than ever before, with significant consequences for both US party politics and conservative foreign policy.

The years immediately after Goldwater's defeat saw a rapid change in the national temper, destructive of existing consensus on domestic and international issues. Frustrations in Vietnam, race riots, student radicalism, rising crime, antiwar demonstrations, an emerging counterculture, controversial judicial rulings, increasingly unpopular welfare programs, and a pervasive sense of social disorder all combined to alienate culturally traditional Democrats from their own party's liberal wing. This sense of alienation was especially severe among conservative white Southerners, but it also included many working-class Catholics in the North. Meanwhile an insurgent antiwar movement gained increasing strength among mainstream liberal opinion. In 1968, Democrats nearly tore themselves apart over these divisions before nominating a traditional Cold War internationalist and New Deal liberal, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, for president. Deep South segregationists bolted to support Alabama's former Governor George Wallace in his independent bid for the White House. Wallace ran as a furious economic populist, an anti-Communist hawk, right-wing on cultural issues, and a bitter enemy of the country's social elite across party lines. The main beneficiary of all this intra-Democratic disharmony was of course the GOP, and specifically Richard Nixon.[6]

Amidst the turmoil of 1968, Nixon emerged as the favored Republican candidate. Born to parents of modest means in Southern California, he served in the Pacific during the Second World War, then as Congressman, Senator, and Eisenhower's vice president, before finally capturing the White House. Critics found Nixon shifty and uncharismatic, yet even they admitted his political skill, brainpower, and sheer work ethic. His instinctive politics were those of Middle American pragmatism, rather than ideological conservatism per se. He looked to build a new center-right coalition, populist on both cultural and economic issues, including what he called "the great majority," the "forgotten Americans, the non-shouters, the non-demonstrators . . . decent people; they work and they save and

they pay their taxes and they care." He had no particular objection to governmental involvement in the economy, but truly resented the social positioning of what he called the country's "leader class" or "Eastern establishment," including on national security issues. Nixon's 1968 election platform emphasized a relatively middle-of-the road position on both civil rights and Vietnam, including an "honorable end to the war." He stressed the need for law and order, nailed down support from the GOP's rising Sunbelt wing, and presented himself as a capable foreign policy hand. On this basis, running particularly well with white-collar suburbanites nationwide, he scraped by with a narrow electoral win in November.[7]

Foreign policy tended to bring out Nixon's better qualities, and here he showed impressive skills and abilities, including bold innovation, tactical skill, and a readiness to defy conventional wisdom. By the late 1960s he possessed his own distinct and emerging vision for the redirection of American diplomacy. This entailed what he called a new "era of negotiations," along with a "complete reappraisal" of existing US commitments. Ever the pragmatist, Nixon had an instinctive feeling for international power politics. Yet as his Quaker mother's son, Nixon also regularly and privately expressed a keen desire to play the role of "peacemaker." He favored US diplomatic outreach toward Moscow and Beijing, both to bring China into the existing international order, and to improve America's geopolitical options. He understood that Cold War competition would continue, but after years of costly struggle in Vietnam, looked to place America's international commitments on a more sustainable basis—partly by playing on Sino–Soviet tensions, and partly through the "progressive de-Americanization" of the war in Vietnam. In Nixon's view, the post-1945 diffusion of economic dominance away from the two superpowers permitted and required fresh possibilities for allied burden-sharing. As a staunch anti-Communist and longtime Republican internationalist, he had the credibility to pursue these creative departures. As president, Nixon would be ably assisted by his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, a brilliant Harvard professor with an instinct for bureaucratic maneuver and a rich foreign policy worldview compatible with Nixon's own. Skeptical of the State Department as an institution, the two

of them would initially run US foreign policy strategy largely out of the White House.[8]

The domestic political context for Nixon's foreign policy was a breakdown in America's Cold War consensus. Especially among mainstream liberals, the war in Vietnam triggered a sweeping reconsideration of anti-Communist policies overseas, in favor of a more dovish internationalism. The new doves rejected Cold War policies of anti-Communist intervention, including in Southeast Asia, and recommended a shift toward altered international priorities including the environment, Third World development, diplomatic accommodations, and human rights. With a few notable exceptions such as Senator "Scoop" Jackson (D-WA), most Northern liberal Democrats in Congress were increasingly drawn toward the new doves, as were a significant minority of liberal Republicans. Conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats however tended to remain staunch Cold Warriors, which gave Nixon a base of support in Congress. The conflicted general public opposed any precipitous American surrender over Vietnam, and tended to resent antiwar demonstrators, but was coming to view the war itself as a mistake. Consequently, over the course of the early 1970s, political and popular momentum was clearly with the doves, both inside Congress and out. This domestic political reality constrained and informed Nixon's manner of regrounding Republican and US commitments.[9]

Beginning in 1969, Nixon and Kissinger sent out careful diplomatic overtures to Moscow, Beijing, and Hanoi, even while continuing broader US policies of anti-Soviet containment. Under the newly announced "Nixon doctrine," regional allies such as Israel, Iran, and Saudi Arabia were provided with generous American aid, but also expected to do more without direct US interference. In relation to Hanoi, through a policy of "Vietnamization," Nixon looked to bolster the South—and pressure the North into a favorable peace agreement—simultaneously with a slow withdrawal of US troops from the region. In relation to China, Nixon looked to balance against the Soviet Union. As he put it: "We're not doing this because we love the Chinese. We just have to see to it that we play both sides." And in relation to Moscow, the United States began serious

negotiations over the status of Berlin as well as nuclear arms control. By 1972, all of these overtures bore fruit. Visiting Mao Zedong's China, Nixon concurred on the basic outlines of a "One China" policy, agreeing to disagree over the precise status of Taiwan. Beijing and Washington now formed a kind of tacit partnership against the USSR. Visiting the Soviet Union, Nixon concluded the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), agreeing to freeze the two superpowers' nuclear arsenals at existing levels. And after employing US airpower to knock back repeated North Vietnamese military offensives in 1972, Nixon agreed to a cease-fire settlement in January 1973—the Paris peace accord—that kept Saigon's non-Communist government in power. By reaching out to China, pursuing détente with the USSR, and re-establishing US policy in Southeast Asia as part of an overall global strategy, Nixon and Kissinger looked to create a new triangular great-power arrangement, leaving the United States with more diplomatic leverage in multiple directions. This by no means indicated the end of anti-Soviet containment, but rather a more disciplined version of it, using carrots as well as sticks, at less cost to Americans and less risk of nuclear war.[10]

In foreign economic policy, as in national security, Nixon took a turn in a less globalist direction. He and many of his leading advisers believed the United States could no longer afford its traditional financial obligations under the Bretton Woods system. They preferred to emphasize America's autonomous economic health and freedom of action. Nixon therefore encouraged a short-term economic boom and won domestic political points in 1971 by unilaterally suspending the convertibility of the American dollar into gold.[11]

