For the Common Man- Patrick J. Buchanan and Kevin P. Phillips: Populist Conservatives during the Ascendancy of the American Right

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This biographical history explores the careers of New Right conservative populists Patrick Buchanan and Kevin Phillips, tracing their shared political evolution with, and eventual divergence from, mainstream Republicanism. Placing their conservative populism in the wider political context of America's transitions from liberalism to neoliberalism from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, both men expressed a politics that articulated the rise of the American right, and its divisions by the election of Bill Clinton. Using a myriad of published works from their literary careers, this project complicates the often-monolithic picture of conservatism's rise in American politics. Starting with Phillips' influential *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969), both men envisioned a coming conservative electoral majority to usurp the dominance of Democratic liberalism. During the 1970s, both men thought such a majority was jeopardized in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, the resulting ideological confusion of the decade, and what they perceived as the liberal bias of the nation's media. Unsatisfied with the expressions of American conservatism in the 1980s, Phillips became a harsh critic of Ronald Reagan's economic policies while Buchanan felt that Republicans had not moved right enough. By contextualizing America's shifts in the post-World War II era with the country's longer populist history, Phillips pivoted his image of the elite from a broad collection of liberal interests to Reagan's business Republicans. Buchanan only emboldened his attacks on liberal elites and moderate Republicans he thought threatened the white working-class. In highlighting their trajectories, this project places populism as a political force that both bound together, and revealed contradictions in, the conservative movement that gained power in the 1980s. Broadly, their divergence from mainstream Republicanism represented the breaking of Reagan's coalition of economic and social conservatives.

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Introduction

In 1964, Arizona senator Barry Goldwater captured the Republican presidential nomination in what is now considered to be one of the defining moments of modern American conservatism.[1] A newly mobilized grouping of conservatives had successfully taken the nomination from the moderate and liberal Rockefeller wing of the Republican Party.[2] Goldwater's campaign would be defeated in one of the largest landslides in modern American electoral history, but just four years later, his victorious opponent, Democrat President Lyndon B. Johnson, would resign in a year of anti-war protests, assassinations, and increasingly polarized cultural conflict.[3] Goldwater's libertarian populist conservatism had been mobilized through a combination of anti-communism, a desire to shrink the government, tax reduction, a defense of states' rights, and the reversal of what was perceived to be liberal establishment social programing.[4] In the aftermath of Goldwater's resounding defeat, Republican Richard Nixon, and George Wallace, an independent by 1968, benefited from this political environment of resentment and upheaval.[5] Historians have extensively covered this history, how the shocks of Vietnam, Civil Rights, taxes, and a myriad of other social, cultural and political changes forced Americans to look in the mirror.[6] Americans would leave the 1960s with very different

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[1] Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American* Consensus (New York: Nation Books, 2001), 504; Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 76.
[2] Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Made Political History* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2007), 70-71; Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 196; Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 355-358.
[3] Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 14; Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 55; Kevin Boyle, *The Shattering: America in the 1960s* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2021), 268-69.
[4] Perlstein, *Before the Storm,* 474; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 49.
[5] Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (2010; repr., New York: The New Press, 2012), 6-7, 80; Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 64,69.
[6] See Molly C. Michelmore, *Tax and Spend: The Welfare State, Tax Politics, and the Limits of American Liberalism* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Christian G Appy, *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015); Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain*

reflections of what their country morally represented, with the 1970s serving as a decade of transition, as the baggage of 1960s upheavals went unsolved.[7] Further crises such as the Watergate scandal, economic stagflation, and the OPEC oil crisis would continue to have Americans ask what had happened to their country.[8] With a perception of the country in decline, these crises and a cultural turn toward individualism, would lead many Americans to vote for a leader who said he could offer something new.[9] Benefiting from the growth grassroots conservatism in the 1970s, and building a coalition of social and economic conservatives, Ronald Reagan proclaimed to offer American's a path out of the crises of the 1970s.[10] With his ideological conservatism, as well as his personal magnetism on display, voters in the 1980 presidential election rebuked the politics of Democrat incumbent Jimmy Carter.[11] For some, this was the moment the modern conservative movement had arrived. Nearly 15 years after the defeat of Barry Goldwater, a conservative was finally in the White House.

Back in 1964, Goldwater had been reluctantly pushed into the GOP primary by grassroots Cold War conservatives who had moved right of 1950s' Republican President Dwight Eisenhower.[12] Emboldened by a new network of right-wing media, these ideological

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Reaction: The Impact of Race Rights and Taxes on American Politics (New York: WW Norton, 1992); Boyle, *The Shattering: America in the 1960s*.

[7] See David Frum, *How We Got Here: The 70's, the Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Schulman, *The Seventies*.

[8] See Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014); Schulman, *The Seventies*; Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[9] See Lizabeth Cohen, *The Consumers Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

[10] Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge*, 748-49; Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 127-128.

[11] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 125-126.

[12] Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 179-181.

conservatives would seek to reform what they saw as a country in crisis.[13] Author Rick Perlstein called the appeal of Goldwater in 1964, "the federation of the fed-up."[14] While the results of the election would seem to discredit the concerns of the "fed-up," elements of his Cold War conservatism worked their way into the GOP apparatus, marking the beginning of the modern party.[15] Just as significantly, the issues which had motivated the groundswell support for the conservative libertarian, would only widen in electoral appeal as Americans faced the latter half of the 1960s.[16] Nearly four years before his electoral battle against Lyndon Johnson, Goldwater wrote a conservative tract which would help mark him, in a moment of conservative media expansion, as a leading figure of a new type of conservatism.[17] *The Conscience of a Conservative,* published in 1960, would turn the senator into the face of the burgeoning political right.[18] One such young conservative was twenty-something Patrick J. Buchanan.

Born in 1938, Buchanan grew up in Washington D.C. with a German Catholic mother and a Scottish-Irish Catholic father.[19] The family's Catholic faith, and specifically his father's conservatism, would build the foundation of his is political and cultural values. Buchanan described the ideology of his youth, a "street corner" conservatism, one that was not learned through books, but through family and life experience.[20] Growing up with eight siblings, Timothy Stanley the author of Buchanan biography, *The Crusader*, paints a picture of the

[13] Perlstein, *Before the Storm,* 179-181, 483; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy,* 56-59. Perlstein describes in detail conservative activists, such a Clif White who successful forced Goldwater into the race.
[14] Perlstein, *Before the Storm,* 474.
[15] Perlstein, *Before the Storm,* 513-514.
[16] Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares,* 78.
[17] Perlstein, *Before the Storm,* 64. *The Conscience of Conservative* was ghost written by American conservative activist L. Brent Bozell Jr.
[18] Perlstein, *Before the Storm,* 67.
[19] Timothy Stanley, *The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2012), 11.
[20] Patrick J. Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1988), 14.

Buchanan boys as a restless, combative gang in the suburbs of Washington D.C.[21] Buchanan described his childhood in the 1940s and 1950s as an "apolitical" time where there was "no politics to polarize us."[22] Not one to recognize the realities of growing up in segregated Washington, Stanley wrote that the experience "bred in Pat Buchanan a fatal blind spot on race."[23]

Buchanan's father was a former Democrat, turned conservative, who felt President Truman had let the country down after World War II. Bay Buchanan, one of Patrick's sisters who would later work for Ronald Reagan and served as Buchanan's presidential campaign manager in the 1990s, described the family dinner table as a training zone in which the Buchanan children learned how to intellectually defend themselves and to be proud of their beliefs.[24] Buchanan's father listened to Catholic populist Father Coughlin, admired General Douglas MacArthur, and saw red baiting Senator Joesph McCarthy as a victim of the post-war establishment.[25] Such anti-establishment, populist conservative values would carry through for the rest of Buchanan's career, particularly his like for men who had a fighting spirit which butt heads against what Buchanan came to envision as the liberal establishment. Sharing the heroes of his father, anti-communism became an essential component not only of his youth, but his politics as a young man.[26] After nearly getting kicked out of Georgetown University after fighting with a police officer, Buchanan discovered William F. Buckley's *The National Review*, the influential magazine that for many young conservatives of his generation, successfully articulated the

[21] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 15-16.
[22] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 131.
[23] Stanley, *The Crusader*,18.
[24] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 20.
[25] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 14, 99.
[26] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 18.

conservative, anti-communist politics of the era.[27] Buchanan writes in his autobiography, "[Authors at the *National Review*] did not politely disagree with the Liberal Establishment; they lacerated it."[28] During the 1960 presidential election, Buchanan supported Richard Nixon because of the Californian's anti-communist passion, despite most of his Catholic friends voting for John F. Kennedy.[29]

After graduating from Georgetown University, Buchanan went to Columbia University to obtain a Master's of Journalism in 1962, and later became a writer for the conservative newspaper the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. [30] In his application to Columbia, Buchanan cited *The Conscience of a Conservative*, attracted to Goldwater not only for his politics but his "principled militancy."[31] All around him in the 1960s, Buchanan perceived the America of his youth disappearing.[32] Buchanan thought his classmates were losing touch with the "real" America, informed by his strict Catholic and conservative upbringing. For Buchanan, politics would always be a battleground pitting "us" against "them." Writing on the environment of being a young conservative in liberal Columbia, Buchanan wrote, "If Bill Buckley was spiritual guide in our wilderness years in American politics, Barry Goldwater was our political idol and champion."[33]

Years later Buchanan would look back at the Goldwater campaign and the *Conscience of a Conservative*, writing,

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[27] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 218; John B. Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 140, 179.
[28] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 218.
[29] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 220.
[30] Stanley, *The Crusader,* 29.
[31] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 245.
[32] Stanley, *The Crusader,* 28, 32.
[33] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 244.

> "[It] was our New Testament; it contained the core beliefs of our political faith, it told us why we had failed, what we must do. We read it, memorized it, quoted it. To retread it today is to recall the magic the charismatic man from the desert had for so many thousands in that Silent Generation."[34]

In the same essay from the 1990 reprint of *Conscience*, Buchanan wrote of Goldwater's defeat, "like the receding of the Nile, [defeat] left layers of fertile soil on the banks of our national politics."[35] In many ways, Buchanan was right. Goldwater's campaign revealed cracks in the perceived dominance of liberalism.[36] After Goldwater's defeat in 1964, Buchanan saw the future of conservatism in Richard Nixon, who had campaigned for Goldwater during the race. Introduced to Nixon at a dinner party, Buchanan expressed his hopes that Nixon would run for president in 1968, and he wanted to be on board.[37] After joining Nixon's team in 1966, Buchanan would see many of the rhetorical elements of Goldwater's campaign infused into the conservative stripes of Nixon's appeal. As Nixon's number one conservative advisor, and one of his key speech writers, Buchanan would continue to champion elements of the political faith which had grabbed the minds of the "Silent Generation" of young conservatives like himself.

The election of 1964 also marked another major change in American electoral politics reshaping future presidential elections. Despite Goldwater's overwhelming defeat, he had found

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[34] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Introduction," in *The Conscience of a Conservative* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1990), https://buchanan.org/blog/pjb-the-voice-in-the-desert-146.
[35] Buchanan, "Introduction," in *The Conscience of a Conservative*.
[36] Perlstein, *Before the Storm,* 516.
[37] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 33.

success in the American South, with his populist, anti-establishment politics and perhaps most important, his defense of states' rights against the Civil Rights Act of 1964; a Republican had won in the former bastion of Democratic politics.[38] Not understood at the time, Goldwater tapped into a political trend that would later reshape regional voting party affiliations.

One man that did see such change occurring in the 1960s was a Bronx-born, of Scottish Irish, English and Welsh decent, Kevin P. Phillips. Described as a "numbers junkie," when Phillips was 15 he was drawing his own political maps to understand the ethnic makeup of his Bronx borough.[39] Inspired by the recognition of the "polyglot" environment around him, made up of Italians, Irish, Jewish, African Americans and Puerto Ricans, journalist E. J. Dionne Jr. thought such an environment gave Phillips a sense for ethnic political voting patterns.[40] The important influences of Phillips' Catholic, but non-church going family, and his Republican but apolitical father, meant that he didn't fit somewhere cleanly himself.[41] Journalist James Boyd described Phillips' experience in the boroughs as imbuing on him the idea that America's mixing pot had not worked; he thought people voted along ethnic and cultural patterns shaped by enmity.[42] Interviewed later in his career by conservative turned liberal Garry Wills, Phillips would call this "The politics of who hates who."[43]

After graduating from Harvard in 1964, Phillips applied his map making and special focus on ethnic voting patterns as administrative assistant to Republican Paul Fino, Congressman

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[38] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive,* 100; Schulman, *The Seventies*, 36.
[39] D. J. Dionne Jr, "The Unlikely Populist: Kevin Phillips, the GOP's Maverick Pundit, Bashing Away at the Rich," *The Washington Post*, June 19, 1990; Garry Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 265.
[40] Dionne Jr., "The Unlikely Populist."
[41] Dionne Jr., "The Unlikely Populist"; James Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy," *The New York Times*, May 17, 1970.
[42] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."
[43] Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 265.

of the 214th Bronx congressional district.[44] Supposedly directing Fino to move against Great Society programs, minority welfare, and busing, the Italian and Irish district voted heavily for the Republican in the 1966 midterm elections; his attacks on these programs, which had become tied to Great Society Democratic politics, appealed to the voters just as Phillips predicted they would.[45] But Phillips was not just analyzing Fino's Bronx district during the midterms. The Republicans who just two years prior wondered if they could come back from the massive defeat of Goldwater, achieved significant state, house and senate victories in the 1966 midterm elections.[46] To Phillips, these Republican victories were due to opposition to the programs of Johnson's Great Society. Boyd writes, that it was after the 1966 midterms, that Phillips began to write the book that would define the rest of his career, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969).[47]

The controversial book placed Phillips on the political map, arguing that Nixon's 1968 Republican victories in the South were a populist backlash against the perceived excesses of the Democratic Great Society liberalism, that when placed in a larger American political context, represented the most recent example of significant political realignment. Phillips argued that continued GOP victory in the American West, inroads in the ethnic white Northern vote, along with future increased dominance in the American South would create a new presidential electoral majority for the GOP, replacing the voting block of working- and middle-class Americans which had voted for Democratic liberalism since 1932. Sharing summarized versions of *Emerging* to the Nixon team, Phillips was offered a job to join the campaign in 1968.[48] After working on the

[44] Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 265; Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."
[45] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."
[46] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 163-64; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 80.
[47] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."
[48] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."

campaign as a voting pattern analysis, he joined Nixon's Attorney General John Mitchell in the Justice Department.[49] Phillips would dedicate *The Emerging Republican Majority* to both Richard Nixon and John Mitchell.

Right-ward Journey

For the duration of their careers, Phillips and Buchanan offered their political commentary on the seemingly right-ward shift in the direction of the country's politics. The erudite Phillips was a political commentator and prolific writer. Buchanan served as a speech writer, communications director, and emerged from these experiences a firebrand pundit and multi-time runner for president of the United States. What bound these men, despite their significant differences, was their shared populist conservatism, that starting in the Nixon years, would place them in a shared ideological space of the New Right. Proclaiming to speak for the white middle- and working-class Americans, they fought against what they perceived to be the elitest Great Society liberal establishment. As the country entered the 1970s and 1980s, these men would slowly drift apart, as the extent to which they weighed their populism and conservatism conflicted with the politics of the Republican Party and the White House.

This project is a study of conservative populism through the lenses of Patrick Buchanan and Kevin Phillips, exploring the rise and ascendancy of the right revealing the contradictions in the populist conservative relationship and bridging the gap between the right's developments in the late 1960s and early 1970s, its success in the 1980s, and its volatility and increasing

[49] Kevin Phillips, 2014 preface to *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 3rd ed, The James Madison Library in American Politics, (New York: Arlington House, 1969; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), xvii. All citations of *Emerging* refer to the Princeton University Press edition.

fragmentation by the early 1990s. Contributing to a growing scholarship that seeks to explore the conflict within conservatism, and dispelling the previously clear and simplistic periodization of the post-World War II era, this analysis of influential populists crosses the divide between New Deal and modern neoliberalism, emphasizing the difficulty of translating anti-establishment politics to the White House. This biographical history accomplishes this by exploring the striking contributions of two remarkable historical figures whose lives and achievements illuminate the complicated nature of modern American conservative politics. Rather than a monolithic political force which ascended to power in 1980, Phillips and Buchanan were forced to contend with an evolving conservatism, from more pragmatic Richard Nixon to optimistic right-winger Ronald Reagan, and the cultural, political and economic transitions from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Commentating on these decades of political transition, Phillips, and Buchanan both expressed economic and social populism within the sphere of conservatism. Goldwater had helped bring both social and economic populist politics into the modern GOP, but the relationship between these two essential elements differed on their ability to mesh with the actual goals of the party. Discussed through the paper, grappling with conservative populism in the post-war era requires juggling with the intersections and divergences of economic and social factors and their relationship with Republican leadership. Often, the goals of economic populism conflicted with the policies of Republicans in power. In the era of President Trump, in which economic and cultural right-wing populism is an essential ingredient of his appeal, the distinctions and contradiction between the two should be emphasized in this history.