By the following year Nixon's overall foreign policy approach was politically popular within the United States, as he well understood, though he unnerved some US anti-Communist hawks as well as America's Asian allies in the process. The average American voter gave Nixon credit for a kind of fighting retreat from Vietnam, and with military conscription ended and US troops home from the war, the issue of Vietnam lost some of its sting. Meanwhile, the Democrats nominated for president their most liberal, dovish candidate, Senator George McGovern (D-SD), in effect

vacating the center of the American political spectrum. Nixon responded with a hard-hitting campaign that emphasized right-of-center populist stands on issues such as amnesty, crime, drugs, and national security, while pointing to increased government spending and regulation on popular programs related to education, healthcare, and consumer safety. This mixed platform, while leaving conservative purists unhappy, was broadly effective politically. That November, center-right Democrats—including anti-Communist hawks, Catholics, white Southerners, and union households—deserted McGovern in droves, delivering a landslide win for Nixon.[12]

Nixon and Kissinger continued to seek anti-Soviet containment, even while pursuing détente. In Chile, they helped to destabilize the elected Marxist Salvador Allende, for fear of allowing "another Cuba" in Latin America. In the Middle East, they supported Israel during the Yom Kippur war, while using its resolution to begin weaning Egypt away from a Soviet alliance. But domestic political pressures made it increasingly difficult for Nixon and Kissinger to implement their grand design. First, an ever-more dovish Congress continually cut back US aid to Saigon, making it harder to enforce the Paris peace accords. Second, liberal human rights advocates and hardline anti-Communists in both parties began joining together in politically powerful critiques of détente, notably through the Jackson-Vanik amendment, insisting that any new trade agreement with Moscow permit the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. And third, the Watergate scandal hobbled and distracted Nixon, finally forcing his resignation in August 1974. Kissinger's foreign policy realism was being challenged left and right. Interestingly, both hawks and doves agreed that it paid insufficient attention to human rights inside the Soviet Union.[13]

Nixon's successor Gerald Ford brought a very different personality to the White House, but maintained the broad outlines of his predecessor's foreign policy approach, including Kissinger as a leading adviser. Liberal congressional doves performed well in the 1974 midterm elections, further empowering them to block US Cold War policies overseas. This included, for example, shutting down covert American operations against the Marxist government of newly independent Angola. Sensing an

opportunity in their own region, North Vietnamese conventional military forces moved southward with stunning success in 1975, reaching Saigon that spring. To Kissinger's dismay, the US Congress made clear its complete lack of interest in an American military response, and in the end President Ford agreed. There was simply no popular appetite within the United States for renewed combat in Vietnam, and the South was allowed to fall.

At the 1975 Helsinki accords, Ford and Kissinger agreed to formally recognize Europe's postwar territorial settlement, in exchange for Soviet guarantees of political dissent and human rights within its sphere of influence. Neither Kissinger, nor Soviet negotiators, nor anti-Communist Western critics took these guarantees seriously at first, but in the long run Helsinki did help to encourage political dissent inside Eastern Europe. Liberals critiqued Kissinger's policy of détente as secretive, cynical, ignorant of humanitarian considerations, and supportive of right-wing dictatorships. Conservatives critiqued the very same policy as far too accommodating of the Soviet Union. National security hawks—including figures inside the Ford administration, like Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger—mounted an increasingly vigorous campaign against any further concessions to the Soviet Union on nuclear arms control. Indeed former California Governor Ronald Reagan almost captured the 1976 Republican nomination, running against his own party's president, as a staunchly conservative anti-Communist hawk. Reagan's challenge forced Kissinger and Ford to drop further use of the word "détente," and the Republican platform that summer in effect renounced its own president's foreign policy by condemning both "secret agreements" and the Helsinki accords.[14]

Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter, the 1976 Democratic nominee for president, denounced the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy legacy as amoral, overly militarized, insufficiently free from Cold War assumptions, and at the same time too accommodating toward the Soviet Union. Ford for his part managed to bungle a discussion of US Soviet policy during the fall TV debates. In spite of this, public opinion polls revealed that voters continued to give Ford, Kissinger, and the Republicans the edge on

foreign policy issues that year. Carter won, very narrowly, as a fresh face on the issues of Watergate, the economy, and on the basis of traditional Democratic strength in party identification. In particular, Kissinger's capabilities on foreign policy matters continued to play well with the general public, though less well with opinion elites in both parties.[15]

Between 1969 and 1976, as most voters realized at the time, two successive Republican administrations had a fair amount of success in regrounding America's global role on a more solid and realistic basis. Nixon and Kissinger, in particular, conducted a necessary fighting retreat from Vietnam, while developing careful and creative new strategies for containing the Soviet Union at reduced expense. Only within this improved strategic context did Jimmy Carter have the luxury to suggest that human rights should henceforth be of the highest concern. Yet there really was a sense in which Nixon and Kissinger underestimated the significance of Marxist-Leninist ideology for their Soviet counterparts. Events over the course of the 1970s would reveal that with or without détente, the USSR continued to promote socialist revolutionary regimes within the developing world. The United States was thereby forced to choose how to respond. Carter offered one alternative. Reagan offered another.

Ronald Reagan worked as a Depression-era sports announcer in his native Midwest before making his way to California, signing on as an actor with Warner Brothers. Originally a New Deal Democrat, he drew upon affable communication skills to become president of the Screen Actors Guild and then spokesman for General Electric. These real-life experiences, combined with wide reading, turned him into a staunch anti-Communist, an effective negotiator, and an economic conservative on issues of taxation, free enterprise, and government regulation—so much so, that he had to part ways with General Electric as he became more and more political. In 1964 Reagan delivered a very well-received TV address on behalf of Barry Goldwater, warning of the dangers to individual liberty from Communism abroad and government planning at home. Brought in this way to the attention of Republican conservatives nationwide, Reagan ran for governor

of California two years later, easily defeating the incumbent Pat Brown among middle-of-the-road voters on pocketbook as well as law-and-order themes. Re-elected to a second term in 1970, Reagan fast became a favored presidential candidate on the right wing of the Republican Party. In 1976 he challenged President Ford for his own party's nomination, running especially well with grassroots conservatives in Southern and Western states. Reagan hit on themes of American nationalism and hardline anti-Communism to power through a string of Southern primaries, attacking détente, arms control, and US defense cuts, along with Ford's proposal for ceding control of the Panama Canal to Panama. As Reagan described the canal: "We bought it, we paid for it, we built it, it's ours and we intend to keep it." A narrow loss to Ford at the convention that summer nevertheless clarified that Reagan would be the GOP's leading candidate four years later—and that the party was moving in his direction.[16]

Reagan spent the 1970s laying out a long-considered foreign policy view. Like other anti-Communist hawks at the time, he favored the restoration of what he called "strategic superiority" against contemporary trends of détente, arms control, and American cuts in defense. But he also revealed a specific perspective unusual among his fellow hawks. First, Reagan was appalled by the premise of mutual assured destruction between nuclear-armed superpowers. He despised nuclear weapons and over the long run looked to see them abolished. Second, Reagan was uncommonly optimistic that the Soviet system was doomed because of its fundamental internal flaws—"a temporary aberration which will one day disappear from the earth." America's free-market economy would eventually outcompete the Soviet Union, he believed, so long as US economic weight was militarily leveraged. Reagan's specific aim, laid out publicly before 1980, was to rebuild the US military, pressure Moscow into deep arms reductions on American terms, and lower the risk of nuclear warfare. As he suggested to his friend Richard Allen, the goal was "We win and they lose."[17]