America's "Right Turn"

Since Alan Brinkley's 1994 call in the pages of the *American Historical Review*, aptly titled "The Problem of American Politics,*"* for historians to reassess the importance of American conservatism in the post-World War II era, scholars have increasingly focused on the importance and power of conservatism in modern American life.[50] Previously, 20th century American political history had been understood to be a paradigm dominated by liberalism.[51] Nearly two decades after Brinkley's call to action, historian Kim Phillips-Fein summarized how scholars had both explored the "reactionary populism" of grassroots conservatives, as well as the top-down imposition of post-war conservatism which had greatly shaped the nation.[52]

In bridging what was understood to be the liberal 1960s and the conservative 1980s, historians came to argue that the 1970s served as a key moment of transition.[53] Edited by Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer, 2008's *Rightward Bound*, a collection of essays from a diverse array of historians of post-war America, argued that the decade saw the expansion of grassroots conservatives, the religious right and corporate America, working to make right-wing electoral history.[54] The extent to which historians connect Richard Nixon to Ronald Reagan, and exactly how and when America "went right" is more divided, with historians such as Donald Critchlow presenting the success of the right requiring the failures of the Carter presidency.[55] Sean Wilentz,

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[50] Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (1994): 409–29.
[51] Robert Mason and Iwan W. Morgan, eds., *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017).
[52] Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 3 (December 1, 2011), 724-726.
[53] Suleiman Osman, "Glocal America: The Politics of Scale in the 1970s," in *Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brent Cebul, Robert B. Mason, and Lilly Geismer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 246.
[54] Schulman and Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound.*
[55] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy,* 124.

in *The Age of Reagan,* argued that the Watergate scandal broke the political center of both parties, helping lay the groundwork for Reagan's victory.[56] Historian Bruce Schulman in *The Seventies*, argued that as the 1960s ended, liberalism's coalition of working- and middle-class white Americans frustrated by increasing taxation, and social unrest, were willing listen to Richard Nixon's proposed solutions for the America's ills, but not yet ready to jump on board with conservatism.[57] He argues that this reaction against liberalism was not an immediate leap to the conservative politics of Ronald Reagan, but a step in the direction of a new conservatism.[58] Jefferson Cowie, in *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*, used the lens of labor to explore the transitions of the 1970s. Cowie explains the nationalist populism spread by politicians such as George Wallace, and Nixon's blue collar strategy that gave white working class Americans security from the real and imagined assaults on their prosperity and way of life.[59] Cowie argues that Nixon followed trends of Southernization, deindustrialization, and the growth of the American Sun Belt, using a "vague populism," which was successful in courting elements of the working class[60]

Scholars have done an excellent job telling the history of how American conservatives came to have such large influence and particularly how Ronald Reagan made electoral history in his 1980 landslide.[61] Gender, region, race, economics as well as other factors shaped and provided conservatism with the tools to usurp elements of liberalism's political dominance.[62] In

[56] Wilentz, preface to *The Age of Reagan*, xv.
[57] Schulman, *The Seventies,* 36.
[58] Schulman, *The Seventies,* 193.
[59] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 364.
[60] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive,* 128, 132, 170.
[61] Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism," 725-726.
[62] See Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*; Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*; Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party*, 2nd ed. (Lawernce: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

this process however, a narrative of grassroots conservatives which ascended to power has been overstated, or has simplified the complexity of American conservatives' appeal in a period of changing attitudes against liberalism and a globalizing economy. Kim Phillips-Fein argued that the previous reassessment of liberal dominance in the 20th century, now needed to be applied to the history of modern conservatism, a history she argued had been presented as a monolithic force, lacking any sort of nuance or complexity.[63]

The result of a monolithic understanding of conservatism's triumph results in histories that often artificially split America in the 20th century between the liberal politics which began in the New Deal 1930s, and an era of conservatism starting with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, without conveying any sense of the continuities between these eras. Essential to the rise of the American right, starting in the post-World War II era, was the dominance of liberalism that prioritized a high tax regime, government spending on social programs, and anti-communism; an era of American global dominance in which large swaths of working class Americans moved into the middle class.[64] Liberalism, or what had formed into Great Society Democratic politics under President Johnson, faced multiple challenges from across the political spectrum in the 1960s and 1970s, especially the Keynesian economic assumptions forming its foundations . When the consensus establishment view that economic downturns could be fixed by spurring economic activity with increased government spending ultimately resulted in a combination of soaring inflation and high unemployment in the 1970s, called "stagflation," American voters began to look to alternatives.[65]

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[63] Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism," 725.
[64] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*; Cohen, *The Consumers Republic*.
[65] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 22; Frum, *How We Got Here*, 354. David Frum takes a slightly wider historical scale when looking at the transition and the impact of the 1970s, looking at the rapid changes American society went through socially, politically and technologically since the turn of the century. Frum

Instead of using the partisan framework of marking the 1980 election as a "right-turn," historian Gary Gerstle used a "neoliberal" framework to describe the political, economic, and cultural transformation of the country which both Democrats and Republican's prescribed to elements of.[66] Gerstle describes neoliberalism, "grounded in the belief that market forces had to be liberated from government regulatory controls that were stymieing growth, innovation, and freedom".[67] These beliefs proved appealing in the long economic crisis' of the 1970s, a key factor in the defeat of Jimmy Carter by Reagan in 1980.[68] Gerstle also argues that using the neoliberal framework deemphasizes histories which put too much weight in the influence of the American South in reshaping the country, rather emphasizing the role of finance, technology and communications which changed the political economy of the country under the direction of both Republicans and Democrats.[69] Gerstle acknowledges that elements of the New Deal Order survived, such as Social Security, but that New Deal framework had been essentially broken.

Historian Matthew Lassiter, in response to Phillips-Fein's argument for a muddied history of conservatism, noted how scholars had much too often marked the 1980 election as a clear end to the Great Society liberalism, without examining how liberalism sustained itself during the supposed conservative ascendancy.[70] Lassiter stresses the importance of viewing American politics beyond a red-blue binary which can "culminate in oversimplified narratives of right turns, conservative triumphs, and election maps misconstrued as proof of partisan, popular, and

argues that by the 1970s, that the New Deal ballpark failed to supply adequate answers to the trouble of the times, particularly stagflation, breeding a new distrust and cynicism that destroyed the order.

[66] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*.

[67] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order,* 2.

[68] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 2-4. It should be noted that it was Jimmy Carter's administration that begun a turn towards deregulation at the end of the 1970s.

[69] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order,* 4.

[70] Lassiter, "Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide," *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 3 (2011), 761.

geographic polarization."[71] For Lassiter, the New Deal order was a victim of its inability to answer the economic crisis of the 1970s, the subsequent bi-partisan move towards deregulation and the "failure to uphold the promises of security and upward mobility at the heart of the postwar social contract."[72]

Historian Sean Wilentz, in *The Age of Reagan*, marks the post New Deal world from 1974-2008, emphasizing Ronald Reagan's role in reshaping public debate about the role of government, giving Republicans the terms of political debate.[73] Despite Reagan's presidency having substantial impact long after his two terms, Wilentz argues that he never achieved electoral realignment even with the landslide wins in 1980 and 1984.[74] Wilentz concludes that by the late 1980s, Reagan's coalition of ideological social conservatives and economic libertarian conservatives was beginning to show its cracks.[75] Donald Critchlow, in his book *The Conservative Ascendancy*, echoes Wilentz's argument that the Republicans under Ronald Reagan, despite their massive successes, were unable to realign American electoral politics.[76] In tracing the history of the American right from its intellectual origins in the post-World War II era, the Goldwater movement, and Nixon and Reagan, the book paints a picture of labored right ascendancy that was neither inevitable nor monolithic.[77] Despite facing the public on issues like welfare and thus failing to shrink the size of government, Critchlow does argue that Reagan's success in 1980 was with this ideologically conservative message.[78] In 2022, historian Nicole Hemmer argued that moving into the 1990s, American conservatism underwent a transformation,

[71] Lassiter, "Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide," 763.
[72] Lassiter, "Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide," 761.
[73] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 8.
[74] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 449.
[75] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 315.
[76] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 219.
[77] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 4-5.
[78] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 171-72.

abandoning Reagan's optimism for partisan attack politics that "was not just conservative but antiliberal."[79] Rather than a decade of increasing partisanship, conservatives had to shift now that the Cold War had ended. As such, she presents the 1990s as a decade of conservative radicalization as they tried to find their new identity in the Clinton years.[80]

Populism and the American Right

Much of the rhetorical efforts of the conservatism in the post-World War II era, particularly starting with Goldwater's 1964 campaign, had a populist tinge which framed the "people," which was most often working- and middle-class white Americans, as victims in what was often argued was a dominating liberal state. Within academia, *populism* as a defined term is often contested, with scholars disagreeing on its utility because it is so widely used, and describes a wide variety of global figures across the political spectrum.[81] Political scientist Cas Mudde defined populism as, "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people."[82] For Mudde, the key separator of *populism* from other "isms" is that it places morality at the center of the conflict. This explains why figures who do not share the same socio-

[79] Nicole Hemmer, *Partisans: The Conservative Revolutionaries Who Remade American Politics in the 1990s* (New York: Basic Books, 2022), 13.
[80] Samuel Goldman, "The Problem of American Conservatism, Revisited," *American Political Thought* 13, no. 2 (March 1, 2024), 243. Goldman argued how scholarship on the American right evolved significantly after the election of Donald Trump; as the post-Brinkley emphasis on sympathy for splitting of conservatism's many avenues has given way to lumping. Goldman writes, "rather than distinguishing the mainstream from the radicals, elite from populist, postwar or new conservatism from old Right, recent work emphasizes continuity across such categories."
[81] Cas Mudde, "Populism: An Ideational Approach," in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford University Press, 2017), 28; Nadia Urbinati, "Political Theory of Populism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, no. Volume 22, 2019 (May 11, 2019), 114.
[82] Mudde, "Populism: An Ideational Approach," 29.

economic background or class as "the people" can become figure heads of these movements.[83] The "general will of the people" is conceived as the commonsense solution in favor of the homogeneous masses; any policy or action taken to even a subset of the accepted "people" is seen as special interest politics of the elites.[84] As will become clear in the coming chapters, Phillips and Buchanan deploy a populism which divides the American working- and middle-class between those perceived to be victims of an amorphous liberal elite, and Americans who are the target of said elite's "special interest."

Jefferson Cowie called Richard Nixon's rhetoric a "vague populism" which appealed to American working and middle-class citizens frustrated with the politics of the late 1960s.[85] This "vague populism" has also been identified by other important works on the 1970s which seek to explain the migration of these constituencies from the Democratic, to the Republican Party. "The White Ethnic Strategy" in *Rightward Bound* by Thomas J. Sugrue and John D. Skrentny argued that Nixon's populist efforts, while more rhetorical than policy directed, were successful in bringing northern urban working class ethnic whites into the Republican Party.[86] In appealing to the white working class, scholars have recognized the role or presence of populism in the American political transitions from the 1960s until the 1980s.[87]

Populism has long been a feature of American electoral politics before its use by post-war conservatives. Michael Kazin's seminal work, *The Populist Persuasion*, traced American

[83] Mudde, "Populism: An Ideational Approach," 30.
[84] Mudde, "Populism: An Ideational Approach," 33-34.
[85] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 132.
[86] Thomas J. Sugrue and John D. Skrentny, "The White Ethnic Strategy," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 192.
[87] For more on post-WWII conservative populism see David C. Barker and Ryan DeTamble, "American Populism: Dimensions, Distinctions, and Correlates," *Global Public Policy and Governance* 2, no. 1 (2022): 22–46.; Erik J. Engstrom, *Race, Class, and Social Welfare: American Populism since the New Deal* (Cambridge: University Press, 2020).

populism from its origins in the Thomas Jefferson era to the present. Both Kazin and Phillips emphasize the 1890s People's Party, an influential but electorally failed movement. With its base of disenchanted white farmers and laborer's, identifying themselves as the "producer" class fighting against owning class money elite, they endorsed Democrat William Jennings Bryan in the 1896 presidential election, in his first of several failed presidential bids.[88] What made the party significant was that its organizers infused a moral drive into its radicalism and demands for reform, a departure from previous U.S. populist movements [89] Kazin defines populism as a, "persistent yet mutable style of political rhetoric" employed through, "tropes, themes, and images to convince large numbers of Americans to join their side or to endorse their views on particular issues."[90] Kazin, marks the 1940s as a transitional period in which American populism, drifted from its origins as a largely rural protest and resistance movement and by the 1960s was representing "a conservative populism that pledged to defend pious, middle-class communities against the amoral governing elite."[91] This sort of populism was used to different extents by a wide range of post-war conservatives such as Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and Democrat George Wallace. Ultimately says Kazin, populism in American history is essential to understanding "how Americans perceived the sources of justice and injustice in their society and acted upon those views."[92]

[88] Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History Revised Edition* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2017), 46.
[89] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 46. William Jennings Bryan presidential campaign in 1896 is often referenced by Kevin Phillips throughout his work as a key populist surge in U.S. history.
[90] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 2, 5.
[91] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 4.
[92] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 6.

Road Map

Previously, Phillips and Buchanan have primarily served as supporting figures in the history of modern American conservatism. Of the two, Buchanan is the more prominent figure in the scholarship, appearing during the Nixon years, and as an influential right-wing commentator both in print and on TV during the 1970-1990s. His time on CNN's *Crossfire*, his many published books, and his three presidential campaigns throughout the 1990s, brought him significant fame. Discussed in the concluding chapter, Buchanan's run for president in 1992 was perhaps the height of his fame and influence. Hemmer argues that Buchanan was a significant player in the transformation of conservatism in the post-Cold War years, helping shift the politics of the Republican Party away from Reaganism.[93] Timothy Stanley's 2012 biography of Buchanan traces his relationship with conservatism and the Republican Party, presenting Buchanan as an influential but ultimately disappointed figure in the story of the American right.[94]

Kevin Phillips is most often discussed in the context of *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969), and the impact the book had on describing the political context of the late 1960s as well as its connections to the strategies of the Nixon Presidency. What has not been sufficiently explored is Phillips' series of other books, written from the 1970s well into the 2000s in which Phillips underwent a political transition, moving from a proponent to a harsh critic of the Republican Party.[95] His works from 1969-1993 provide valuable insight not only into his political transition, but a primary commentary on the period's political transformation.

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[93] Nicole Hemmer, "Opinion | The Man Who Won the Republican Party Before Trump Did," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2022.
[94] Stanley, *The Crusader*.
[95] John B. Judis, "Kevin Phillips, Ex-Populist: Elite Model," *The New Republic*, May 22, 2006. In this article, Judis covers Phillips' later career, arguing that by the late 1990s, Phillips had distanced himself from populism, coming to resent aspects of what had become of the Republican base by the early 2000s. Judis also traces Phillips' political development from his origins with Nixon to his anger at the Republican Party by the 1980s.

Chapter 1 examines Phillips and Buchanan in the pre-Watergate Nixon years, arguing that the two men were linked in their conservative populist vision of America's Republican future, and their frustrations with Nixon's often confusing political policy. Chapter 2 follows Phillips and Buchanan in a movement of political uncertainty after the Watergate scandal. It argues that both men doubted the possibility of rekindling Nixon's majority and feared the dominance of what they perceived to be the elitest democratic establishment and the liberal media. Phillips framed these threats in a broader declination narrative while Buchanan emphasized the ideological conservatism that he believed would rescue the country in the 1970s. Chapter 3 argues that once Reagan won the White House, the new president's conservative politics betrayed what Phillips thought to be the populist masses and proved not conservative enough for Buchanan. Instead of Reagan's first term offering a moment of conservative arrival both men, for distinct reasons they diverged from the Republican establishment they had never quite fit within. The final chapter, starting with the end of Reagan's presidency and the election of George H. W. Bush traces Phillips' harshest critiques of the Reagan years, who thought the GOP had become the new nostalgic capitalist business establishment, while Buchanan doubled down on this social conservatism, and ultimately, cementing both men as outsiders of the Republican Party.

By placing these two men and their remarkable trajectories side by side, tracing their political evolution from the beginning of the Nixon presidency in 1968 until the election of Bill Clinton in 1992, this project plants populism as a central force which erodes the concept of a monolithic conservative movement, instead presenting this period as sustained political conflict and conservatism as a movement filled with internecine conflicts. Viewing Phillips' and Buchanan's divergence during the Reagan presidency especially explains ruptures in the president's electoral coalition of social and economic conservatives, resulting in a splintered

American right and Republican Party in the early 1990s.[96] Utilizing their written works, primarily books and news media publications, as well as Buchanan's internal memos from the Nixon White House, this project constructs their political evolution, especially Phillips' whose dissociation from the GOP – while it became central to his identity as a nationally renowned pundit – is instructive of larger changes with in American politics during this period and remains previously unexplored in depth. Framing these men's works in the political context of the time, using a myriad of primary and secondary sources, builds a wider context around their work, fitting Phillips and Buchanan into America's often titled "right turn." Phillips adjusted his conception of the "people" and the "elite" becoming a harsh critic of the Republican Party, while Buchanan stayed firm in his ideologically conservative "people vs elite" framework putting him at odds with the GOP for his extremism. Both thought the "common man" had continually been left behind. This study serves to enrich our understanding of America's "right turn" by using two key commentators of modern conservatism to offer nuance to the direction taken by the political right in the United States in the closing decades of the Twentieth Century.

[96] Hemmer, *Partisans*, 10-11.

Chapter 1: Phillips and Buchanan during the Nixon Years

Despite the hopes of some conservatives in the 1960s, President Richard Nixon's reign did not mark the end of liberalism, nor was he a consistently ideological conservative.[97] Nixon more often tended to veer towards opportunism, working to dismantle liberalism but not always through the ways post-Goldwater right-wingers desired, or would become more commonplace after the election of Ronald Reagan.[98] While employing vague populist conservative rhetoric, many of his economic and social policies were reflective of the liberalism those on the right wanted to destroy. Historian Jefferson Cowie described Nixon as, "a conservative opportunist governing in a liberal paradigm with the goal of building the New Majority."[99] Despite his inconsistent politics, Nixon attracted conservatives who desired nothing more than the destruction of the so-called "liberal establishment." These folks would have to wait more than a decade to see an ideological conservative president. Nevertheless, Nixon and the Republican Party had rebounded after the disastrous 1964 election, defeating the heir to President Johnson's liberal politics. Nixon saw an opportunity to build his own majority, and he regarded conservative Republicans as a vital part of that national constituency. Patrick Buchanan would be one of his key contacts with the American right, and advocate for their positions when Nixon drift from what he thought the country needed.

Nixon was not the only candidate running with a sort of populism in the 1968 presidential campaign. George Wallace, the former Democratic Governor of Alabama, famous for his working man populism and appeals to white racial fear, saw the possibility to influence national

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[97] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 78, 103, 171; Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 6, 227, 319; Schulman, *The Seventies*, 25-36; Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 46, 49, 478.
[98] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 25-36.
[99] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 138-139.

politics.[100] While in candid moments Wallace acknowledged that winning the presidency was a long shot, the segregationist had expanded his initial appeal from southern whites who were threatened by federal government progress on Civil Rights, to a broader resentment against the liberal politics of the late-1960s.[101] What made historian Dan T. Carter deem the southerner a transitional figure was his rough around the edge's populist appeal separate from the country club image of the traditional right which clung to Goldwater.[102] Wallace didn't neatly fit within a *liberal* or *conservative* category and was rejected by intellectual new conservatives like *National Review* publisher William F. Buckley Jr.[103] Wallace only captured five Southern States and about 13% of the popular voter in 1968, but his politics helped shift populism from its origins in the political left, towards the right.[104] These would be trends that Phillips saw as essential to his defining work.

In the aftermath of Richard Nixon's narrow victory over Democrat Hubert Humphrey in the 1968 presidential election, Kevin Phillips published *The Emerging Republican Majority*, which sought to explain Nixon's victory through a populist-framed analysis. In viewing Nixon's victory through the lenses of regionalism, ethnicity, and American electoral history, Phillips argued that 1968 represented the coming of a Republican majority.[105] Phillips' text begged attention not only for its bold position that the electoral coalition of the New Deal had crumbled, but that cultural conflict over race was one of the prime motivators. On the first page, Phillips proclaims,

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[100] Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 11-12.
[101] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 338-339.
[102] Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 12-13.
[103] Carter, *The Politics of* Rage, 344.
[104] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 4, 224, 228
[105] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 553.

> "This repudiation visited upon the Democratic Party for its ambitious social programming, and inability to handle the urban and Negro revolutions, was comparable in scope to that given conservative Republicanism in 1932 for its failure to cope with the economic crisis of the Depression."[106]

At the time, the conventional wisdom did not find that New Deal liberalism had been destroyed by the election.[107] As the title of the book suggested, Phillips saw that the results of 1968 only pointed in one direction, the domination of the Republican Party and the repudiation Democratic Great Society politics which American majority middle class saw as biased towards minorities.

Phillips' use of cyclical theory, the idea that American political eras are shaken up every 32-36 years by a populist upheaval that dethrones the elite, was foundational to his analysis. Viewing America since the Civil War as a series of political eras, it was the end of the 1896-1932 era of Republican laissez-faire elitism, which resulted in the populist working-class support for Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932.[108] For Phillips, the genius of American politics, that the masses can reject and reshape the elite, was an inevitable reaction to the politics of the 1960s, in which the former populist Democrats became the new establishment elite. "The new elite [were] the corporate welfarists, planners and academicians," Phillips wrote, far removed from the white working-class supporters which had backed President Roosevelt during the New Deal.[109]

In line with his historical comparison and use of cyclical theory, Phillips also connected longer-term historical trends to the decline of the Democratic New Deal coalition. Phillips

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[106] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 1.
[107] Sean Wilentz, preface to *The Emerging Republican Majority*, by Kevin Phillips, xi.
[108] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 110-113.
[109] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 550.

pointed to immediate changes in Southern support of FDR as early as 1940 which reversed some of the president's gains in 1932 and indicated a coming split with Southern Democrats. Democratic support of unions and a concentrated focus on urban issues an urban bias allowed the South to begin to "flirt with the two party system."[110] This process only accelerated when conservative libertarian Barry Goldwater captured the Republican nomination in 1964, winning in areas where conservative southern senator Strom Thurmond had won in 1948, back when he was still a Democrat (or "Dixiecrat").[111] Phillips argued that as the 1960s progressed, it became increasingly clear to white southerners, and specifically poor and working-class whites, that the New Deal had abandoned its earlier "economic populist stance—supporting farm, highway, health, education and pension expenditures against conservative budget-cutting—into a credo of social engineering."[112] Phillips wrote that Goldwater's segregationist campaign, which was weakened by its extremism, did well in the South but sacrificed votes in the rest of the nation.[113]

These trends in the American South were proof to Phillips that the regional Civil War voting patterns, which had indicated federal voting affiliation, were breaking down. Following the Civil War, argued Phillips, the Democratic Party continued to hold sway over Southern politics, and along with the American West, held on to its populist voting record history.[114] In Phillips' framework, the Northeast became the bastion of Republican elite business politics. Broadly speaking, Phillips argued that after the defeat of populist William Jennings Bryan in 1896, the dominance of these business Republicans in the North sparked an era of industrial and financial economic policy that defined America's political operation until the Great

[110] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 215.
[111] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 224; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy,* 88.
[112] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 226.
[113] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 224.
[114] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 8.

Depression.[115] The populist outburst that bucked the Republicans from the White House in 1932 resulting in the New Deal coalition, was to Phillips, one in a series of populist cycles including the eras of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. In linking these outbursts as Southern and Southwestern American majority populist electoral revolts against a Northeastern elite, Phillips explained that 1968 was the beginning of yet another cycle along these volatile political fault lines.

With this historical-based argument, Phillips used data from the 1968 election to show that regions that voted heaviest for Nixon and independent populist George Wallace, had a militant populist voting track record. Mobilized over ethnic tension and resentment toward what was perceived to be the minority-biased policies of New Deal liberalism, Wallace and Nixon took control of the South from the Democrats. George Wallace was a key element of Phillips' prophecy for a national Republican majority. Phillips argued that while Wallace was the clear winner of the Deep South in 1968, that success along with Nixon's breakthrough in Southern suburbs and cities destroyed Democrat Hubert Humphrey's chances in the region.[116] Phillips firmly placed Wallace as a "way station for disaffected voters" who would align with Nixon's GOP once Wallace's third-party bid fell apart.[117] Phillips predicted that Wallace's unfocused regionally situated appeal would result in his voters moving to Nixon in 1972.[118] Wallace's core

[115] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority,* 14, 38.
[116] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 227; Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 352. Carter explains that Wallace's anti-establishment rhetoric allowed him to capture some Northern urban white working-class support, but that such appeal was hampered by the efforts of union advertising which warned voters of Wallace's low-wage right-to-work state.
[117] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 541; Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 350. Carter explains that Nixon, was very wary of capturing the Wallace voter in 1968 given the risk of coming off as an extremist which would alienate voters outside the Deep South. Carter cites Nixon's style in discussing school desegregation where he walked the line, not renouncing his support of the policy, but making clear to Southerners that he would not greatly expand desegregation efforts.
[118] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 239; Kazin writes on this chapter on George Wallace's populism that he reflected the errors of other third party populist candidates. Besides being disadvantaged by the two-party system, Kazin argues that Wallace's campaign did not articulate a clear plan other than resentment. Like 1930s populist Father Coughlin, Wallace refused to build a movement that was separate from himself.

constituency in the Deep South would only bolster Nixon's 1968 success in the Outer South and specifically, the vast expansion of suburbia.

But it was not just in the South that populist politics were reshaping the electoral map of the country. Republican's won big in the 1966 midterms, with many of Johnson's liberal Democrat House Representatives losing their seats, and 9 out of 10 new governors being Republican.[119] While downplayed by the media, the Republican backlash was anti-liberal and anti-Civil Rights.[120] Phillips interpreted the success of Republicans in the 1966 midterm elections and Nixon's win in 1968 as a key transition of rural Northeast, urban Catholics, Irish, Italians, Poles, and other ethnic European whites into the Republican collum; voters who were angry with the sociopolitical demands of racial minorities.[121] These Americans were leaving the Democratic Party, as well as Northern cities, as they saw their neighborhoods change, crime increase, and government programs that only seemed to support African Americans.[122]

If regionalism and ethnicity were vital in dictating political eras defined by party politics, then the migration of white Americans to the South and Southwest, and the movement of African Americans into the North, would alter the voting patterns which had shaped American presidential politics since the Civil War.[123] What he would coin as the *Sun Belt*, a region describing the vast swath of the southern tier of the United States from Florida to California, Phillips' argued that this was a suburbanizing population of "solidly middle class and conservative" white Americans who were resistant to the programs of the liberal state and its racial politics.[124] These were the areas in which Democrats had lost most significantly. Even with

[119] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 163-64.
[120] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 165-66. Perlstein argues that the media greatly downplayed the results of the 1966 elections arguing that Democratic liberalism's loss was significant.
[121] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 59, 69, 139, 188; Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 166.
[122] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 176; Frum, *How We Got Here*, 17-18.
[123] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 106, 255.
[124] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 548; Schulman, *The Seventies,* 37.

the transfer of African Americans into the urban North, their numbers paled in comparison to the migration of whites to the Southern and Southwest United States, a demographic transformation that shifted the entire electoral balance of the county.[125] Phillips placed the "Negro socio-economic revolution" as the most important inciting factor in this shift,

> "Today, the interrelated Negro, suburban and Sun Belt migrations have all but destroyed the old New Deal coalition… For a century, the prevailing cleavages in American voting behavior have been ethnic and cultural. Politically, at least, the United States has not been a very effective melting pot. In practically every state and region, ethnic and cultural animosities and divisions exceed all other factors in explaining party choice and identification."[126]

This would result, said Phillips, in a weakened Democratic Party associated with the failed liberal programs of the New Deal and the perception that it was becoming the party of minorities. In the most cynical moment of *Emerging*, Phillips wrote, "Maintenance of Negro voting rights in Dixie, far from being contrary to GOP interests, is essential if southern conservatives are to be pressured into switching to the Republican Party…"[127]

In prophesying a new electoral majority which broke with the continuity of dominant liberalism, Phillips' analysis questioned the political paradigm which had become conventional wisdom. From Phillips perspective, the programs and cultural impact of establishment liberalism, represented most clearly through Johnson's Great Society, had helped produce a new middle-

[125] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 255-56. Schulman argues, that beyond a power shift, America in the 1970s experienced a southernization of American culture.
[126] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 17-19.
[127] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican* Majority, 543.

class conservative majority that Republicans could take advantage of.[128] In the context of decade defining left leaning political protest, Phillips rejected the arguments of commentators who elevated left-wing movements against the liberal establishment. Rather, the real significant shift in American political culture was "a populist revolt of the American masses who have been elevated by prosperity to middle-class status and conservatism. Their revolt is against the caste, policies and taxation of the mandarins of Establishment liberalism."[129] Combined with urban flight from the North to the Sun Belt, culminating in a regional party realignment, Republicans could avoid splitting their new constituency by ignoring appeals to the shrinking pool of Democrat backing minorities and Northeast establishmentarians.[130] Angering the weakened moderate Republicans left in the party, it was Phillips' viewpoint on racial politics which made headlines.[131] But for Phillips, it was a simple reality; ethnic and cultural strife had always animated American politics and had not halted the progress of the nation.[132]

Reactions to *The Emerging Republican Majority*

During the 1968 campaign, the Nixon team saw the potential in Republican inroads in the South and thus view Wallace as a threat.[133] However, Nixon was careful not to indulge in the explicit racial rhetoric that Wallace spewed.[134] When *Newsweek* called *The Emerging Republican Majority* the "political Bible of the Nixon era," they mischaracterized the book as a strategy guide for the Nixon administration.[135] Phillips had worked as a voting pattern analyst for

[128] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 552.
[129] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 550.
[130] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 547.
[131] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 545-551; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 70-71.
[132] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 550.
[133] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 341.
[134] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 35-36.
[135] Phillips, 2014 preface to *The Emerging Republican Majority*, xv.

the 1968 campaign, but at the time of the book's release he was working as a special assistant for Attorney General John Mitchell. As Phillips explained: "I was more an outsider than an insider;" the book helped describe what was happening in 1968 rather than prescribing a strategy for the White House.[136] Once the book became the subject of controversy, Phillips said he was sidelined, and he soon left the Justice Department in 1970.[137] Instead of endorsing the book, the Nixon White House publicly distanced itself from Phillips' ethnic and regional analysis. Explaining the controversial political reaction to the book, the *New York Times* speculated that Phillips had written the book as essentially the campaign strategy his boss, and Nixon's campaign chairman, John Mitchell.[138] The article explains, "What has riled up the White House is not what Phillips wrote, but the fact that he wrote it. In candidly exploring matters so sensitive as ethnic and racial voting, Phillips has said the unsayable."[139] After the White House repudiation, the article explained that Phillips had dropped out of two televised debates regarding *Emerging*, while several Republicans publicly denounced his thesis.[140]

Reading reviews from when *Emerging* was released, it is clear just how controversial Phillips' arguments were.[141] As with its coverage of the White House reaction, a *New York Times* book reviewer emphasized the "racial ingredient" of Phillips' analysis, while doubting that it was far from John Mitchell's tactics.[142] Some reviews read amusingly naive as they couldn't help but

[136] Phillips, 2014 preface to *The Emerging Republican Majority*, xvii.
[137] Dionne Jr, "The Unlikely Populist."
[138] Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "White House Gags Author Phillips For Candor on Lily-White Strategy," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 29, 1969.
[139] Evans and Novak, "White House Gags Author Phillips For Candor on Lily-White Strategy."
[140] Evans and Novak, "White House Gags Author Phillips For Candor on Lily-White Strategy."
[141] Warren Weaver Jr., "The Emerging Republican Majority," *The New York Times*, September 21, 1969; Joel R. Malnick, *Review of The Emerging Republican Majority*, by Kevin P. Phillips, *Geographical Review* 61, no. 3 (1971): 457–58.
[142] Warren Weaver Jr., "The Emerging Republican Majority."

reject Phillps' cynical outlook on the motivations of the electorate.[143] Reviewer Douglas Price questioned Phillips' assumption that Americans were motivated by ethnic, religious, or racial self-interest, instead offering that perhaps there is a self-interest in seeking accommodation of the majority rather than polarization.[144]

In his book, *Nixon Agonistes*, former *National Review* writer-turned-liberal, Garry Wills interviewed Phillips, presenting him as the figure who best exemplified the political attitude of the "Southern Strategy."[145] In the book, Phillips is a young cynical political operator, drawing maps and using his ethnic, regional, social and historical analysis.[146] When asked about the prevalence of urban riots by Wills, Phillips expresses his conservative side, Nixon should send in the army and "cream 'em."[147] Wills saw Phillips as a continuation of Clif White and William Rusher, the political operators of the presidential campaign for Barry Goldwater in 1964, who first saw the potential for Republican victory in capturing the American South and Southwest, ignoring the Northern establishment.[148] The mistake White and Rusher made, Wills argued, was that they confessed their Southern strategy, whereas Nixon had not.[149] Mocking what he viewed as Phillips' arrogance, however, Wills writes, "Phillips makes the same mistake Clif White did - he confesses his strategy."[150] Tellingly however, Phillips doubted Nixon's ability to "trust the

[143] Douglas Price, "'Critical Elections' & Party History: A Critical View," ed. Walter Dean Burnham et al., *Polity* 4, no. 2 (1971): 239.
[144] Douglas Price, "'Critical Elections' & Party History."
[145] Phillps was criticized by the Right as well. In the *National Review*, Phillip's Southern conservative populist strategy was mocked, comparing his vision of middle-class populism to that of Lenin. Bruce Schulman references an article titled "To the Nashville Station" in the *National Review*. Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies,* 284.
[146] Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 265.
[147] Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 268.
[148] Wills, *Nixon Agonistes,* 261-264.
[149] Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 264.
[150] Wills, *Nixon* Agonistes, 269.

trends, to buck the Eastern Establishment."[151] Such doubts, not made clear in *Emerging*, would come to exemplify Phillips' opinion of the Republican Party in the 1970s.