Politically, Reagan's case was bolstered by the late 1970s through the rise of multiple forces on the right. The GOP's congressional caucus continued to drift in a more conservative, Sunbelt direction. Evangelical Protestants, leading business interests, taxpayers, and small property owners all began

to mobilize and organize politically around a range of rightward-leaning domestic issues. So too did a variety of conservative foundations, think tanks, donors, and intellectuals. A set of anti-establishment lobbies known as the "New Right" used direct mail techniques to argue for a fresh combination of social populism and American nationalism, zeroing in on the Panama Canal treaty as an unwelcome indicator of erosion in the US position. Traditional and respected Cold War Democrats like Paul Nitze joined with leading Republicans and anti-Communist intellectuals in forming the Committee on the Present Danger, to make the case for a reinvigorated anti-Soviet foreign policy worldwide. And a new generation of intellectuals known as neoconservative, including authors such as Irving Kristol and Jeane Kirkpatrick, argued for supporting anti-Communist allies straightforwardly against radical insurgents, rather than retreating into flights of moralistic reform post-Vietnam. As Kirkpatrick put it, referring to cases such as Nicaragua and Iran:[18]

> Hurried efforts to force complex and unfamiliar political practices on societies lacking the requisite political culture . . . not only fail to produce the desired outcomes; if they are undertaken at a time when the traditional regime is under attack, they actually facilitate the job of the insurgents.[19]

Interestingly, Reagan assumed that a diverse range of social and economic conservatives would concur on an anti-Communist foreign policy, and on "maintaining a superior national defense, second to none." He deliberately looked to unite all of these forces, including working-class cultural conservatives, into a "new, lasting majority" whereby the GOP would shed its "country club-big business image."[20]

Reagan's successful run for the 1980 Republican presidential nomination confirmed the party's rightward, Sunbelt drift. Running on themes of national military and economic rejuvenation, traditional social values, and unabashed patriotism, Reagan reached out to GOP moderates while maintaining a variety of conservative policy positions. Many voters worried that a Reagan presidency would increase the chance of war with the

Soviet Union. But the increasingly widespread perception of Carter as a failed president, combined with Reagan's winning manner on the stump, helped to tilt the electoral outcome, and Reagan's promise to restore national defenses and respect for the United States resonated under the conditions of the time. In the end Reagan won in a landslide, securing the votes not only of GOP conservatives, moderate Republicans, and independents, but a full 41 percent of conservative Democrats. He ran especially well with white Southern Democrats, along with culturally traditionalist Catholics in the North.[21]

Reagan's foreign policy leadership style was considerably better than his contemporary critics alleged. To be sure, he had little interest in policing bureaucratic squabbles, and this sometimes led to failures of management or implementation. Yet he also possessed abundant leadership qualities. He offered a clear overall vision that inspired his supporters; was a capable negotiator, a persuasive public spokesman, politically canny, and calm in crisis situations. On the major foreign policy decisions of his administration, contrary to some impressions at the time, he was very much the person in charge.[22] He began from a sincere set of policy beliefs, but was unwilling to risk disaster in order to maintain ideological purity. The specific outlines of his foreign policy strategy in office emerged gradually and contained a number of key components:

1. An American defense buildup, to restore diplomatic leverage with the Soviet Union.[23]
2. Indirect military assistance, training, and weapons to anti-Communist insurgents in Afghanistan and Nicaragua.[24]
3. A reorientation on nuclear arms control negotiations, in the direction of restoring Western defenses before reaching any further agreements with Moscow.[25]
4. Disputation of Communist domination in Eastern Europe, especially via US support for the Polish union movement Solidarity in coordination with the Vatican.[26]
5. Economic warfare against the Soviet bloc, through attempted restrictions on Western trade, technology, and credit.[27]

6. A stinging public diplomacy challenge to the Soviet Communist model as fundamentally illegitimate, immoral, and doomed—an "evil empire," as Reagan described it, and a "bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written."[28]
7. Energetic research and development into a national US missile defense system, or Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).[29]

All these elements were part of a gradually developed, deliberate strategy through which Reagan looked to pressure the Soviet Union relentlessly, imposing costs upon its weak points through global diplomatic, military, ideological, economic, and technological competition. National Security Decision Directives such as NSDD-32 of May 1982 (US National Security Strategy) clarified that the administration sought to "contain and reverse the expansion of Soviet control and military presence throughout the world," to "weaken the Soviet alliance system by forcing the USSR to bear the brunt of its economic shortcomings, and to encourage long-term liberalizing and nationalist tendencies within the Soviet Union itself." The goal here was not simply parity or containment, but—wherever possible—rollback, reassertion, preponderance, and success.[30]

With regard to large-scale military interventions abroad Reagan tended to be cautious and self-restrained, in spite of his crusading language. Two cases from 1983—Grenada and Lebanon—provide telling illustrations. In relation to Grenada, fearing another Soviet ally astride Caribbean sea-lanes, Reagan decided to overthrow that island's leftist government through sudden and direct US intervention. The invasion was a "sloppy success" operationally, as described by General Colin Powell, and an unusually direct rollback of a Marxist regime. In relation to Lebanon, Reagan deployed American troops under multinational peacekeeping auspices to help counteract Syrian influence. But after a suicide bombing attack on Marine barracks, US forces were quietly withdrawn in early 1984. A better solution might have been not to deploy them under such unfavorable conditions in the first place. Nevertheless, Reagan demonstrated in both cases one key element of his overall strategy: namely, a preference

that military interventions be brief, effective, small-scale, and popular within the United States—or terminated, with minimal domestic political fallout.[31]

Reagan's energetically anti-Communist policies and language during his first term in office left Soviet leaders alarmed. Renewed superpower tensions peaked in the fall of 1983, with the shooting of South Korean airliner KAL 007 over Soviet airspace, followed by NATO military exercises known as Able Archer. Leading Soviet officials feared that Able Archer might be used as cover for a nuclear first strike against the USSR. When Reagan learned of this fear, he was sufficiently appalled as to offer both private and public assurances that the United States had no such plans. While offering no substantive policy concessions, he supplemented continuing hardline policies with a certain shift in tone, emphasizing the need for "reducing the risk of war" through a "better working relationship." As he said, "the fact that neither of us likes the other system is no reason to refuse to talk." This emphasis on the common desire for peace was also wisely highlighted heading into the 1984 re-election campaign. Reagan's Democratic opponent, Walter Mondale, stressed the dangers of deepening US military involvement in Central America and even nuclear war, both issues of real popular concern. Yet in the end most voters viewed Reagan as better able to manage these pressing security challenges, combining peace with strength—and gave him credit for a considerable restoration of national pride. Domestic economic recovery and Reagan's own winning manner helped tilt the election outcome into a landslide victory for the incumbent, solidifying a new GOP coalition of evangelicals, white Southerners, working-class, and Catholic voters. Yet Reagan's hardline anti-Soviet foreign policies were in many ways quite controversial at the time. It was only successful, practical performance in government that gave his agenda broad appeal.[32]

The most significant global development early in Reagan's second term was Mikhail Gorbachev's takeover as General Secretary of the USSR's Communist Party. While initially committed—like Reagan—to a continuation of Cold War proxy competition, Gorbachev was simultaneously ready to experiment with bold new approaches internationally in order

to buy time for domestic Soviet reforms. The two leaders met at Geneva in 1985 and established a productive personal rapport. The following year they met again, in Iceland, and came close to agreeing on mutual nuclear weapons abolition, an incredible proposal in every sense of the word. The main sticking point was Reagan's support for SDI, alongside Gorbachev's determination to see that program mothballed. Moving on to more solid ground, they proceeded at the Washington summit of 1987 to agree upon an Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, whereby an entire class of intermediate and medium-range land-based nuclear weapons was verifiably eliminated. Since this agreement represented, in effect, Soviet acceptance of Reagan's arms control position dating back to 1981—and since it gave him something to show for years of hardline stands—Reagan was happy to say yes. By the time he visited Moscow during his last year in office, he was able to honestly say that the Cold War tensions of his first term represented "another time, another era."[33]

Reagan's tenure was often represented as the triumph of a neoconservative foreign policy approach, emphasizing a kind of muscular idealism with regard to democracy promotion overseas. And certainly, neoconservative intellectuals during the 1980s reached a new prominence and policy influence they had not earlier possessed. But of course the first generation of neoconservatives, such as Jeane Kirkpatrick, had emphasized an unapologetic defense of US interests, rather than global democratic transformations as such. In truth, Reagan presided over a broad political coalition within which intellectuals were a relatively minor component. Some neoconservative intellectuals, such as Norman Podhoretz, were actually disappointed that the president was not more aggressive in rolling back the Soviet bloc directly. Fortunately Reagan ignored such criticisms. The more practical question with regard to democracy promotion was exactly when to side with US allies, or against them—a question on which neoconservatives themselves disagreed. In any case, looked at overall, Reagan's approach toward democracy promotion overseas was subtle and effective. Certainly, he believed in the superiority of democratic forms of government. But he also believed that nothing could be worse for the democratic cause than for anti-American radicals to triumph worldwide.

Initially therefore, his instinct was to back non-Communist allies in developing countries rather than to hector them, even in cases such as South Africa when their actual practices were far from democratic. A significant shift came in 1986, once Reagan became convinced that pro-American autocrats such as Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines could be pressured on human rights, or even overthrown, without risking something worse. The administration therefore switched to a somewhat more pointed approach in pressing authoritarian allies on issues of human rights, and this pressure—in combination with reassurances, assistance, and above all internal factors within each allied country—left significant regions in the East Asian littoral and Latin America more democratic than when Reagan first entered the White House.[34]

By the time Reagan left office Cold War tensions had faded dramatically, with Moscow conceding on a wide range of military issues and proxy conflicts. Gorbachev's choices here were certainly central, but Reagan did his share as well. He realized when few others did that the Soviet Union was vulnerable at critical points, and through a deliberate strategy of pressure, forced Moscow to make difficult choices. He began by forcing Soviet leaders back on the defensive. Then he improved relations with those same leaders, negotiating from strength to conclude a major arms control agreement on American terms. This was practical success, attained by alternating between diplomacy and intransigence as appropriate to the situation. Reagan's uplifting foreign policy speeches are also easily misunderstood. In reality, he was generally cautious and careful regarding any large-scale or protracted use of military force. Nor did he try to institute regime change within Eastern Europe through direct US intervention. In practice, his foreign policy involved greater circumspection than his speeches might have indicated. By refusing to overreach internationally, he helped to ensure both global and domestic political success for his foreign policy approach.[35]

Viewed in terms of foreign policy, the presidency of George H. W. Bush (1989–1993) was a kind of successful denouement to the Reagan

years, managed with hands-on professionalism. The pedigreed son of a Connecticut US senator, Bush fought in the Pacific theater as a naval pilot during World War II before returning to make his personal and political fortune in Texas. Securing a series of high-ranking appointments during the Nixon-Ford era, gaining international along with executive experience in the process, Bush ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 1980 as the surprise favorite of GOP moderates. He then served as vice president, becoming Reagan's heir apparent and the party's own nominee by 1988. Framing the general election decision as a broad choice between liberal and conservative values, and under relatively favorable conditions of peace and prosperity, the Bush campaign had little difficulty in the end holding on to the Reagan coalition and defeating Democratic opponent Michael Dukakis that November—including on issues of national security. Bush then set out to consolidate the international gains from the previous eight years while placing US–Soviet relations on what he viewed as a more even keel. Unlike Reagan, Bush's conservatism was of the dispositional rather than ideological kind. He was skeptical of centralized solutions to social or economic problems, and did not seek radical policy departures in any direction. This sensibility also influenced his foreign policy. Drawing lessons from the 1930s, Bush very much believed in a leading role for America in the world, buttressed by international alliances, strong US armed forces, and free-trade arrangements. Yet by temperament and conviction he emphasized pragmatism, stability, caution, and prudence in nudging forward US interests on a case-by-case basis. In other words, rather than stressing grand designs, he applied the Hippocratic Oath to matters of foreign policy: "First, do no harm."[36]

After an initial pause to reassess America's Soviet policy, Bush put forward bold new proposals on arms control, looking for the "integration of the Soviet Union into the community of nations" with a Europe "whole and free." Events soon overtook even the most creative imaginings. Over the summer and fall of 1989, numerous Communist governments in Eastern Europe allowed for genuinely sweeping democratic reforms inside their own borders, and unlike past Soviet leaders, Gorbachev permitted these reforms peacefully to go forward, capped off by the destruction of the Berlin Wall. Like most Americans, Bush was pleasantly astonished at these events, but he refused to gloat over them. Indeed he worried that a violent collapse of the Soviet Union itself could be dangerous for nuclear stability. Partly for this reason—and in contradiction to strong bipartisan currents of American opinion—he was unenthusiastic about supporting Baltic or Ukrainian independence in 1990–1991. Instead he tried to use quiet diplomacy and the prospect of US economic aid to constrain any Soviet Baltic crackdown, while warning Ukrainians about the dangers of "suicidal nationalism." Bush did, however, press American advantages relentlessly against Moscow on numerous other issues, including the freedom of Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe. In relation to Germany, Bush and his foreign policy team—together with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl—helped orchestrate a masterful diplomatic process resulting in the peaceful unification of East and West Germany as a sovereign member of NATO. In relation to superpower arms control and Third World proxy conflicts ranging from Angola to Nicaragua, the Bush administration pushed for and achieved a set of diplomatic successes and agreements very much on American terms. Of course, it was Gorbachev who repeatedly made the crucial decisions to concede. Yet overall, Bush presided over a series of astonishing and peaceful Cold War diplomatic victories. This was a vindication of not only his particular approach, but of American strategic engagement going back to the 1940s.[37]