Journalist James Boyd defended Phillips from accounts that described him as a robotic analyst, but in the article, Phillips appeared more cynical than in the book.[152] For Phillips, "When the average voter steps into the booth he registers the prejudice or the allegiance bred by a mix of geography, history and ethnic reaction which stems from a past he knows only murkily," writes Boyd.[153] An acquaintance of Phillips is quoted in the piece saying, "Phillips sketches the most horrendous developments without a trace of emotion".[154] The Boyd piece on Phillips and *The Emerging Republican Majority* is most valuable however for Phillips' quotes on conservative ideology. While Phillips repeats his disdain for the liberal social programming elites, his comments on conservatism are revealing:

> "I wish we could drop into the Potomac all those obsolescent conservatives who are still preoccupied with Alger Hiss and General MacArthur, and who keep trotting out laissez faire economics and other dead horses. They make the Republican Party look musty to millions of ignored working-class people who are looking for a party that relates to their needs."[155]

[151] Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 269.
[152] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy." Phillips states blatantly in the article, "Republicans would be shortsighted if they weakened enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. The more Negroes who register as Democrats in the South, the sooner the Negrophobe whites will quit the Democrats and become Republicans. That's where the votes are."
[153] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."
[154] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."
[155] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."

For Phillips, the new majority he envisioned was quite "unconservative" in a traditional sense, but decidedly conservative in its reaction Democratic Party liberalism.[156] As Phillips continued to offer his political analysis in the 1970s, he was associated with other Cold War conservatives and what would later be called the New Right. However, Phillips' politics were aligned with the populist impulses against what he saw as the establishment, more so than any subscription to conservative ideology. While Phillips' explicit distaste for Great Society Democratic liberalism certainly put him within the conservative context of the period, it would be simplistic to suggest that he was a conservative of the Goldwater variety given his quote to Boyd. That being said, in an era where American conservatives were still finding their way, and often frustrated with the words and actions of President Nixon, a commonly perceived enemy of the liberal elite and permissive culture bound men like Phillips to a wider New Right movement despite his differences with them. If dismissal of Cold War conservative cornerstones such as laissez faire economics and anti-communism distanced Phillips from his contemporaries, it was his belief in a populist majority which would expel establishment liberalism from the White House that connected him. *The Emerging Republican Majority* was not a conservative tract, but rather in Phillips' view, offered more of a tentative road map about where the country was going. For the greater part of the 1970s, the fissures that would ultimately push Phillips from conservatism were obscured by the perceived political dominance of the liberal elite.

Phillips was not the only political analyst trying to explain the changes undergoing American electoral politics in the late 1960s. Authors Ben J. Wattenberg and Richard M. Scammon's *The Real Majority* (1970) also attempted to make sense of the results of the 1968 election, but their analysis lacked Phillips' Republican conservative tilt, and calculated dismissal

[156] Phillips, 1970 preface to *The Emerging Republican* Majority, xxvi.

of the Northeast and minorities. While they recognized the new importance of social issues in mobilizing the electorate, previously economic issues had dominated, they argued that the average voting American was not an ideological being but rather concerned with their family and themselves; "Middle aged, middle class and middle minded."[157] Instead of Phillips' coldly pragmatic moves to push the GOP right to capture the growing conservative middle America, Wattenberg and Scammon insisted the center was key to electoral success.[158] For them, electoral success in the 1970s depended on the ability of either party to capture the political center.

Political scientist Ruth C. Silva's 1971 comparison of *Emerging* and *The Real Majority*, written after stinging Republican defeats in the 1970 midterm elections, offered contemporaneous insight into conceptions of 1968 victory. Viewing both texts as useful analysis', Silva argued Scammon and Wattenberg's middle minded thesis was more compelling. Both texts argued that 57% of the electorate had voted to remove Democrats from the White House but Silva thought Phillips mistook his "hypotheses for conclusions."[159] Scammon and Wattenberg agreed with Phillips that voters had associated Democrats with drugs, crime, protestors and "gay culture," but Phillips interpreted this shift as a signal that "voters are ready to expel Democrats from national politics."[160] With the benefit of writing after the 1970 midterms, Silva disputed Phillips' argument that Wallace would serve as a bridge candidate to the Republicans because 1968 Wallace votes had not translated to GOP midterm votes.[161]

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[157] Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Real Majority: An Extraordinary Examination of the American Electorate* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970), 21.
[158] Scammon and Wattenberg, *The Real Majority*, 200.
[159] Ruth C. Silva, *Review of The Emerging Republican Majority; The Real Majority*, by Kevin P. Phillips, Richard M. Scammon, and Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 395 (1971), 233.
[160] Silva, "Review of The Emerging Republican Majority; The Real Majority," 233.
[161] Silva, "Review of The Emerging Republican Majority; The Real Majority," 233.

In *The Silent Majority* (2006), historian Matthew Lassiter echoed Silva's critiques, writing that Phillips' argument that Goldwater's success in the Deep South in 1964 and Wallace's victory there in 1968 would funnel to Nixon in the 1972, "the most questionable thesis of the book."[162] Lassiter's book directly challenged the Southern Exceptionalist narrative of 1960s American political realignment, a narrative popularized in part by *The Emerging Republican Majority*. Rather than Phillips' conception of the populist middle-class as conservative, Lassiter conceptualized the middle-class suburban vote as a constituency beyond the simple red-blue divide, but linked through "populist identifications of suburban residents as homeowners, taxpayers, and school parents."[163] Lassiter and fellow historian Donald Critchlow, argued that the areas that voted most heavily for Wallace in 1968 failed to translate into long-term Republican support during the 1970s.[164] This was perhaps most evident in Democrat Jimmy Carter's sweep of the South in the 1976 presidential election, indicating that neither Wallace or Nixon had constructed a lasting Republican coalition in the South.[165]

Underscoring Phillips' perhaps simplistic conception of the middle class's political ideology, and a populist historical throughline that approaches historical determinism, it is his analysis of the political context that is most compelling. And such analysis', even when publicly disputed by the Nixon administration, helped articulate the electoral upheavals which would shape the nation in the 1970s and 1980s, and appeal to populist conservatives such as Patrick Buchanan. Ultimately, *The Emerging Republican Majority* made Phillips an influential political commentator of his time and set the groundwork for all his future texts which used populism,

[162] Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 240.
[163] Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 7.
[164] Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 319; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 181.
[165] Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 319; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 181.

and cyclical theory, to emphasize the importance of the American middle class ignored by Beltway establishment political figures and their beneficiaries.

Nixon's Conservative Firebrand

Despite the public-facing rejection of *The Emerging Republican Majority* from the Nixon White House, Kevin Phillips was not without supporters in the administration. As Nixon's conservative advisor and speech writer, Patrick Buchanan served as a communication point to the president for the right. Reflecting the Cold War conservatism of his early twenties, Buchanan was closer to what would emerge as the New Right, but was firmly joined with Phillips in his populist politics and disdain for what they believed to be a media controlled by liberals. In Richard Nixon, Buchanan saw the opportunity to propel the conservative values so important to him into power.[166] As with much of the American right, Buchanan often grew frustrated with what he viewed as inconsistencies on Nixon's part when it came to matters of conservativism.[167] As such, Buchanan had to contend with the opportunist and mixed-bag politics of the administration, despite his personal admiration for the president he often called the "old man."[168] Throughout his time in the Nixon White House, Buchanan made his opinions heard when he felt that the administration was compromising the conservative politics that he felt so essential to saving the country. If Buchanan was satisfied by Nixon's use of law-and-order politics, he was disappointed by the New Deal-like programs the administration supported and, in some cases,

[166] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning* 321; Stanley, *The Crusader,* 33-35.
[167] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 95.
[168] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 221-222.

helped fashion.[169] It was in the Nixon White House where Buchanan would lament the moderates or liberals around a man he respected, and it wouldn't be the last time.[170]

Rhetorically, however, Nixon employed a populism that aligned with Buchanan's values. Speaking to the great "silent majority" of sympathetic and patriotic Americans who supported Nixon's actions to end the Vietnam War in the face of a minority of voices demonstrating in the streets, Buchanan helped shape the language that he felt spoke to true Americans.[171] These were the same Americans Phillips identified in as forming the Republican majority. The amorphous yet effective term "silent majority" prescribed clear divisions between different sections of American society, using patriotism and conservatism in the face of protest to produce a conflict narrative – "us" against "them." Historian Michael Kazin effectively described the "silent majority" as "imprecisely defined but was meant to represent producers and consumers-taxpayers, white ethnics, housewives, middle Americans who felt scorned by New Left and by powerful liberals."[172] Matthew Lassiter writes that with its various incarnations, "these labels represented a suburban strategy designed to conceal class divisions among white voters while taking advantage of the convergence of southern and national politics."[173] Such language served as an effective binding tool that emphasized the administration's objectives in forming a new majority.

When sections of the media responded negatively to Nixon's speech, Buchanan wrote to the president identifying a gap between the public and what he thought of as the biased

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[169] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 25; Patrick J. Buchanan, "Memo to H.R. Haldeman, February 5, 1971," in, *Advising Nixon: The White House Memos of Patrick J. Buchanan*, by Lori Cox Han, (University Press of Kansas, 2019), 124.
[170] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 50.
[171] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 51; Richard Nixon, "Nixon's 'Silent Majority' Speech," November 3, 1969, https://watergate.info/1969/11/03/nixons-silent-majority-speech.html/ Nixon wrote the speech himself, but Timothy Stanley writes that the president borrowed the term "silent majority" from Buchanan.
[172] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 246.
[173] Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 5.

networks.[174] Buchanan stated, "The contrast between the network reception of the president's address and the public's reception offer us a golden opportunity to move in earnest now against the commentators."[175] Buchanan conceived of a four-step plan to attack and threaten the national networks, including investigations into the objectivity of the media. Buchanan's focus on the gap between the public and the media regarding Nixon's historic November 3, 1969 "Silent Majority" speech, exemplified his populist anti-establishment politics. It was time to pounce when such a discrepancy appeared so pronounced between the people and the elite. In his 1973 book, *The New Majority*, Buchanan reflected back on the speech and the media reaction, writing, "Despite its virtual monopoly on the creation and dissemination of information, the liberal aristocracy was exposed as out of touch with the common man, politically unprepared for the 'trauma of the distasteful reversal.'"[176] It was simple, the public had celebrated Nixon in the face of the elites and liberals' attempts to squash the president's mandate to govern. Given Buchanan's tendency to view Nixon as under attack from establishment forces, he often emphasized the attempts of those outside the White House who tried to shape the direction of the country, a theme that Buchanan would encounter again.

In his role as speech writer, Buchanan took the fight to the media in the aftermath of the "Silent Majority" speech. Presented by Nixon's White House conservative compromise Vice President, Spiro Agnew attacked the media in a speech the following week. Buchanan, one of the authors, injected anti-establishment populism into the speech, with Agnew framing the conflict,

[174] Lori Cox Han, *Advising Nixon: The White House Memos of Patrick J. Buchanan* (University Press of Kansas, 2019), 52.
[175] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon November 5, 1969," in, *Advising Nixon,* 53.
[176] Patrick J. Buchanan, *The New Majority: President Nixon at Mid-Passage* (Philadelphia: Girard Bank, 1973), 13.

> "The purpose of my remarks tonight is to focus your attention on this little group of men who not only enjoy a right of instant rebuttal to every presidential address, but, more importantly, wield a free hand in selecting, presenting, and interpreting the great issues in our nation."[177]

Framing the media as a manipulative force, the speech espoused Buchanan's opinion that they were infringing on the man the populist masses had voted for. Writing in 1973, Buchanan firmly refused the idea that the liberal media had the public's interest mind or ever fought for the "public's right to know." Buchanan quoted Kevin Phillips, "'The public's right to know' is a code for the Manhattan Adversary Culture's desire to wrap the First Amendment around its attacks on the politicians, government and institutions of middle America."[178] Buchanan follows the quote, "The passage seems self-explanatory."[179]

While the attack on the media certainly played to the benefit of protecting Nixon, Buchanan also wanted to make institutional moves against the news media's elitism. Days after Vice President Agnew's speech, Buchanan sent a memo to White House Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman, requesting a program where the White House would collect complete tapes of media programming to track how political issues were being presented. With that data Buchanan proposed that the White House could better inform their media counterattacks. Buchanan writes, "We will be missing a golden opportunity if we don't use the occasion of RN's national address—and the network reaction to begin a sustained counteroffensive."[180]

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[177] Spiro T. Agnew, "Television News Coverage," delivered in Des Moines, Iowa, November 13, 1969, https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/spiroagnewtvnewscoverage.htm.
[178] Buchanan, *The New Majority*, 20.
[179] Buchanan, *The New Majority*, 20.
[180] Buchanan, "Memo to H.R Haldeman, November 11, 1969," in *Advising Nixon*, 53-54.

In spring 1970, the administration was under renewed protests pressure over revelations about U.S. bombing in Cambodia as well as the killing of 4 students at Kent State by the National Guard.[181] In May of that year, Buchanan wrote to Nixon frustrated that the administration had moved in an open-door relationship direction with the news media.[182] Tired of hearing White House officials apologizing, Buchanan argued in the wake of the killings the people needed the "impression of a strong government… [not] deterred an inch by any crowd of idealistic mixed-up kids."[183] The solution was loud and aggressive conservatives who would defend the White House from liberals who Buchanan said, blamed Nixon for the killings.[184] Instead what Buchanan perceived was a White House that had lost the initiative in attacking the media through "the conciliatory gestures of virtual appeasement to our ideological enemies."[185] Buchanan emphasized that in open attacks on the media, Nixon won the support of the people, but allowing for dialogue with dissenters has only confused the public. By "muzzling" Agnew, Buchanan said, the public failed to hear a strong defender of their conservative values.[186]

Historian Bruce Schulman argued that the march of 150,000 hard hats in support of Nixon and against the protestors at Kent State, "reinforced his determination to incorporate labor into his New American Majority."[187] More often than not however, the opportunistic nature of Nixon's policy meant conservatives were rhetorically catered to, rather than courted in tangible policy.[188] Nonetheless, Americans like these hard hats, working class whites in the North, were an essential element of Phillips and Buchanan's conception for the president's Republican

[181] Perlstein, *Nixonland,* 480-81.
[182] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, May 21, 1970," in, *Advising Nixon,* 54.
[183] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, May 21, 1970," in, *Advising Nixon,* 60. Buchanan prefaces this statement writing, "This is no argument for having National Guardsmen shooting 19-year-old girls in the head with an M-1…"
[184] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, May 21, 1970," in, *Advising Nixon*, 60.
[185] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, May 21, 1970," in, *Advising Nixon*, 56.
[186] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, May 21, 1970," in, *Advising Nixon*, 57.
[187] Schulman, *The Seventies,* 39.
[188] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 132-134.

majority. If Phillips after 1970 was operating from the outside, Buchanan was echoing much of what Phillips had to say internally.

Back during the 1968 campaign, Phillips' concept of a the emerging majority were spreading through Nixon's strategists.[189] In a July 13, 1968, memo to Nixon, Buchanan echoed much of what would be printed in Phillips' finished book in 1969; "Laying unnoticed before our eyes in the breakdown of the Gallup Poll is the answer to our riddle," wrote Buchanan.[190] The answer for Nixon's electoral victory would be the combination of Wallace Protestants and Humphrey Catholics.[191] In the memo Buchanan disputed the idea, just as Phillips had done, that the GOP pursue the African American and Jewish vote; "The Irish, Italian, Polish Catholics of the big cities - these are our electoral majority- they, and the white Protestants of the South and Midwest and rural America. That way lies victory."[192] Buchanan wanted tangible action, arguing that to capture Catholic support, Nixon should offer a tax credit for Catholics supporting both public and Catholic schools; something Phillips also said he suggested at the tail end of the 1968 campaign.[193] Even after the 1968 election, Buchanan continued to argue Nixon needed to make moves in the South, Midwest, and West to build a new majority.[194]

Buchanan exposed Nixon to both *The Emerging Republican Majority* and *The Real Majority*.[195] Despite the different conclusions of each book, they indicated similar trends that echoed Nixon's attempts to court the South and the blue-collar North.[196] In a February 25th,

[189] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 277.
[190] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, July 13, 1968," in *Advising Nixon*, 16.
[191] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, July 13, 1968," in *Advising Nixon*, 16.
[192] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, July 13, 1968," in *Advising Nixon*, 20.
[193] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, July 13, 1968," in, *Advising Nixon* 18; Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 267.
[194] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon (via H.R. Haldeman), November 13, 1968" in *Advising Nixon*, 30; Schulman, *The Seventies*, 38-39.
[195] Phillips, 2014 preface to *The Emerging Republican Majority*, xv. Phillips later wrote that Nixon read drafts of the book's analysis during the 1968 campaign and didn't read the book until 1970.
[196] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 126.

1970, memo, Buchanan attached a speech by Kevin Phillips that broke down the core elements of *Emerging.*[197] In the speech Phillips' toned down his "politics of who hates who," and underscored how Nixon's appeals to the middle class would help all citizens, including African Americans. Ending by reinforcing his core populist and regional realignment arguments, Phillips stated that the success of the Nixon administration would be in its simple objectives to help the people, the new middle class centered in the South and Southwest; middle America was the bedrock of the country.[198] Writing to Nixon, Buchanan felt that Phillips explained how the Northern establishment was "thwarting the popular will," and the path to build a new majority.[199] Buchanan finishes, "Quite good."[200]

The 1970 Mid-Term Elections

As the 1970 midterm elections approached in the context of increasing conflict between congress and the Nixon administration over Vietnam, and the previously mentioned Kent State killings, the Nixon administration seemed to double down on appealing to what it perceived as the "silent majority."[201] Vice President Agnew unleashed attacks upon the elitest Democrats in a series of public appearances, hooking them as being radicals, authored by Buchanan and one of the administrations' other speech writers, William Lewis Safire.[202] Buchanan argued to Nixon that to thwart the pro-Democrat strategies proposed in *The Real Majority,* Republicans had to link Democrats to "radical liberalism" to court social conservatives.[203] Buchanan suggested that

[197] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Memorandum to the President," February 25, 1970, Nixon Papers 6A-73-05, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, 2-11.
[198] Buchanan, "Memorandum to the President," February 25, 1970, 11.
[199] Buchanan, "Memorandum to the President," February 25, 1970, 1.
[200] Buchanan, "Memorandum to the President," February 25, 1970, 1.
[201] Perlstein, *Nixonland,* 523.
[202] Perlstein, *Nixonland,* 524.
[203] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, August 24, 1970" in *Advising Nixon*, 115-118; Perlstein, *Nixonland,* 524.

the president should hold onto his progressive domestic policy but present himself as a social conservative, blaming Democrats for obstructionism of his policies.[204] It could appear that Democrats were holding back the real domestic policy that the president wanted to pursue; the liberal elite were blocking the president of the people. Further, Buchanan argued that backing Republican candidates could only go so far; it was attacking Nixon's enemies that would be most beneficial and garner the most media attention.[205] The language "liberal establishment" should be employed said Buchanan, to mark the Democrats as those ruining the country with ultra-liberal civil rights programs and busing.[206] Like Phillips, Buchanan saw Civil Rights programs as an effective boon to the Democrats which had tarnished the liberals in the mind of middle America. Buchanan thus endorsed the hardhats, "It should be our focus to constantly speak to, to assure, to win, to aid, to promote the president's natural constituency–which is now the working men and women of the country, the common man, the Roosevelts New Dealer."[207]

Despite Buchanan's confidence in such tactics, the results were at best disappointing for the Republicans.[208] Lassiter argues that the 1970 midterms were a test for both Phillips' thesis and Nixon's Southern Strategy,

> "The midterm elections of 1970 demonstrated the political independence of the middle-class suburbs and the intellectual bankruptcy of the "southern strategy" in the electoral climate of the Sunbelt South… Instead of expanding the party's southern wing, the administration's tactics turned off middle-class voters in the recently developed and

[204] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, August 24, 1970" in *Advising Nixon*, 116.
[205] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, August 24, 1970" in *Advising Nixon*, 118.
[206] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, August 24, 1970" in *Advising Nixon*, 118.
[207] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, May 21, 1970" in *Advising Nixon*, 58.
[208] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 536-37. Perlstein suggests that the weak economy in 1970, along with Democrat ability to paint the Republican's as using politics of fear, resulted in Republican disappointment in the midterms.

> normally Republican suburbs, especially white moderates who interpreted racial extremism as a greater threat than court-ordered desegregation to the New South priorities of economic development and quality public schools."[209]

It appeared as though the political landscape as understood by Phillips and the more ideological Buchanan, was not so simple.[210] The day after the midterms, November 4, 1970, Buchanan evaluated the media coverage of the election for the president, showing how the Republicans were painted as running "a dirty, divisive campaign" that used "politics of fear."[211] Buchanan highlighted that Vice President Agnew received the most negative press attention, and he recommended, once again, the collection of media reports to communicate just how biased the networks were against the Nixon administration.

Two weeks later, Buchanan's evaluation of the campaign manifested in his frustration with Nixon's lack of tangible conservative policy. In typical Buchanan fashion, it wasn't that the president needed to back off conservatism, but he must provide Americans with the "real McCoy" rather than "counterfeit liberal" extensions of Great Society programs.[212] Buchanan was adamant that countering the liberals required programs that were Nixon-branded, and to "bring home the bacon" to truly build a new majority. Buchanan wrote,

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[209] Matthew D. Lassiter, "Chapter Thirteen: Suburban Strategies: The Volatile Center in Postwar American Politics," in *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History*, ed. Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 331-333.
[210] Osman, "Glocal America: The Politics of Scale in the 1970s," 246. Osman writes, "Rather than oscillating like a pendulum, the politics of the 1970s was a strange mix of conflict and consensus. "In the late seventies, the people of the United States were moving vigorously to the Left, the Right and the Center, all at the same time," wrote Michael Harrington about the era's ideological incoherence."
[211] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, "Special Report, Media Coverage, Predominantly TV, During Last 10 Days of Campaign," November 4, 1970," in *Advising Nixon*, 68-71; Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 537.
[212] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, November 18, 1970" in *Advising Nixon*, 162.

> "At all costs we must avoid, in the wake of the election, and in the pressure the president is assuredly getting from the left, any kind of transparent public move to the left. This damaged us after Kent State and such would now be tacit admission the Restons and Sideys were right and we were wrong on the campaign. It would be disheartening to the bulk of our support."[213]

As will become clear, this no-compromise politics would define much of Buchanan's critique of the Republican Party throughout his career. Never could a true and strong conservative White House bend to the demands of the left; the middle class, believed by Buchanan to be solidly conservative and populist, would see through compromise.

And yet, the Buchanan of 1970 qualifies the statement, perhaps showing some recognition of the effects of the partisan midterm campaign, that Nixon should present a path forward rather than left or right. As the administration approached the 1972 presidential elections, Buchanan was more defensive of the strategy in 1970, offering that, "The error in 1970 was not the 'Law and Order' issue," but its preemptive use which was trumped by Democrat media closer to the election. Buchanan states that saving the issue until later in the election would put the Democrats in defense against charges of being weak on crime and riots.[214]

Ruth Silva used the 1970 midterm results to critique Phillips's theory offering that perhaps Scammon and Wattenberg's center strategy was more appropriate.[215] Phillips did not budge, reacting in tandem with Buchanan on the apparent failure of the "Southern Strategy." The issue was not that Nixon and the Republicans drifted too far right, it was that they did not go far

[213] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, November 18, 1970" in *Advising Nixon*, 167.
[214] Buchanan, "Memo to John Mitchell, "Attack Organization & Strategy," March 14, 1972" in *Advising Nixon*, 215.
[215] Silva, "Review of The Emerging Republican Majority; The Real Majority," 234.

enough.[216] In the preface to his 1974 book *Mediacracy*, Phillips reflected on the 1970 midterms, "The Administration's lack of interest in history, programs, or philosophy was apparent in many more ways than mere book-denial."[217] The results of this arrogance, said Phillips, was a mishmash of policy: busing, suburban low-income housing, anti-poverty program continuation, basic income, and law and order. As Buchanan said, the attempt to court the middle class was inauthentic to the concerns of the conservative middle class. Phillips mocked Nixon's team of "merchandising men," who squandered the lessons of 1968 because they were too afraid to be tied to ideology.[218] Phillips even addressed Scammon and Wattenberg's emphasis on "law and order," arguing that its usefulness for the Republicans was hampered because it originated with Democrats defending themselves in the 1960s. Nixon's approach which offered voters both law and order as well as Great Society-type programs was contradictory.[219] Phillips makes clear that during the election, he was outspoken about the negativism of the law and order campaign and the failure to offer socioeconomic solutions for middle-class Americans that distanced itself from liberal failure.[220]

Comparing the reactions of Buchanan and Phillips to the 1970 midterm disappointment reinforces just how linked these two conservative populists were in the Nixon years. They recognized, as did other conservatives, that Nixon's departure from the Democratic Party liberalism was not significant enough. And yet, their populist focus, which at this time was both economic as it was social, recognized the potential for Nixon to capture the Democratic voters

[216] Kevin P. Phillips, preface to *Mediacracy: American Parties and Politics in the Communications Age* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), vii
[217] Phillips, preface to *Mediacracy,* vii
[218] Phillips, preface to *Mediacracy,* vii.
[219] Scammon and Wattenberg, *The Real Majority*, 199; Phillips, *Mediacracy,* vii. Scammon and Wattenberg argued that Republicans should continue to capture the political middle using the law-and-order issue, and a combination of integration and anti-busing politics.
[220] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, viii.

dissatisfied with the legacy of President Johnson. For Nixon, the midterm defeats indicated he needed Agnew's rhetoric toned down and a strong economy in time for the 1972 presidential election.[221]

Trouble on the Right

After the loses in the 1970 midterms, Nixon's position with conservatives was weakened, with some particularly upset with the direction of his foreign policy. It seemed to these conservatives that the anti-communist was working with the Soviets rather than increasing America's nuclear strength.[222] Buchanan stressed to the president and other key members of the administration that the right was angry with Nixon's domestic and foreign direction.[223] In January 1971, Buchanan deemed the situation on the right "as bad as I have known it since joining RN."[224] In a lengthy message, Buchanan explained that younger conservatives were fed up and abandoning their support for the president. Of particular concern for the right was Nixon's liberal domestic programs, and their perceived lack of conservative voices in the administration. Conservatives felt they had been ignored and taken for granted.[225] Buchanan wrote a long list of grievances, specifically mentioning Reaganites and the American Conservative Union's growing cynicism towards the White House. Buchanan's populism is apparent when he stressed that the conservative working-class base had been disheartened by the president's courting of party regulars, congressmen, governors, and media columnists; "Without the party, without the basically conservative workers enthusiastically and energetically behind

[221] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 538.
[222] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy,* 95. Crichlow also highlights efforts of some conservatives who would not support Wallace in 1972 but wanted to challenge Nixon's presidency from the right.
[223] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy,* 95.
[224] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, January 6, 1971," in *Advising Nixon*, 121; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 95.
[225] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, January 6, 1971," in *Advising Nixon*, 118-120.

us, 1972 will find us in 'deep kimshee.'"[226] Buchanan emphasized that the White House needed a high-ranking conservative and that despite the liberal tilt of the domestic programs the team needed to emphasize their conservative efforts. At the end of the memo, Buchanan holds back, "while the president's decisions and directions domestically may be locked…" he suggests that perhaps a media focus on the president's conservatism could be achieved.[227] Buchanan was unsatisfied with Nixon's policy pursuits.

A month later in a memo to White House counsel John Ehrlichman, Buchanan was less forgiving, warning that Nixon may "go down in history… as the president who doubled the welfare rolls; the man who did more than anyone else to destroy the work ethic in America."[228] Two days later, writing to H. R. Haldeman, Buchanan relayed Jeff Bell's conservative suggestions, including simplifying the tax structure, reprivatization of social security, and repudiation of welfare which goes to the "working poor."[229] Throughout the summer of 1971, Buchanan continued to express his fear that Nixon was losing conservatives.[230] In August, after Buchanan warned Haldeman about a meeting of key members of the right who wanted to pull support for the president, he wrote to Nixon again stressing his fears.[231] Buchanan stated that what the right needed was an "olive branch" and that their fears were substantive, citing the right's aversion to Nixon's trip to China.[232] Ultimately, Buchanan warned the president that for success in the 1972 elections, he needed to regain both white-collar and blue-collar conservatives, the constituencies of Senator James Buckley and George Wallace.[233]

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[226] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, January 6, 1971," in *Advising Nixon*, 120.
[227] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, January 6, 1971," in *Advising Nixon*, 121.
[228] Buchanan, "Memo to John Ehrlichman, February 3, 1971," in *Advising Nixon*, 123.
[229] Buchanan, "Memo to H. R. Haldeman, February 5, 1971," in *Advising Nixon*, 123-126.
[230] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, May 7, 1971," in *Advising Nixon,* 128.
[231] Buchanan, "Memo to H. R. Haldeman, July 28, 1971," in *Advising Nixon,* 134; Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, August 4, 1971," in *Advising Nixon,* 135.
[232] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, August 4, 1971," in *Advising Nixon,* 136-137.
[233] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, August 4, 1971," in *Advising Nixon,* 138.

Nixon did of course win overwhelming in the 1972 elections, in a landslide of historical proportions, despite Buchanan's fears that his boss risking losing the American right.[234] In the wake of the election, Buchanan wrote to Nixon and laid out what he saw as the conservative vision for the second term.[235] The number one priority said Buchanan was the establishment of a Franklin Roosevelt-style "political dynasty" affirming the president's majorities in the South, the ethnic white and Catholic blue-collar North, and the West.[236] Buchanan directly invoked the thesis Phillips had argued in *Emerging*. It was the populist working man, not minorities or the liberal media which needed to be front in center in the next four years. Further, Nixon should pursue the liberal media elite just as Roosevelt had attacked the financial monopolies.[237] Buchanan ended the memorandum by writing that to cement the new majority, the government needed to be shrunk and taxes needed to be slashed.[238] Buchanan's proposals were much too ideologically conservative for Nixon to follow, but it didn't matter. Nixon didn't last.

Watergate

As the Watergate scandal consumed Washington in the second half of 1973, it appeared that the trends which Phillips and Buchanan had championed were under significant threat.[239] Nixon, the president who was supposed to speak for the "silent majority," had lied to the public, and resigned in August 1974 disgraced.[240] During the crisis, Buchanan biographer Timothy Stanley wrote that the loyal speech writer genuinely believed the Nixon when the "old man" told

[234] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 745.
[235] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, November 10, 1972," in *Advising Nixon*, 290-299.
[236] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, November 10, 1972," in *Advising Nixon*, 291-293.
[237] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, November 10, 1972," in *Advising Nixon*, 293.
[238] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, November 10, 1972," in *Advising Nixon*, 299.
[239] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 102-03.
[240] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 101-02.

him that he had no knowledge of the break in.[241] After months of defending Nixon, viewing the scandal as a media and Democratic witch hunt, Buchanan learned of the smoking gun tape, where Nixon had discussed using the CIA to obstruct the FBI investigation into Watergate.[242] Buchanan agreed with the rest of Nixon's team, the president had to resign.[243] Buchanan had fought hard to represent and speak for the middle class conservatives he saw throughout the nation. After helping form the rhetorical attacks on the Democratic liberal establishment in the Nixon years, Buchanan carried on without the "old man," increasing his focus on the media and continuing to envision a conservative majority. After the fact, Phillips thought Watergate was little different from the tactics of the Johnson administration, but found little to celebrate in the wreckage of Nixon's GOP.[244] After articulating the potential of Nixon's electoral realignment, Phillips had been disappointed by the administration's inability to deliver on the political direction he described in *Emerging*. However, the Nixon years illustrated Phillips' and Buchanan's commitment to populist politics that infused with anger at the liberal establishment could not be snuffed out by what was to come. They had proclaimed to advocate for the American's they thought left behind by the Democratic liberal elite, and in doing so converged in what was just the beginning of the conservative politics Nixon had flirted with.

[241] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 72; Buchanan, "Memo to Alexander Haig, May 10, 1974," in *Advising Nixon*, 329.
[242] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 78.
[243] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 79.
[244] Phillips, preface to *Mediacracy*, xi.

Chapter 2: What Now? Confusion in the 1970s

After the explosion of the Watergate scandal, Democrats rode high on public backlash to Nixon's GOP, sweeping the House in the November 1974 midterm elections. Voter affiliation with the Republican Party had dropped significantly since the scandal. "In this environment, the GOP Right had become a minority within a minority party," later argued historian Donald Critchlow.[245] What perhaps was not clear at the time, was that the enduring message of Watergate, a feeling of "don't trust the government," served the interests of those on the right.[246] Ford's conservatism was far from what the right desired and he would face challenges from his own right flank throughout his term, including the grassroots mobilization against the Equal Rights Amendment, and Ronald Reagan's challenge in the 1976 Republican primary. But in 1974, Buchanan and Phillips were not so sure about the future of the country, and even less sure of the conservative majority.