Another defining moment for Bush came with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The president deployed American troops to protect Saudi Arabia, secured UN sanctions against Iraq, and soon decided that Saddam Hussein's forces would be ejected from Kuwait one way or another. Working a knack for personal diplomacy, Bush assembled a broad international coalition of support, including not only US Arab and Western allies but the UN Security Council. With regard to his domestic American audience, the president built support for this approach by referring to hopeful post–Cold War prospects for a "new world order," a Wilsonian vision of "a world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle." Bush's insistence on the forcible liberation of Kuwait was hardly uncontroversial; most Democrats initially opposed the resort to war, preferring to let

sanctions operate. But the president secured a majority vote in Congress for an authorization of force, and on January 16, 1991, the United States began a series of punishing airstrikes against Iraqi forces. American and allied ground troops then moved in on February 24, liberating Kuwait and producing a cease-fire within a hundred hours. Bush mistakenly believed that Saddam would quickly be overthrown, encouraging Kurdish and Shiite civilians to rise up against the Iraqi dictator. Still, Bush saw little merit in trying to occupy Iraq itself. When no successful uprising occurred, the United States settled into a policy of no-fly zones, containment, deterrence, sanctions, inspections, and periodic airstrikes against Saddam's forces—a policy that would essentially continue under various administrations well into 2001.[38]

In other foreign policy arenas, as in Eastern Europe and the Persian Gulf, Bush acted as a conservative internationalist with a realist cast—committed to free trade, collective security, alliances, and the protection of vital US interests, but broadly skeptical regarding humanitarian intervention in the affairs of other countries. With regard to China—which he viewed as both a strategic and economic partner—Bush resisted strong bipartisan pressures for an aggressive US response after Beijing's Communist government cracked down violently on peaceful protestors in Tiananmen Square. With regard to trade, Bush held firmly against protectionist sentiment, favoring negotiations with Canada and Mexico on the NAFTA signed in 1992. And with regard to humanitarian outrages against civilians in Bosnia and Somalia, Bush's early instinct—against liberal, congressional, and human rights critics—was to avoid armed US intervention in cases of civil conflict unamenable to external military solutions. Only in the final weeks of his term did he finally authorize a limited American operation in Somalia to help deliver food supplies, and in Bosnia he never signed off on any major intervention. As Bush put it: "Before I'd commit American forces to battle, I want to know what's the beginning, what's the objective, how's the objective going to be achieved and what's the end."[39]

By 1992, Bush's foreign policy came in for criticism from two directions, left and right. On the right, conservative commentator Pat Buchanan decided to challenge Bush for his own party's presidential nomination.

Opposed to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, inspired by the support of paleoconservative intellectuals, and finding the administration to be insufficiently hard line on a range of domestic issues, Buchanan ran a spirited campaign against the president, capturing over a third of the vote during the opening GOP primary in New Hampshire. The cheerful right-wing firebrand decried apparent job losses from free trade, and stressed the need to reorient both America and the Republican Party back toward a more detached US foreign policy stance. As he explained his position: "We call for a new patriotism, where Americans begin to put the needs of Americans first, for a new nationalism where in every negotiation, be it arms control or trade, the American side seeks advantage and victory for the United States. . . . He is a globalist and we are nationalists. He [Bush] believes in some Pax Universalis; we believe in the Old Republic. He would put America's wealth and power at the service of some vague New World Order; we will put America first." While he did not win a single state primary, Buchanan won almost three million votes against Bush, indicating considerable discontent at the base of the Republican Party as well as among independents. Buchanan's populist, nationalist, and paleoconservative pitch still had limited appeal in 1992, and he himself was too far right to capture the nomination, but he offered one possible foreign policy direction for Republicans throughout the 1990s, and in retrospect key aspects of his campaign would turn out to be prophetic.[40]

The more immediate challenge to Bush's re-election, once Buchanan had been defeated, of course came from the Democratic nominee, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton. On foreign policy, Clinton adopted the tone of a relatively hawkish liberal internationalist, critical of Bush on human rights, while at the same time making clear his primary focus on domestic economic revival. This center-left stance was probably about the best Clinton could do, since in truth Bush held a massive advantage over Clinton on national security and foreign policy issues. Fortunately for Clinton, foreign policy was simply not as salient as it had been for most American voters before the Soviet Union's collapse. The general public gave Bush high grades on foreign policy, but turned against him for other reasons, above all domestic economic. In fact the same thing had been true during

the 1992 GOP primaries: most Republicans and independents preferred Bush to Buchanan on international issues. Bush's real weakness politically was popular dissatisfaction over the economy and the lack of a clearly communicated domestic agenda. In the November general election, independent candidate and Texas billionaire Ross Perot helped siphon off the votes of discontented independents and moderate Republicans, as Clinton won handily. Conservatives would go back into opposition, forced to grapple with new internal divisions over US foreign policy.[41]

During the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the election of Bill Clinton left the GOP uncertain as to the proper direction for US foreign relations. Most Republicans agreed that Clinton was not a strong commander-in-chief, but beyond that there was considerable cross-cutting and intraparty debate over foreign policy matters between GOP nationalists and internationalists, realists and idealists, hardliners and noninterventionists. Realists like Henry Kissinger argued for the careful use of force and diplomacy to maintain balances of power overseas, rather than emphasizing domestic conditions inside other countries. Onetime Cold War hawks like Jeane Kirkpatrick largely agreed, suggesting that it was "not within the United States' power to democratize the world." Pat Buchanan and his paleo-conservative supporters went much further, arguing for the termination of many US international commitments, protection against foreign commercial competition, and rollback of open immigration laws. Libertarians such as Representative Ron Paul (R-TX) were more liberal than Buchanan on certain social issues, but positively dovish on foreign policy.[42]

At the other end of the foreign policy spectrum, a new generation of neoconservative intellectuals such as Robert Kagan and William Kristol argued for rogue state rollback, increased military spending, "the remoralization of American foreign policy," and energetic intervention abroad in a range of cases to promote democracy and human rights as well as US interests. In the 1996 presidential primaries, Republican Party voters continued the pattern of nominating a relatively pragmatic conservative internationalist in Senator Bob Dole (R-KS), rejecting stark alternatives like Paul or Buchanan for president. But in Congress, as in the country, the predominant feeling among GOP conservatives throughout the Clinton era—as embodied by key figures like Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), not to mention Newt Gingrich's 1994 Contract with America—was a kind of hawkish nationalism, attracted to US alliances and military strength, but deeply unenthusiastic about UN peacekeeping missions, humanitarian intervention, arms control agreements, foreign aid, and any cession of US national sovereignty. Neoconservatives were able to find common cause with Helms and Gingrich on a number of issues, but remained frustrated by the obvious lack of enthusiasm at the base of the party for Wilsonian interventions overseas—a sentiment that revealed itself most fully in the confused congressional responses to crises in Bosnia and Kosovo. Still, the new Republican idealists like Kagan had created a clear foreign policy alternative, one quite different from the original recommendations of first-generation neoconservatives like Jeane Kirkpatrick. What remained needed was the moment, and the leader.[43]