However, over the course of the decade, a growing force of populist conservatives which commentator Kevin Phillips came to call the "New Right," would have significant impact.[247] This movement utilized anger over social and cultural issues to mobilize electoral support, challenging both the liberal establishment and establishment Republicans.[248] In reaction to the cultural and political upheavals of the era, members of the New Right fought to defend what they thought to be American's traditional values.[249] Rather than viewing the path for a conservative majority through the Republican Pary, these right-winger populists looked to George Wallace as

[245] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 103.
[246] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 51.
[247] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 128; Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge*, 305; Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.*, 368, 377. Critchlow credited Paul Weyrich with coining the name "New Right," whereas Judis cites Kevin Phillips as its creator.
[248] Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 228; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 128, 129.
[249] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 128, 129.

inspiration.[250] The New Right rallied around coherent political and cultural themes which constructed a national network that organized the broad and disconnected anti-liberalism that had been growing in the country.[251] During the decade, both Buchanan and Phillips would be deemed members of the New Right for their populist-focused politics.[252]

In the wake of the Watergate constitutional crisis, both Kevin Phillips and Patrick Buchanan released books trying to grapple with the challenges the country faced. Phillips' *Mediacracy* (published in 1974) and Buchanan's *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories* (published in 1975) both lamented the lost opportunity of Nixon's "New Majority," an electoral coalition they saw as potentially unfeasible with the tarnished name of the GOP. Phillips' *Mediacracy* sought to explain America in the post-industrial age, arguing that the elite, which he now called the "knowledge sector," had gained increased influence over politics and were fundamentally at odds with the middle-class electorate.[253] He continued his historical and regional arguments for the existence of the conservative majority but questioned the ability of the American two-party system and growing ideological sentiment to produce a populist politics for the people. Phillips felt the systems which had governed and directed American political life were breaking away.[254]

Buchanan too saw a country in crisis but offered a path for conservatives to achieve victory against the liberal establishment. In *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, Nixon's former speech writer placed himself in the center of a movement he thought had failed to reach

[250] Judis, *William F. Buckley. Jr.*, 367.
[251] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 196.
[252] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 196.
[253] Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge*, 334. Perlstein notes sociologist Daniel Bell's *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, which popularized the subject and who Phillips briefly mentions in *Mediacracy*.
[254] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 227.

its goals. Referencing Barry Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Conservative*, Buchanan looked back on his origins, and the spark of modern US conservatism in mainstream politics, as the guiding light to remind his fellow right-wingers where they had gone wrong. While both books put Phillips and Buchanan within a shared ideological space, in broad terms espousing a similar view and concern for the country, Phillips' place as a political commentator and Buchanan as a pure ideological member of the New Right foreshadowed the divisions in their politics. Still, it was the shared enemy in the perceived liberal establishment that bound them together.

Mediacracy* and *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories

In *Mediacracy*, Phillips described his prophesized populist conservative majority in an environment of political and ideological confusion. In some ways, Phillips was reflecting what would become one of defining images of the 1970s, an era of cynicism, or what President Jimmy Carter later called a "crisis of confidence."[255] Historian Bruce Schulman wrote that the Nixon presidency "often deliberately, sometimes unintentionally, drilled a deep well of cynicism about national politics," a cynicism which had existed before Watergate, but would only grow afterwards.[256] For Phillips, not only were the politics of the era confused in the wake of Watergate but economically the country was transitioning into a post-industrial society, where the bedrock of America's political organization was cracking under the weight of its ties to the Industrial Revolution.[257] With a wider lens than employed by Phillips in *Emerging*, the populist saw a country in decline, where traditional centers of power and influence were transferring to a new elite which opposed the values and views of the masses. Phillips warned of the increasing

[255] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 141.
[256] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 24
[257] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 14-15.

power and influence of the media, which was further eroding the value of the political parties, "as the first communications society, the United States is on its way to becoming the first "Mediacracy."[258] Rather than a partisan endorsement of the Republican Party as in his first book, Phillips had lost faith in either party to articulate the politics of the majority populist middle class. "Today's institutionalized system lacks the fluidity for a traditional type of realignment, and the party system is giving way to a politics of communications," Phillips explained.[259] Lost faith hadn't changed Phillips's populist conservative counter reaction to the Great Society Democratic liberalism, in fact he still saw the American middle-class shifting to the right. What had changed was he didn't know how this populist surge would manifest itself in the uncertain 1970s.

While Kevin Phillips offered readers a broad populist analysis of America in a post-industrial transition, Patrick Buchanan sought to answer why conservatives had failed to reverse the liberal trend of the country and where they could go in the future.[260] In many respects, Buchanan presented the same picture of the nation as Phillips did, but through a purely ideological conservative lens. A creation of their populist bias, for both Buchanan and Phillips, the "elite" was a broad collection of people and groups including the media, academia, liberal Democrats, and in general Americans who economically and culturally opposed what they perceived to be the desired politics of the populist masses. [261] In 1975, Buchanan saw a

[258] Phillips, preface to *Mediacracy*, v; Kathryn Cramer Brownell, *24/7 Politics Cable Television and the Fragmenting of America from Watergate to Fox News* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 5, 84. Brownell argues that there has always been deep connection between the media and American politics but that development of cable news in the 1970s, "exposes ways political institutions and values are deeply intertwined." Nixon particularly hated the broadcast media and helped set the stage for the rise of cable news which transformed American media and politics.
[259] Phillips, preface to *Mediacracy*, x.
[260] Patrick J. Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories: Why the Right Has Failed* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1975).
[261] Buchanan cites Kevin Phillips in the thank you section of the book's introduction.

dangerously dominant liberal media elite, a decline in the power of both parties, and frustration with the Nixon presidency. "In 1968," Buchanan wrote, "the nation was prepared for a conservative government at home; it voted for a conservative government. We did not provide that government…"[262]

In evaluating the political context of 1975, Buchanan identified what he believed to be four key obstacles to conservative victory; the Western intellectual's disdain for capitalism and its social institutions, the national media's monopoly on politics, the hypocrisy of the "race issue," and the weakness of American Detente foreign policy.[263] Buchanan's analysis of each roadblock echoed the politics he expressed during the Nixon years, and what he would vocalize in the decades to come. A theme evident in his White House memos (discussed in the previous chapter) but expressed clearly in this work, was Buchanan's politics of no compromise. Going forward, this position would shape Buchanan's opposition to liberals, moderate Republicans, and even conservatives. Buchanan explained, setting the tone of his analysis,

> "We have nothing to lose by confrontation politics. The nation is a divided country; but it was not divided by conservatives; and it should not be our business to compromise our principles, to silence our complaints, or to abandon our point of view to 'bring us together.'"[264]

[262] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 18.
[263] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 6-8.
[264] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 8.

Buchanan used this no-compromise politics to criticize conservatives he thought had been too loyal to party, sacrificing their principles to curry favor with powerful Republicans.[265] As he would express later in the book, like Phillips, but from an ideological angle, he questioned the Republican Party as the continued path for conservatism because of is placation. This extended to his perspective on the Nixon years, and the Ford government, which he felt had abandoned the moments of attack he had advocated for when he worked in the White House. Buchanan's politics reflected his youth hero Barry Goldwater's infamous 1964 Republican National Convention speech, "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice; moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."[266] Citing Goldwater's influential *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960) yet again, Buchanan placed the book's principles as the north star that he felt conservatives had forgotten. Primarily, Buchanan felt that that Goldwater's libertarian emphasis on restricting and shrinking the federal government had been a fundamental failure of the Nixon presidency.[267] With its placation politics, the Nixon administration had supported the "inexorable growth of the federal budget," and the continuation of the Great Society.[268]

Phillips agreed that in many respects, the essence of the Great Society politics had survived Nixon. Specifying his language from the first book, Phillips now described the middle-class populist reaction against the liberal 1960s a *counterreformation*. This revolt said Phillips, was at first largely partisan, representing cultural, economic, and religious grievances.[269] "Confronted with the moral, racial and social upheaval of the nineteen sixties," Phillips writes,

[265] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 8.
[266] Barry Goldwater, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination," delivered at the Republican National Convention, San Francisco, July 16, 1964, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-republican-national-convention-san.
[267] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 5.
[268] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 17.
[269] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 60.

"the bulk of the American people- with varying speed and intensity- seem to have turned against the new cultural climate."[270] Phillips saw in the early 1970s a resurgence of nationalist, religious fundamentalist, ethnic, and working and middle-class cultural expressions which countered the perceived values of Great Society liberalism.[271] In 1969, Phillips perceived Nixon and the Republican Party as the leaders of this counterreformation, but in 1974, he thought the results of the previous administration had only muddied the ideological political environment. Nixon did not provide the country with a clear ideological direction, instead offering a continuation of some Great Society liberal leaning policies, with moments of real conservatism.[272] Phillips interpreted this non-ideological leadership as fueling the grievances of the populist middle-class Nixon was supposed to turn into a new majority. Just as he had criticized the Nixon administration after the 1970 midterms, Phillips thought that the Nixon team did not understand the extent to which the electorate desired cultural and economic change broken from the Great Society liberalism of the 1960s.[273] Phillips writes,

> "With extraordinarily little appreciation of the 1966-68 victory dynamics, the new GOP regime was not able to offer the electorate in-depth reassurance on the pivotal issues.

[270] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 53.
[271] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 53; Osman, "Glocal America: The Politics of Scale in the 1970s," 243. Historians such as Osman have identified a variety of new political and national identities in the 1970s which citizens turned to, but were not all necessarily motivated by a turn against the Great Society Democratic politics.
[272] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 27. Schulman argues that Nixon, unlike Goldwater and Reagan, attacked big government quietly, and thus then and now confuses people trying to grapple with Nixon's politics. Schulman describes Nixon's tactics as "undermining" by "stripping [liberal establishment] of its bases of support and its sources of funds."
[273] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 60.

> Instead of opposing welfare, busing, and artificial-integration syndrome, the Administration appeared to embrace it…"[274]

Even with Nixon's victory over Democrat George McGovern in the 1972 elections, whose campaign was smeared by the Nixon administration, and large segments of the media, as being closely aligned with the values of the New Left, Phillips only saw a negativist campaign against the social politics of the Democrats.[275] Despite the president's landslide victory at a federal level, Phillips was confident the traditional political realignment he had seen in 1969 had passed.[276] The opportunity for Nixon to furnish a new Republican majority was further tarnished by Watergate which Phillips argued, along with other issues like the Vietnam War, had eroded public trust in party institutions.[277] If Republicans had failed to profit from their political moment, Phillips argued that Democrats had only increasingly split between their liberal and more centrist factions, further separating them from their electoral base fashioned by FDR.[278] After the landslide defeat of George McGovern in 1972, Democrats struggled between their liberal values and what they perceived to be the conservative trends of the era.[279] With both parties failing to represent the popular politics of the American middle class, Phillips saw party lines blurring.[280]

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[274] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 60.
[275] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 61; Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 228-229. Miroff outlines Nixon's behind the scenes tactics to defame the image of McGovern through groups like Democrat's for Nixon, who ran commercials directed by the White House's Committee to Re-elect the president (CREEP).
[276] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 148, 189; Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 249. Miroff emphasizes that Nixon's victory was a "solitary" one, with little excitement for Republican's below the presidential level.
[277] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 12, 62.
[278] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 745. Perlstein recounts a conversation between Richard Nixon and his 1968 Democratic opponent Hubert Humphrey after the 1972 election in which Perlstein hints that Humphrey may have wanted George McGovern to lose.
[279] Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment,* 260.
[280] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 131.

Buchanan was equally critical of Nixon's legacy, but had more sympathy for his old boss. While giving Nixon credit for providing a hard line against 1960s liberalism, in Buchanan's opinion, much of the Democratic continuity from the upheaval decade had continued into the 1970s.[281] Buchanan writes of Nixon, "Less a conservative than a fellow traveler of the right," he drifted against the values and politics that voted him in, due to an initial desire for unity and pressure from his enemies, thus directly contradicting cultural and economic campaign promises.[282] Listing the Family Assistance Plan, détente with the Soviets, racial quotas, amnesty, and new taxes, the administration let down the new majority that it had rallied, thought Buchanan.[283] He did understand Nixon's position: "the president's initial decision not to reflect his constituency and move rightward on social and economic policy in 1969 is only a partial explanation why government fails to reflect the rightward drift in national sentiment."[284] As Buchanan would come to view much of his conservative contemporaries, he painted Nixon as a target victim of the media, special interest groups and liberals, causing the president to feel he had to compromise.[285]

Phillips and Buchanan echoed similar disappointment in Nixon's often confusing policy mixed bag, but with emphasis on détente and a ballooning government deficit, Buchanan made clear his ideological conservatism, separate from Phillips. Populist more so that an ideological conservative, Phillips hardly addressed foreign policy, and he was not opposed to Nixon's intervention in the U.S. economy.[286] Buchanan spread the gospel of the increasingly loud conservative opinion that Nixon's policies had failed to halt Western retreat their battle against

[281] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 4.
[282] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 17.
[283] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 12-13.
[284] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 19.
[285] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 16,18.
[286] Dionne Jr, "The Unlikely Populist"; Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge,* 310-11.

communism, and had stolen politics from the Democratic handbook when the White House implemented wage and price controls.[287] In advocating for strong anti-communism and laissez-faire economic philosophy, Buchanan was placing himself in the origins of the modern conservative movement, as well as the conservative wave to come, later called the Reagan Revolution.[288]

Phillips' on the other hand, was more concerned with the broader future of American politics, not necessarily tied to partisanship. The result of blurred of party lines on cultural and economic values meant that voters placed issues rather than party first, said Phillips. The 1972 election showed an increased role in ideology, rather than party, as the determinative factor guiding Americans voters.[289] Phillips argued this revealed itself most clearly in the phenomenon of ticket-splitting, where voters backed two different parties at the local and presidential levels.[290] In the American South, for example, Phillips thought ideological confusion had produced a conflict between increasing voter identification with the Republican Party at a presidential level, and local and congressional elections which maintained their Civil War voting pattern preference for Democrats.[291] Despite Nixon's massive victory in 1972, the Republicans lost 2 seats in the Senate, and gained only 12 seats in the House, with the Democrats holding both houses of Congress.[292] While Phillips emphasized Democrats running in 1972 for the Senate and Congress who had distanced themselves from McGovern's smeared left-wing politics, author Rick Perlstein wrote, "even as election night drowned McGovern, McGovernism

[287] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 8, 120; Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge*, 335. Perlstein cites a Gallup poll from 1975 in which 66% of the public agreed that wage and price controls should be reinstated.
[288] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 43, 172.
[289] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 200. Phillips cites a study from the University of Michigan Center for Political Studies.
[290] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 130, 200.
[291] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 132.
[292] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 745; Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 249.

itself wasn't necessarily faring poorly at all," anti-war candidates had managed to win their local and state races.[293] Rather than replicating the complete Democrat domination of the 1932 election, where Franklin Roosevelt's party had realigned the country, Nixon had only defeated McGovern himself.

Since the publishing of *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Phillips also sharpened description of what he deemed to be the American elite, labelling the media, massive government bureaucracies, think tanks, universities, "corporate giants of knowledge technology," and to a lesser extent, those providing "specialized services" like bankers and doctors, the "Knowledge sector elite."[294] Benefiting from the transition into a service economy via the Post-Industrial Revolution, this new affluent class represented the institutionalization, beyond government, of Johnson's Great Society social programming, and moralizing culture, argued Phillips.[295] Over the course of the 1960s, Phillips thought the expansion of the liberal establishment, fueling the knowledge sector elite had replaced the old traditionally conservative economic elite of the Industrial Revolution.[296] Rather than benefitting from business domination, this new class, argued Phillips, made its money through its many government partnership programs in areas such as welfare, housing and education, disrupting order for ordinary Americans, while their pockets were lined through massive federal expenditure.[297] Citing neoconservative Irving Kristol, Phillips thought increased welfare rolls had only disrupted the families they were

[293] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 745; Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 131
[294] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 15.
[295] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 17-18.
[296] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 14, 35.
[297] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 51.

supposed to help, having no effect or worse, causing the breakup of families, in particular African Americans.[298] Phillips writes,

> "Often, the poor were only secondary beneficiaries of spending tailored to the theories and pocketbook of the new class… the knowledge sector cut as reckless a socioeconomic swathe as the early railroad barons and factory owners of the industrial era."[299]

While Phillips recognized that some programs may have longer term benefits, such was Medicaid, he argued that the post-industrial liberal elite were both economically and culturally opposed to "the people;" the middle-class not victims of monopolistic business conservatives, but liberals who promoted a politics of change and experimentation, fundamentally opposed to the public's desire for tradition.[300] Phillips argued that the middle class resented "the new elite's nihilism" and its consumption of tax dollars to "increase programs seen as benefiting the elite/ghetto social engineering symbiosis."[301] Buchanan agreed, as he had during his time in the White House, arguing that the continuation of what he thought to be Great Society type programs were at odds with Nixon's middle-class populist conservative constituency.[302] In *Conservative Votes*, Buchanan employed an ideological and divisive angle to his anti-welfare rhetoric, reflecting the often racist and fabricated image of "welfare queens," which candidate Ronald

[298] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 46-47.
[299] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 51.
[300] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 33.
[301] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 33.
[302] Buchanan, "Memo to Richard Nixon, November 18, 1970" in *Advising Nixon,* 162; Schulman, *The Seventies,* 35. Schulman argues that while Nixon's welfare objectives, specifically the failed Family Assistant Plan (FAP) which would have provided universal basic income for the poor and working poor seemed liberal, it was conservative in nature. Nixon's goal writes Schulman, as with the president's other strategies against the liberal establishment, was to undermine their base of support, replacing the entire welfare system with FAP.