Texas Governor George W. Bush ran for the presidency in 2000 on a platform of "compassionate conservatism," strengthened military defenses, and skepticism toward nation-building overseas. No strict libertarian, this son of the forty-first president believed that government power could be used toward conservative and morally worthwhile purposes. At the same time, he was initially cautious regarding arguments for multiple military interventions overseas. Tutored by a team of senior and respected Republican foreign policy experts, the Texas governor settled on an early posture emphasizing increased military spending, free trade, bolstered missile defenses, support for US allies, and a hardline approach toward America's competitors overseas. At the same time, he criticized Bill Clinton for overextending the US military on nonessential missions, offered to be more careful regarding the use of force abroad, and questioned the value of key multilateral agreements such as the ABM Treaty, International Criminal Court, and Kyoto Protocol. This overall combination was sufficiently plausible so as to not harm Bush in his 2000 campaign efforts. In fact it helped rally Republican nationalists and internationalists around

a common focal point, while differentiating Bush's position from the Clinton-Gore era in some significant ways. During the exceptionally close election that November against Vice President Al Gore, exit polls showed that voters favored Bush over Gore on issues of foreign policy and national defense. The opening months of 2001 saw no great shift toward US intervention overseas. On the contrary, Bush appeared focused on domestic policy matters, and disinclined to make any drastic shifts in US policy regarding either China, North Korea, or Iraq. To be sure, Bush moved forward with a more nationalist stance on key matters such as the International Criminal Court and missile defense. In reality however, the initial Bush policy toward Iraq was one of hardened containment, rather than rogue state rollback—arguably more realist than neoconservative.[44]

Al Qaeda's September 11, 2001 attack on the United States transformed the Bush administration's foreign policy. The president quickly became convinced not only that the United States would have to pursue jihadist militants far more energetically, but that the United States had a broader ideological mission bound up with counterterrorism. Bush began by demanding that the Afghan Taliban hand over Al Qaeda's leader Osama Bin Laden. When the Taliban refused, Bush launched a US-led war with broad international support, using special operations forces, American airpower, precision strikes, and regional allies to topple the fundamentalists from power. The failure to capture Osama Bin Laden permitted Al Qaeda to regroup inside Pakistan, but at the time America's strikingly rapid advances against the Taliban encouraged the administration to entertain further missions in the newly announced war on terror, and for Bush the next mission would be Iraq. Concerned that Saddam Hussein could not be indefinitely contained; anxious that the Iraqi dictator might build and hand over weapons of mass destruction to terrorists like Bin Laden; convinced that a democratized Iraq might act as a positive example for the Arab world; and determined to showcase American resolve in the wake of 9/11, Bush settled on a decision to confront Saddam. This decision was bound up with the announcement of a new US National Security Strategy in 2002, one placing fresh emphasis on America's prerogative to launch preventive military action against rogue state sponsors of terrorism like Iraq. More

broadly, Bush declared with this ambitious new doctrine that the United States looked to press democratic freedoms worldwide, freedoms he described as "nonnegotiable demands" applicable "and unchanging for all people everywhere." In sum, the president responded to 9/11 by adopting a much more sweeping and even idealistic foreign policy approach than he had campaigned on the previous year.[45]

Politically, the prospect of invading Iraq was deeply controversial, though not in a way that harmed Bush at first. On the contrary, Democrats were initially more divided over it than were Republicans. Proponents of the war included not only the Bush administration, but for all practical purposes the great majority of Republicans, particularly in Congress, along with a crucial segment of liberal Democratic hawks convinced of the war's moral and strategic necessity. Opponents of the coming war as of winter 2002–2003 included roughly half the Senate's Democrats, certainly the left-liberal base of the Democratic Party, and a vocal minority of Republican conservatives—whether paleo-con, realist, or libertarian. Indeed a newly energized noninterventionist movement on the right organized around fresh venues, like the magazine *The American Conservative*. Many traditional conservatives were uneasy about the coming war in Iraq. Yet for the most part GOP conservatives at the time accepted Bush's argument for war, in part because it tapped into precisely those same nationalist sentiments that had long energized Republicans. In the wake of a violent attack on America itself, most grassroots conservatives were entirely ready to hit back hard in an unyielding war on terror, even in a case like Iraq where the links were tenuous. Bush thereby tapped into the uncompromising nationalism so dear to American conservatives, redirecting it toward a remarkably high-risk, assertive, idealistic, and even Wilsonian strategy within the Middle East. There is every indication that he was in earnest.

Internationally, Bush fixed on the issue of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and secured the passage of United Nations Resolution 1441 in September 2002, declaring that Iraq was already in violation of other UN resolutions from the previous decade. He was unable to secure a second resolution from the Security Council lending explicit support to

a US-led invasion. Since Saddam would not fully cooperate with international weapons inspectors—and since Bush would accept nothing less—this diplomatic process could only end with armed conflict. In the end, America went to war in Iraq with some thirty allies, including roughly half the members of the European Union. The US-led invasion in March 2003 again showcased America's conventional military excellence, toppling Saddam's regime within a few weeks. But the United States had occupied Iraq with little effective preparation for what would come next, whether in the form of counterinsurgent operations, postwar reconstruction, or constabulary responsibilities. Instead, initial planning appears to have gone forward on the optimistic assumption that Iraq was a fine candidate for democratization, that it would welcome an outside occupying army, and that the country's reconstruction would be largely self-financing. Those who questioned Iraq's cultural suitability for democracy were dismissed as ethnocentrically biased. The chaotic situation following Saddam's collapse allowed for widespread violence, looting, and disorder. The United States toppled Saddam's autocracy but did not initially put anything viable in its place. Some of Saddam's former loyalists began a low-level insurgency against US forces. This insurgency then gathered support from Iraq's Sunni Arab minority, resentful of its loss of privileges. By the fall of 2003 it was clear that Bush's invasion had not gone as planned. Insurgent violence continued, Saddam's weapons of mass destruction were never found, Shiite militias proliferated, and foreign jihadists flooded into Iraq. Still, Bush was still able to make the case—quite plausibly—that a US withdrawal would only undermine America's reputation and leave the situation worse inside Iraq.[46]

The 2004 elections featured Iraq as a central issue, with Bush as a polarizing figure energizing both admiration and contempt in differing circles. The bulk of the Democratic Party had by this time turned entirely against the Iraq war, to the extent that Democratic primary voters flirted with antiwar candidate and former Vermont Governor Howard Dean before settling on the more staid Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts. Kerry and Bush engaged in a hard-fought autumn campaign, but the Massachusetts senator was never able to settle on an appealing persona and stance with

regard to either domestic or international issues. In the end Bush defeated Kerry by a clear yet narrow margin, winning over not only the GOP's conservative base, but swing voters including Catholics, married women, and suburbanites. Those voters identifying Iraq as their leading concern cast their ballots for Kerry. On the whole however, broader issues of terrorism and presidential leadership clearly worked in Bush's favor, giving him a crucial and winning edge over his opponent. Indeed there is considerable evidence that in the absence of the stalemated and frustrating war in Iraq, Bush would have won re-election by an even greater margin. Political observers noted that Bush and the GOP appeared able to regularly carve out close but decisive political victories—and perpetuate the old Reagan coalition—by bundling together conservative social, economic, and national security concerns, together with selected cross-partisan policy appeals designed to win over political moderates and independents. Fred Barnes called this formula "big government conservatism," a striking combination of moral traditionalism, increased government spending, and interventionist foreign policy. Certainly Bush's clear position on national defense and counterterrorism played a central part in holding together and expanding his political coalition, at least during the president's first term in office. Some of his own supporters lauded his foreign policy approach as "revolutionary." But Bush had overreached in Iraq, and the tipping point was near.[47]

In his second inaugural address of January 2005, Bush highlighted his sweeping and ambitious international vision, centering on the "expansion of freedom in all the world." Declaring that America's "interests and beliefs are now one," he announced that "every nation and culture" ultimately welcomed the spread of democracy and human rights, as a universal truth. Iraq was now the main test case for this theory. Unfortunately the situation on the ground in that country over the course of 2005–2006 continued to deteriorate. Insurgents killed or wounded thousands of American troops; Iraq's central government proved painfully inadequate to the task at hand; Shiite militias began fighting back against Sunni jihadists; ethnic cleansing triggered massive refugee flows; and the multidirectional violence threatened to spiral into full-scale civil war along

sectarian lines. By 2006 the American public had lost its patience with the war, as even an increasingly vocal minority of conservative Republicans called for reassessment and disengagement. The November 2006 congressional midterm elections led to dramatic losses for the GOP, and there is little doubt Iraq contributed to it.[48]

Basically, Bush had two options by the fall of 2006 with regard to the Iraq war: either disengage American forces under politically respectable cover, or double down through some form of reinforced commitment. The first choice was the one favored by much of the Washington foreign policy establishment, not to mention a clear majority of the general public. The second choice—to bolster US troop levels, emphasize population security, and adopt more effective operational techniques—was the option favored by a limited number of counterinsurgency experts both in and out of the career military. Another president might have chosen the first option. Determined to avoid a failed outcome, Bush chose the second. In the opening weeks of 2007, he announced that the United States would send a number of added Army brigades to Iraq, and that General David Petraeus would be placed in charge of the new overall effort—one that came to be known as the "surge." Buying time for the surge to work, Bush defied congressional Democrats to defund the Iraq war, while most Republicans rallied behind the president in this one last wartime effort. Petraeus—who had discovered earlier local success in northern Iraq using counterinsurgent methods—did not disappoint. Indeed Sunni Arab leaders in the province of Anbar had already begun to turn against the exceptionally brutal Al Qaeda affiliate in Iraq. With an assertive mixture of special operations, diplomatic effort, better intelligence, military force, and local payouts, the United States was able to roll back Al Qaeda in Iraq and eventually bring some reduction of violence in that war-torn country. Petraeus, while careful to note the possibility of reversal under fragile conditions, was able to inform Congress of significant progress by September 2007, a testimony that undermined the antiwar movement and permitted Bush to implement limited rather than wholesale American troop withdrawals.[49]

The 2008 election season was powerfully influenced by the issue of Iraq, both directly and indirectly. For the most part, Republican primary voters remained unconvinced by antiwar arguments, and impressed by the effectiveness of Bush's surge. Under these circumstances, the race for the GOP presidential nomination gravitated toward Senator John McCain (R-AZ), an independent-minded and longtime national security hawk widely respected for his wartime service in Vietnam. Representative Ron Paul (R-TX) continued to carve out his distinct niche among libertarians and noninterventionists, but that niche was as yet a distinct minority view among GOP voters. Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee ran surprisingly well as a Christian populist, winning the Iowa caucus along with numerous Southern primaries. But McCain's eventual capture of the nomination confirmed that Reaganite orthodoxies still dominated within the Republican Party as of 2008. Outside of the GOP, the domestic political impact of Iraq was more damaging. To be sure, the Democratic nominee for president, Senator Barack Obama (D-IL), did not possess McCain's national security credentials, and numerous polls indicated that McCain held clear advantages over Obama on issues of terrorism and national defense. But for the general public, these issues were simply not as central as they had been right after 9/11. More to the point, America's multiyear frustrations within the Middle East had created a political opening for a new type of liberal Democrat to present an anti-war case on Iraq and carry the White House. By 2008 the American public broadly speaking was tired of the war, and prepared to cast a negative retrospective vote on the tenure of President Bush. Arguably this retrospective judgment—very much bound up with the issue of Iraq—was Obama's single greatest asset in the November election, and it certainly helped propel him into the White House.[50]

Bush's foreign policy was hardly the unmitigated disaster of hostile caricature. On the contrary, with regard to nuclear nonproliferation, counterterrorism, bilateral trade agreements, US foreign aid, Africa, India, China, and Japan, his administration had a number of achievements to its credit. His 2006 Iraq surge decision was characteristically courageous,

and vindicated by events. But of course that decision would not have been necessary in the absence of earlier grave mistakes in 2003. It was above all on his fateful, central decision to invade Iraq that Bush asked to be judged. And here it must be said he made severe and fundamental errors. The United States invaded Iraq under unrealistic, rosy assumptions that were ultimately the president's responsibility to sense and correct. It took him far too long to do so. These mistakes were not dishonest or malicious in intent, but they were tragic in their consequences, and there would be a reckoning.

The Obama years saw a splintering of Republican foreign policy ideas back into three perennial tendencies: hardline unilateralist, conservative internationalist, and noninterventionist. All three tendencies or groups were largely conservative, while disagreeing on certain crucial aspects of US foreign policy. GOP noninterventionists argued for a profound retrenchment of American military and financial commitments abroad. GOP internationalists—a diverse group in its own right—continued to favor a forward US strategic presence, including diplomatic, economic, and military components. GOP hardliners supported robust US military and counterterrorist defenses, but grew increasingly skeptical of American nation-building or pro-democracy interventions within the Muslim world.