Reagan later popularized in his 1976 campaign.[303] Such images sought to frame welfare as a unfair system in which, ordinary hard working Americans, often implied as white, were footing the bill for large swaths of the country. Buchanan wrote,

> "One is an expanding army of millions, utterly dependent upon government for education, medical care, food and shelter. The other is a society of producers and laborers, blue collar and white collar, increasingly bitter about carrying that government and army upon their backs"[304]

Phillips shared Buchanan's opinion in invoking "producers and laborers" by continually citing William Jennings Bryan as the historical throughline to America's current populists, but he didn't articulate welfare or economic issues as a vitriolic split as Buchanan did.[305] Phillips instead targeted his attacks clearly on the hands of the government and liberal elites, without necessarily degrading those who were on welfare, but painting them as victims of a failed naive experiment.[306]

The other dominating subgroup of the Knowledge sector elite, as conceived by Phillips, was the media which had a symbiotic relationship with the liberal 1960s and the upheaval it produced. By the early 1970s, Phillips, Buchanan, and others of the New Right were focusing

[303] Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge*, 603-04. The label "welfare queen" was first used to describe a fraudster in Chicago by the *Chicago Tribune.*
[304] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 132.
[305] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 45-46.
[306] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 46-52. Phillips did criticize Great Society liberals for "excusing anti-social behavior" because of people's lack of education, housing, or economic support, and in his opinion trying to justifying their own support programs.

their attacks on the media's supposed liberal bias, supporting a network of growing local and national conservative media sources.[307] Buchanan had a regular collum in *TV Guide* titled "News Watch," reminiscent of his desire for the Nixon administration to track the liberal media's presentation of the news, which reached a third of U.S. adults.[308] For these populists, it was concerning that television and other forms of mass media were becoming the main source for political news, and that such power was controlled by an industry they saw as liberal biased.[309] "Failure to advance [liberal opinions] is professionally crippling" within the media, Phillips wrote.[310] Viewing the media as run by a concentration of *affluentsia* which opposed middle-class values and traditionalism, they directed "the knowledge and information functions of an economy and society."[311] Not only did the massive media conglomerates based in the American Northeast help spread the upheavals of the 1960s, but they were shaped by them, wrote Phillips, joining with liberal think tanks and universities in spreading awareness and positive images of the many anti-poverty, anti-racist causes of the era, in effect becoming the spokesperson for "interest-group liberalism."[312] Such efforts created their own "adversarial culture" which "triggered conservative animosity" against the media.[313] Phillips predicted that a media which

[307] Alan Pell Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The "New Right" and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 30-31; Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge*, 222. Perlstein also notes that Phillips was working on a project to break up the domination of the small number of American TV broadcasters.
[308] Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge*, 222; Buchanan, "Memo to H.R Haldeman, November 11, 1969," in *Advising Nixon*, 53-54.
[309] Brownell, *24/7 Politics*, 30-31; Julian E. Zelizer and Bruce J. Schulman, "Introduction," in *Rightward Bound: Making American Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 6.
[310] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 28.
[311] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 29; Brownell, *24/7 Politics*, 84. Nixon created the Office of Telecommunications Policy (OTP) and in the wake of his 1972 victory, the director of the OTP gave a speech attacking the biased ideology of the news media and journalists for failing the American people.
[312] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 28-29.
[313] Phillips, *Mediacracy* 26, 28.

promoted an adversary culture would become a new elite target for the populist middle class, as Wall Street had served in the past.[314]

Buchanan shared the same concerns from this ideological conservative angle, citing Phillips' description of a "communications revolution."[315] For Buchanan, the liberal media was damaging the country as one of the most important blockages to conservative victory.[316] Liberals Buchanan said, would be easily defeated in the 1970s if it wasn't for the incredible power of the liberal media.[317] Issues such as the anti-Vietnam War movement, anti-business sentiment, bias in favor of social spending, civil rights, women's liberation, and environmentalism, argued Buchanan, were artificially propped up and promoted with "extraordinary tolerance" by the nation's media.[318] If the media wasn't promoting these sentiments, said Buchanan, they were espousing a "chronic negativism" about the country.[319] In the most ironic section of the book, the champion of no-compromise politics criticized the media for failing to promote unity, and instead covering stories that emphasized division, sex and violence.[320] In viewing a liberal establishment media that he believed craved constant excitement and controversy, Buchanan worried whether people that he regarded as truly authentic conservative voices could draw vital media attention.[321] Reflecting Phillips' concerns about the media's political influence, Buchanan wrote that the "lesson seems clear," conservatives must pursue a politics of attack to attract the

[314] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 24.
[315] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 6.
[316] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 72
[317] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 72
[318] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 76-78
[319] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 83.
[320] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 83.
[321] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 90.

media. An early indication of what became his own media brand, Buchanan said conservatives could not spend time on the defensive.[322]

It was not just the biases that Phillips saw in the media that were changing the political landscape.[323] The media specifically played an essential role for Phillips in rupturing America's political organization and decreasing the relevancy and power of both Democrats and Republicans. Already in a blurred political state, the two major parties said Phillips, had been replaced by the media in determining "the fate of politicians and political ideas."[324] Phillips cited a study from the Michigan Center for Political Studies which indicated that the mass media had played a crucial role in the determination of cultural and economic conflict and the perception of a widening ideological gap between Democrats and Republicans.[325] In Phillips' mind, the knowledge elite were both politically and economically dominant.

Buchanan felt that the nation's liberal media had played an essential role in the explosion of the Watergate scandal, giving journalists the sense that they had been right all along in their critical coverage of Nixon.[326] In reaction, said Buchanan, the Ford White House had conceded to attack from the media that charged Nixon with running an imperial presidency, "downgrading White House machinery… the principal instrument at his disposal to guarantee daily translation

[322] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 90.
[323] Brownell, *24/7 Politics*, 84, 104-105. Brownell effectively shows how Nixon's saw television as an essential element of political success and had a personal hatred for the business since his election loss in 1960. As such, Nixon waged a war by pitting traditional broadcasters against the cable news business.
[324] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 30, 201.
[325] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 200-201.
[326] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 90; Brownell, *24/7 Politics*, 111-112,123. The televised Watergate hearings were a massive cultural event which Brownell argues gave people a stake in the political process. However, in televising such a monumental occasion, it begged questions about the TV monopoly of the nation's broadcasters and the interest in doing public good. She also notes how Nixon's defenders argued televising the hearings would turn them into a "political witch hunt."

of his decisions into policy."[327] Doing so had limited the potential for a strong activist president, which Buchanan saw as essential to the true victory of conservatism.[328] Conservatism in the executive branch needed a leader who would not be constrained by those around him, or who bowed to the pressure of the nation's media or moderates, thought Buchanan.[329] Strong-man politics was required, said Buchanan, because the country was so divided,

> "In 1975, there can be no successful politics of 'communication, conciliation, compromise and cooperation.' How does one split-the-difference between those delighted the United States washed it hands of Indochina and those who believed that both the national interest and a moral obligation dictated that we help our allies in their death and agony?"[330]

Such an absolutist, culture war viewpoint would define the rest of his career. Buchanan had placed himself at the center of a conservative movement that he spoke for in this work.[331] If Phillips described the politics and constituency of the New Right, Buchanan spoke directly for it. In that sense Buchanan expressed an extremist version of Phillips politics, directly tying them to the conservatism of Barry Goldwater and the like.

If the transition into a post-industrial society had reframed the balance of power and damaged America's political institutions, Phillips argued this upheaval was also making political

[327] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 165. Buchanan is vague in describing exactly what "white house machinery" means.
[328] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 164.
[329] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 165.
[330] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 168.
[331] Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, 6.

language obsolete. Since Phillips saw the elite of the 1970s as liberal, pushing "the people" to the right, the terms *conservative* and *liberal* had become irrelevant. Liberalism's tenants of "individual opportunity, competitive merit and anti-elitism," had been warped by the 1960s knowledge sector into an ideology pushed by the elite in favor of group equality, argued Phillips.[332] *Conservatism,* divorced in the 1970s from its origins with the business elite in protecting "the existing order of things," had been splintered in reaction to the "conservative" counterreaction of the middle class.[333] With conservation left to the non-elite masses, and the knowledge sector motivated by change, this language only further complicated the confusing political climate of the early 1970s, argued Phillips.

For Phillips, splintered "conservatism" had produced a pseudo-conservatism, "the right-wing populism of the *Lumpenbourgeoisie*, which [sought] to overturn… the liberal establishment."[334] As he had identified in *Emerging,* this was a group which was conservative in opposition to the liberal establishment, desiring organizational upheaval rather than traditional conservative preservation. Phillips argued that this New Right had its electoral base in the South, West, and ethnic white North, the same regional base which composed FDR's 1932 coalition of liberal voters. Comparing voting maps from the 1972 and 1932 elections, Phillips found that in FDR's time, these had been the most "liberal" areas of the country, whereas in the 1970s, these were the most "conservative."[335] To Phillips, this comparison indicated the convergence of these constituencies, already joined on "social conservatism," the "Old Left" and New Right would combine, as post-industrialism dissipated the groups' disagreement on labor issues.[336] The result

[332] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 64.
[333] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 64, 67.
[334] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 67.
[335] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 205.
[336] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 205-206. By "Old Left," Phillips is describing the former liberal voting coalition of FDR, not old radical left groups such as the Socialist Party or the Communist Party.

would be, in the context of confused 1970s political affiliation, "a combination of social 'conservatism' and economic activism," that supported programs for the middle class, media reform, and government assistance to industry.[337] Not only did this affirm the obsolescence of *liberal* and *conservative,* argued Phillips, but it dislodged voters from clear party affiliation, where the two major parties were already internally battling between their liberal, centrist, and conservative factions.[338]

However, in framing his populist "conservatism" as a combination of social conservatism and economic activism, Phillips separated himself from the conservatives in his ideological circle and hinted at what would drive him to become a harsh critic of future President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Unlike Buchanan who desired a Goldwater desire to shrink the government along with a strong social conservatism, Phillips did not assume that social conservatism would be linked with a libertarian, economic conservatism. Phillips argued that conservatives had failed to comprehend the convergence of "Old Left" and New Right,

> "To be sure, the New Right will continue to oppose welfare and social spending. But there is likely to be increased support for middle-class economic security programs, control of the economy, assistance for troubled industries, and regulation of the media."[339]

Much like the populist "conservative" constituencies he had been writing about since 1969, Phillips leaned into the populist perspective, not an ideological conservative lens that dictated the

[337] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 206. To be clear, when Phillips writes "economic activism," it is moderate, not what he perceived of as the social programing activism of the Great Society.
[338] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 64-67; Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*, 261; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 128.
[339] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 206.

politics of Buchanan who tied himself to the origins of the modern American conservative movement. This is why Nixon appealed to Phillips, the president did not propose the laissez-faire old Republicanism that Phillips despised, but also appeared opposed to the values and programs of Great Society liberalism.[340] Yes, Phillips was disappointed in the direction Nixon took once in office, but the populist had a moderate economic philosophy compared to his contemporaries in the New Right which would only come to divide them once an economic conservative got to the White House.

The culmination of an ideologically blurred two-party system understood through irrelevant Industrial Revolution political language, in a post-industrial society in which "liberal" had become elite and "conservative" had become popular, was the impossibility of a traditional electoral realignment of the Roosevelt variety. Instead, Phillips predicted that America would enter a new phase of 8- to 12-year election cycles in which the media and the ideology of voters drove electoral change and deemphasized the power of the two-party system.[341] Post-industrialism had helped push a greater economic and cultural divide between the knowledge sector and the populist masses, said Phillips.[342] In such a decisive environment, Phillips wrote,

> "The potential for authoritarianism is considerable: first, because of the escalating size and scope of government; second, because of the nature of the media and communications power. On one hand, the new class seems out of kilter with the beliefs of the majority. And on the other hand, the traditionalist coalition seems to lack the technical and intellectual capacity to turn things around within the politics, administrative, and

[340] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 25.
[341] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 148-149.
[342] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 76-78.

communications framework established by liberal forces in basic control of Washington since the New Deal."[343]

In citing American public opinion pollster, Samuel Lubell, Phillips concurred that coalition building had "promoted an essential unification theme of moving the country forward."[344] But Phillips in 1974, could not see what underlying coalitions could be formed in the political and cultural context of the 1970s.[345]

The Future of Conservatism and the Grand Old Party in 1976

With grim assessments of US politics in the mid-1970s, and the disappointment in the Nixon Presidency, both Buchanan and Phillips looked to the 1976 elections – occurring in America's momentous bicentennial year – with hesitancy.[346] The first primaries following Watergate and the resulting deluge of news stories revealing the dirty secrets of America's post-World War II leadership, primary voters were presented with a variety of potential candidates, representing the ideological confusion of the time.[347] Little known former governor of Georgia Jimmy Carter surprised the country and the Democratic establishment, when his anti-politician, outsider Southern moderate politics appealed to voters outside of Georgia, in a race that included social conservative George Wallace, neoconservative Henry "Scoop" Jackson, and the potential return of failed Johnson heir Hubert Humphrey.[348] On the Republican side, conservatives had

[343] Phillips, *Mediacracy,* 78.
[344] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 79
[345] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 78 79.
[346] Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge*, 711-14; Schulman, *The Seventies*, 48.
[347] Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge*, 556-558, 613, 623.
[348] Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge*, 587, 613.

grown frustrated with Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan launched longshot bid to dethrone the incumbent president.[349] Dismissed at first, Reagan's team came to seriously challenge the president, coming back after losing five states in a row to Ford, winning big in Texas, where the social conservative candidate appealed to a blatant conservatism that the Ford administration did not yet comprehend.[350]

Prior to the race heating up, in 1975 in the closing chapters of *Conservative Votes*, Buchanan questioned the viability of the Republican Party as the future of conservatism. Citing the results of the Nixon and Ford years, Buchanan asked how a conservative Republican leader could rally support when the GOP was tarnished by Watergate, an increased national deficit and crime rates.[351] Buchanan asked, "How does the party of limited government explain funding the Great Society?"[352] Buchanan also thought too many Republican politicians were betraying their values, specifically those who had morally distanced themselves from the Southern Strategy.[353] Phillips saw a broader electorate dealignment from the two parties in his mediacracy. Phillips felt that neither party was able to properly articulate what he perceived to be the populist "conservative" politics of the middle class. They also reckoned with evidence of shrinking Republican voter identification in the years since 1972.[354] Thus, both men considered the possibility of a populist conservative third party that could accurately represent the coalition Phillips had laid out in *Emerging* and who could alter the stagnated two-party system.

[349] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 146-47.
[350] Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge*, 674.
[351] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 173.
[352] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 173.
[353] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 171.
[354] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 170; Phillips, *Mediacracy,* 198.