Conservative internationalists of various types remained a powerful force within the Republican Party during the Obama era, particularly at the elite level. Moreover, many of the specific policy preferences cherished by GOP internationalists—including free trade, international alliances, and robust military spending—continued to receive a certain degree of support from Republican voters and their congressional representatives. Yet there was also an unmistakable shift in mood among conservatives, over the course of the Obama years, with regard to foreign policy and security issues. Republicans continued to support aggressive counterterror measures. But particularly after the frustrations of the 2011 Arab Spring—notably in Libya—a great many conservatives began to suspect that US-led interventions inside the Arab world had only opened the door for radical

Islamists. Increasing war-weariness and skepticism regarding democracy promotion dovetailed with a new prioritization of domestic constitutional and fiscal concerns. The rise of the Tea Party during Obama's first term only confirmed these shifts on the right. And intense GOP opposition to Obama's agenda tended to reinforce opposition toward his foreign policy, especially when Republicans did not trust the president to carry it out effectively.[51]

Tea Party foreign policy preferences during the Obama era were commonly mischaracterized as "isolationist." It would be more accurate to say they were hardline nationalist. Multiple polls found Tea Party members to be more supportive of US military commitments abroad than the average American. At the same time, Tea Party supporters really were unenthusiastic about humanitarian intervention, the United Nations, foreign aid, and any cessions of US national sovereignty. Foreign policy was simply not their primary concern. On balance, Republicans remained relatively hawkish on national security issues during the Obama era, and more likely to support increased defense spending than either Democrats or independents. Overwhelming majorities of Republicans supported drone strikes against suspected terrorists; preemptive strikes against Iran if necessary to prevent that country from building nuclear weapons; and US airstrikes against ISIS starting in 2014. So the overall shift in the GOP foreign policy mood during the Obama era—while certainly less interested in any Middle Eastern "freedom agenda"—was not toward a dovish posture, but rather a hard-edged conservative nationalism.[52]

Republican noninterventionists and libertarians like Senator Rand Paul (R-KY), Ron Paul's son, had an impressive run prior to 2014 in making their case on a range of foreign policy issues. Indeed the Kentucky senator was initially considered by many to be a strong presidential candidate. But the rise of ISIS that same year confirmed a traditional truth regarding grassroots conservative and GOP voters: namely, their instinctive hawkishness with regard to evident national security threats. Noninterventionists like the Pauls tended to argue that the overly aggressive nature of US foreign policy created enemies like Al Qaeda. This argument, while common enough on the left, was not especially popular

among Republican conservatives. Most GOP voters in 2014 affirmed that they favored counterterrorism policies more aggressive than Obama's—not less so. The rise of ISIS thereby reconfirmed a serious gap between libertarian foreign policy thinkers and grassroots Republicans on key national security issues.[53]

At the presidential level, conservative internationalists predominated within the GOP throughout the 2012 election cycle. Ron Paul ran for the party's presidential nomination one last time, making his case for a US posture of strict nonintervention. But while he received a respectful hearing, conservative voters were not yet prepared to embrace Paul's radical critique of US global responsibilities. Most GOP candidates articulated hawkish criticisms of Obama, on issues ranging from Iran, China, and defense spending, to counterterrorism. Interestingly, more nationalist candidates like Texas Governor Rick Perry and Representative Michele Bachmann (R-MN) also expressed some profound doubts regarding existing military missions in Afghanistan and Libya. But the winning intraparty theme was still an embrace of American international leadership, and in the end former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney won the nomination running on a traditional GOP foreign policy platform. The Obama White House, for its part, was unfazed by Republican criticisms. Having authorized a successfully deadly raid on the hidden compound of Osama Bin Laden—and confident that most American voters were not looking for additional US military commitments overseas—Obama parried Romney's foreign policy criticisms with aplomb. National security was, in effect, temporarily removed from the table as a typical GOP electoral strength, and Obama won re-election employing traditional incumbent advantages.[54]

At the congressional level, most GOP conservatives starting in 2009 critiqued Obama from a hardline posture over issues of arms control, missile defense, Iran sanctions, counterterrorism, and US policy toward Israel. But there was also a noticeable shift in priorities, as many congressional Republicans—especially Tea Party freshmen—now emphasized domestic economic concerns rather than military expenditures or US interventions inside the Middle East. Tensions with the White House over

fiscal priorities led Republicans to accept the 2011 Budget Control Act, by which defense spending was cut significantly over a ten-year period in exchange for equivalent domestic cuts. Most congressional Republicans also refused to openly support either Obama's Libyan intervention, or US airstrikes against Syria's Assad. In the wake of the Arab Spring, the bulk of congressional Republicans proved to be quite skeptical regarding arguments for US military strikes in either Syria or Libya. Constituent opposition, mistrust of Obama, and the risk of empowering Islamist radicals combined to nudge GOP members against intervention in these cases. Even in the case of Afghanistan, where 9/11 had originated, a significant minority of GOP members were ready by the summer of 2011 to call for clear exit deadlines. Only with the rise of ISIS in 2014 did congressional Republicans once again find themselves largely united in calling for more energetic US military action within a Muslim country.[55]

On issues of trade, the GOP caucus generally lent its support whenever Obama submitted new agreements to Congress. Indeed on cases relating to Panama, Columbia, and South Korea, the president had to rely on majority votes from Republicans, since congressional Democrats tended to oppose such agreements. But there was already some splintering of Tea Party support for new trade agreements during the Obama era, and beneath the surface, underappreciated divisions existed over free trade and globalization at the base of the GOP. A 2014 Pew Research Center poll highlighted these divisions. Noting that Republicans remained largely conservative on a wide range of public policy issues, including national defense, the Pew Center nevertheless found some striking differences between what it called Business Conservatives and Steadfast Conservatives. Optimistic and upscale Business Conservatives tended to support free trade, foreign policy activism, and immigration reform. Older Steadfast Conservatives, on the other hand, described themselves as suspicious of big business, opposed to further immigration or free trade, and angry and pessimistic about the future of the country. In other words, perhaps half of Republican voters—contrary to GOP establishment preferences—had turned sour on the benefits of globalization. No Republican presidential candidate had quite captured that frustration in previous cycles.[56]

Perhaps even more fundamentally, profound social changes had already taken place within the United States among non–college educated and working-class white voters—increasingly a mainstay of the GOP—over a period of many years. Astute observers such as Charles Murray documented the disturbing splintering of white America into a new upper class and a new lower class, increasingly separated not only by zip code but by continuing adherence to traditional middle-class norms of marriage, religiosity, and work. This sense of cultural erosion, socioeconomic frustration, loss of relative social status, and political disconnection was preparing the way for a populist revolt against existing party establishments more class-based than checklist-oriented, and consequently more severe. This was the lay of the land in the summer of 2015, when Donald Trump descended his building's escalator to announce his run for president.[57]

4

National versus Global

The Trump Era

For most Americans prior to the summer of 2015, Donald Trump was best known as a celebrity billionaire, real-estate developer, and reality TV star. He had changed parties back and forth more than once, and was not especially conservative. Given that his comments on specific foreign policy issues over the years had sometimes been disconnected or ambiguous, it was easy for the press to dismiss to him as having no overall worldview. But in fact, Trump's public statements during a period of roughly thirty years revealed, if not a full elaborated ideology, then at least a broad perspective with a certain amount of continuity. And that perspective was one of populist American nationalism.

Essentially, dating back to the 1980s, Trump's argument was that US-allied trading partners had taken advantage of American security guarantees and lopsided commercial arrangements to promote their own economic interests while free-riding off the United States. Other countries had not only "ripped off" America economically, but lost respect for it in the process—or as Trump liked to say, "They're laughing at us." With regard to US military interventions overseas, Trump tended to support such interventions when they went well—including in Iraq—and abandon them went they went badly. He had no objection to high levels of American defense spending per se, describing himself as "very hawkish," and regularly called for a strong US military. But he did object to an overall