More committed to the Republican Party than Phillips, Buchanan was not yet convinced that the emergence of a robust, dominant conservatism within the GOP was a lost cause.[355] Buchanan believed Ronald Reagan was the strongest leader conservatives had, but doubted his ability to defeat incumbent President Ford in the Republican primary. Seeing the GOP divided between its conservative and moderate factions, Buchanan argued that the social conservative Wallace vote had to be captured in order for Reagan to win.[356] Regarding the possibility of a third party, Buchanan worried that the resulting three-way race would split the conservative vote handing victory to liberal Democrats.[357] Further, he saw that the third party option would require joining of socially conservative Democrats and economically conservative Republicans that would likely result in a Wallace party leadership over Reagan.[358] Even with these doubts, Buchanan wrote that leaving the GOP "cannot be ruled out" if it was required of his conservative convictions.[359]

Phillips was more hopeful, identifying cracks in the GOP which conservatives could exploit in a third party. Such cracks were evident to Phillips between the 1.1 million votes captured by John Birch Society member, John Schmitz, leader of the American Party in 1972, and the moderate direction President Ford had taken the party.[360] Along with voter "dealignment" from the Democrats and Republicans, a result of ticket splitting and voter emphasis on ideology, Phillips predicted an increased population of independent voters could

[355] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 177.
[356] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 174, 175.
[357] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 176.
[358] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 177; Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge,* 668. During the 1976 Texas Republican primary, the Reagan campaign produced advertising targeting Wallace Democrats since the state had open voting to non-party members during primaries.
[359] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* 177.
[360] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 138, 145, 201.

benefit a third party.[361] Firm in the belief that the country was drifting right-ward, Phillips countered critics who said popular movements only came from the left, stating as he had done since 1969, that the populist mass was middle-class and conservative.[362] As with other conservatives of the era, Phillips thought that Ronald Reagan seemed the right leader, who bolstered by Wallace as a running mate, could capture the populist majority drifting from the two major parties.[363] Phillips argued that the Reagan-Wallace ticket could win a three-way race, both bringing a constituency they could not capture alone, and gaining from a conservative GOP bolt caused by the moderation of the Republican candidate in comparison to the third party.[364]

Later in 1975, Phillips was sure that Reagan would announce his Republican primary challenge, yet he still considered the Reagan-Wallace ticket an option in the event Reagan was defeated by incumbent President Ford.[365] For Phillips, Reagan would not make electoral history by challenging Ford in the primary but by crossing the "Presidential Rubicon" by joining with Wallace to make third party electoral history.[366] Ronald Reagan did not subsequently run as a third-party candidate after losing to Ford, rejecting the idea of running outside of the GOP.[367] Before Reagan's exit, Buchanan felt that whether the Californian won or lost, he had provided a service to the conservative cause in forcing President Ford to move rightward.[368] Half a year later, Buchanan addressed fears that a Reagan primary victory would result in a moderate revolt from the GOP; Buchanan disagreed, feeling Reagan was the only Republican that could win in

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[361] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 145.
[362] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 145.
[363] Kevin P. Phillips, "A Reagan-Wallace Ticket in 1976?" *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., November 9, 1974).
[364] Phillips, "A Reagan-Wallace Ticket in 1976?"
[365] Kevin P. Phillips, "Reagan Must Soon Decide to Cross Rubicon," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., June 14, 1975).
[366] Phillips, "Reagan Must Soon Decide to Cross Rubicon."
[367] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 145.
[368] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Reagan's Candidacy Does Service to GOP," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., December 6, 1975); Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 148.

1976.[369] After narrowly losing the primary to Ford, Buchanan blamed the Reagan Revolution for a lack of fighting instinct.[370] The most important reason, wrote Buchanan was "neither the Reagan personality nor the Reagan strategy was ideally suited to the enterprise undertaken… he is more royalist than rebel."[371] Buchanan thought the campaign contradicted itself in trying to capture the conservative wing of the party while attempting to preserve party unity. Buchanan also blamed the meek Republican establishment for preferring the "heated palace" of Ford's camp compared to the harsh rebel conditions of Reagan's bid.[372] Only "total war," said Buchanan, could have defeated Ford.[373]

Critiques of the New Right Populists

With Ronald Reagan defeated in the 1976 Republican primary, and Democrat Jimmy Carter's victory in the general election, neoconservative political scientist and diplomat Jeane Kirkpatrick authored an article titled, "Why the New Right Lost."[374] Grouping Kevin Phillips and Patrick Buchanan with other prominent conservatives such as William Rusher, Kirkpatrick argued that these men failed because they had a fundamentally flawed understanding of the domestic political landscape. Kirkpatrick described the New Right's positions,

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[369] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Will GOP Libs Wreck Reagan?" *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., May 29, 1976).
[370] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 123; Patrick J. Buchanan, "Why the Reagan Revolution Failed," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., September 4, 1976).
[371] Buchanan, "Why the Reagan Revolution Failed."
[372] Buchanan, "Why the Reagan Revolution Failed."
[373] Buchanan, "Why the Reagan Revolution Failed."
[374] Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Why the New Right Lost," *Commentary Magazine* (blog), February 1, 1977, https://www.commentary.org/articles/jeane-kirkpatrick/why-the-new-right-lost/.

> "Among these are the idea that there exists in the electorate a hidden conservative majority; that the social division with the greatest potential political significance is not that between "haves" and "have-nots" but between the liberal elite and everybody else; that a realignment of the parties into two ideologically homogeneous groups is both desirable and likely; that the Republican Party may not prove an effective institutional channel for the expression of truly conservative politics and should perhaps be abandoned…"[375]

Kirkpatrick doubted the existence of a hidden conservative majority, arguing that the conception of the "conservative voter" offered by Phillips and Buchanan were hardly a cohesive coalition, but rather a collection of wide political and cultural beliefs artificial fashioned together. In Kirkpatric's opinion, the New Right held a simplistic "conception of ideology" that overestimated "the electorate's ideological inclinations."[376] This simplification, a narrative of the liberal elite vs the masses, assumed that American's voted with pure ideological interests. Kirkpatrick argued that the 1964 and 1972 presidential elections showed the opposite, with Goldwater and McGovern, respectively, failing to capture a support with their narrow ideology; instead, it was the politics of consensus which attracted coalitions and was essential to the realistic operation of democratic institutions.[377] Kirkpatrick thought the results of 1976 were a "instructive critique of the New Right theory of American politics."[378]

[375] Kirkpatrick, "Why the New Right Lost."
[376] Kirkpatrick, "Why the New Right Lost."
[377] Kirkpatrick, "Why the New Right Lost."
[378] Kirkpatrick, "Why the New Right Lost."

Kirkpatrick was not the only one who had critiques of the New Right's conception of cultural conflict. In his 1975 review of *Mediacracy*, Leon V. Sigal noted that Phillips failed to distinguish between the New Left and the Great Society Democrats.[379] Despite his detailed analysis of regional population movement, and economic transition, Phillips suggested a simplistic us vs them conflict structure, failing to consider the assaults the Democratic Great Society liberalism received from the left. Just had Phillips had grouped many "conservative" voters together as a powerful majority, Sigal argued he had done the same with the liberal elite. Sigal writes,

> "That such ostensibly diverse groups of Chase Manhattan financial analysts, Dow chemists, and Berkeley sociologists constitute a self-conscious class with an overriding common interest in "change, that this interest excludes reactionary change, and that this class is somehow displacing businessmen and industrialists as the power elite of America are hardly borne out by the evidence Phillips presents.[380]

While proclaiming to speak for the "silent majority," spokespersons such as Phillips and Buchanan were beneficiaries of higher education, and positions in government, and yet an embrace of the concept of "anti-establishment" was an essential aspect of their politics.[381] In his

[379] Leon V. Sigal, review of *Review of Mediacracy: American Parties and Politics in the Communications Age.*, by Kevin P. Phillips, *Political Science Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (1975), 748.
[380] Sigal, "Review of Mediacracy," 747.
[381] Nadia Urbinati, "Political Theory of Populism, 119. While this is ironic, such contradictions have not stopped more successful conservatives of an elite status in building a populist following. Nadia Urbinati writes "Central in populism's narrative is antiestablishment rhetoric, but this does not refer to socioeconomic elites and is neither class-based nor money-based. As candidates, Italy's Silvio Berlusconi and the United States' Ross Perot and Donald Trump were part of the economic elite, in fact very wealthy persons; yet this seemed to be acceptable to their electors, who were in effect looking for someone who was successful but held the same values as theirs." In the

pioneering 1980 book on the New Right, *Thunder on the Right*, journalist Alan Crawford argued that one of the evolutions of the Right in the 1970s was the identification of anti-elitism as a powerful coalition-building force.[382] Instead of simply conserving values, for members of the New Right, anti-elitism meant protecting the middle-class Americans from elitists.[383] Such anti-elitism was naturally extended to an anti-intellectualism which put men like Phillips and Buchanan at odds with both members of the left and right.[384] Crawford identified such themes in Buchanan's authored speeches for Nixon's Vice President Agnew.[385] Crawford, as well as author and historian Garry Wills, recognized the irony of these intellectually trained, non-producing political commentators. Wills specifically found the neopopulism of these men "strange," arguing that Phillips and Buchanan fought political battles with words, and as such were "non-producers on their own terms."[386] Wills writes especially frustrated of Phillips, given the "populist" made his money being a political writer and adviser.[387]

What Wills found particularly bothersome about especially Phillips adoption of populism is the assertion that the middle-class needed protection from elites while thinking, "the poor need none at all- or at least none from the privileged, the elite, the 'silk stocking liberals,' of the racial chicset."[388] In Wills' opinion, "Mr. Phillips is no anti-elitist, as he thinks," jabbing that at least

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1970s, Phillips and Buchanan both framed their populism through this cultural lens while also incorporating elements of class which put them at odds with "Old Right" conservatives. Phillips more so than Buchanan employed the "middle-class" in his work though his later works would specify the group.

[382] Crawford, *Thunder on the Right,* 167.

[383] Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, 166-167.

[384] In Jeane Kirkpatrick's article "Why the New Right Failed" she lays out how the Old Right did not see the New Right as conservative.

[385] Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, 171.

[386] Garry Wills, *Confessions of a Conservative* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1979), 143-144. Wills writes, "I call this development strange, since Phillips more precisely defines [Tom] Wolfe's "radical chic" crowd as a nonproductive "knowledge industry."

[387] Wills, *Confessions of a Conservative,* 143.

[388] Wills, *Confessions of a Conservative*, 147.

Phillips' was populist enough to attack William F. Buckley Jr. for owning a yacht.[389] Despite, Buchanan's admiration for Buckley in his youth, these were men of two different camps of conservatism in the 1970s.[390] Phillips particularly despised members of what he considered to be the "Old Right."[391] Buckley mocked Phillips calling him "the Marx of Middle America," while Phillips accused Buckley of "abandoning Middle America to load up his yacht with vintage wines and sail across the Atlantic."[392]

Coming Divides

Such division within what was broadly considered to the American Right in the 1970s, illustrative in the divide between the Old Right and New Right, and in particular, the New Right's populist inclinations would become more apparent once an ideological conservative reached the White House. While their shared distain for the media, liberals and political moderates in the political establishment joined them within the New Right, Phillips' and Buchanan's different ties to the origins of modern conservatism split them significantly on the economy. Buchanan considered himself the center of true conservatism, his passionate support from Goldwater to Nixon legitimizing his right-wing credentials.[393] Phillips never made such connections of his own ideology to the broader modern conservative movement, instead commentating on the broader political environment, and emphasizing the long history of

[389] Wills, *Confessions of a Conservative*, 143, 155.
[390] Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, 31.
[391] Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, 176; Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.*, 377.
[392] Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.*, 378; Dionne Jr, "The Unlikely Populist: Kevin Phillips"; Dale Vree, "Mediacracy: American Parties and Politics in the Communications Age. By Kevin P. Phillips. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975)," *American Political Science Review* 71, no. 3 (September 1977), 246.
[393] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 7.

American populist which was "popular" not essentially left or right.[394] Buchanan writes in his autobiography, "Decades before the term was invented, I was an ardent supply-sider."[395] During the 1970s, Buchanan would author several articles for the conservative periodical *Human Events* in which he forcefully advocated for the slashing of corporate tax rates. Buchanan felt that Americans and the Congress were caught up in an anti-big business ideology.[396] In his Buchanan style, he argued that high corporate tax rates only hurt American workers, and would fail to stifle the lifestyle of corporate elites.[397]

Phillips, however, never shared Buchanan's supply-side convictions. Back in 1970, Phillips stated to Garry Wills,

> "Now populism is of the middle class, which feels exploited by the establishment. Almost everyone in the productive segment of society considers himself middle-class now, and resents the exploitation of society's producers. This is not a movement in favor of laissez-faire or any ideology; it is opposed to welfare and the establishment."[398]

This disagreement would only become clearer after the election of Ronald Reagan, where the extent to which both Phillips and Buchanan weighed both conservatism and populism affirmed their political differences. Comparing Phillips' *Mediacracy* and Buchanan's *Conservative Votes,*

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[394] Phillips, *Mediacracy*, 145.
[395] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 274.
[396] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Corporate Income Tax Should Be Abolished," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., January 8, 1977); Patrick J. Buchanan, "Corporate Tax Cut Could Bring Boom," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., March 20, 1976).
[397] Buchanan, "Corporate Income Tax Should Be Abolished."
[398] Wills, *Nixon Agonistes*, 266.

Liberal Victories reveals both the strength of their populist hatred for Great Society Democratic liberalism, and the divergence in their ideological conservatism. Shared enemies did not mean that they placed their wider concerns in the same place. Phillips saw cracks in the ability of American two-party system to adequately express the populism of his emerging majority in a decade of ideological confusion. Buchanan focused his efforts on the viability of conservatism itself, placing himself with the right-wingers would have been fighting for the cause since 1964. Their faith in the Republican Party as the path for conservative populism, waivered by Watergate and the wider political zeitgeist, emphasized their rocky relationship with the GOP that in the decades to come would place these two men as political outsiders. While Ronald Reagan would provide some hope for Buchanan's uncompromising conservatism, Phillips feared a radical combination of economic and social conservatism over correcting the ills of the 1960s.

Chapter 3: Reagan's First Term Disappointment

In November 1980, Ronald Reagan achieved one of the great landslides in American electoral history. For many conservatives, and members of the New Right, the "Reagan Revolution" marked the height of their movement that had been building since Barry Goldwater. In Ronald Reagan, the movement seemed to have found a leader who could satisfy both economic and social conservatives. Decades later, many historians saw the election as a key turning point in 20th century U.S. history, marking the end of what came to be called the "New Deal era," and the beginning of a neoliberal or conservative era.[399] President Reagan presented American voters with a patriotic confidence, a reinvigorated anti-communism, a return to traditional family values, and an assault on the federal government he thought holding the country back.[400] In an economic environment of high inflation and high unemployment, called "stagflation," Reagan convinced many voters that he could offer a new economic philosophy that could turn the country around.[401] This electoral victory also seemed to confirm Kevin Phillips' original thesis; Reagan had captured the Sun Belt, flipping the South that Carter had won in 1976, and winning a significant number of working class voters in the North, now nicknamed "Reagan Democrats."[402] These results pushed some to call the 1980 election an electoral realignment towards a conservative majority. President Jimmy Carter was repudiated, but claiming that the electorate now supported Reagan's ideological conservatism was more difficult.

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[399] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 2; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 128.
[400] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 171-172; Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 120-121.
[401] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 178, 181; Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*, (New Haven Conn: Yale University Press, 2010), 263.
[402] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 175; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 282.

As Kevin Phillips and Patrick Buchanan entered the new decade, the two populist conservatives disagreed on what Reagan's election signified. Phillips, still convinced that Watergate and the 1970s had ruptured the chance for traditional realignment, argued the election was a clear rejection of Jimmy Carter, but was not a mandate for conservatism. Buchanan, ever the ideologue, thought Reagan had been handed a conservative mandate by the electorate, the chance to fulfill his right-wing political hopes. The election of a conservative also complicated the ability to see America through the populist lens they had used in the past. Phillips and Buchanan had been politically joined in their focus on the liberal elite's conflict with what they saw as a conservative middle-class majority, as well as their disappointment in Nixon's politics. Along with their grouping in the New Right, these shared opinions blurred their political differences. Now that there was a conservative in the White House, the ability to present such a simple populist argument, along clear partisan lines, disappeared.

If in the 1970s, important observers of the American political scene such as author Gary Wills and American political scientist Jeane Kirkpatrick could group Patrick Buchanan and Kevin Phillips together in the New Right, by 1982, it wasn't possible. Phillips' *Post-Conservative America: People, Politics, and Ideology in a Time of Crisis,* published in that pivotal year, marked this departure from the New Right. If it was ever appropriate to label him as such, he questioned conservatism under the new president and the Republican Party's ability to reverse the trajectory of a country Phillips saw damaged by its political institutions, the media, and broader global economic trends. Meantime, Buchanan spent Reagan's first term as a political pundit and his ideological convictions would continue to put him at odds with the Republican Party. While celebrating Reagan's conservative triumph, Buchanan would be continually

disappointed with what he perceived to be the moderation and restriction of true conservatism in the White House.

Further, the extent to which each man stressed the populist, or conservative elements of their political ideology, continued to reveal a more complicated right-wing political landscape in the decade. As Phillips leaned on his populism, he began to adjust what he saw as the elite, whereas Buchanan maintained his firm populist conservative position. The 1980s for these two populists was not an era of conservative triumph, but a decade of continued conflict. Reagan's first term revealed the cracks which would affirm their place outside of mainstream Republicanism in the 1990s.

Disappointed Populists

In 1980, Kevin Phillips maintained his aversion to the social and cultural impact of the 1960s. Prior to the election, he continued to speak positively of what he interpreted as a conservative trend in American culture. Citing a poll on the attitudes of youth in 1980, Phillips celebrated what he saw was a reversion of youth liberal radicalism of the 1960s, noting highschoolers turning towards traditionalism.[403] Replacing the "neurotic progressivism" of the 1960s with a turn towards religion was healthy, said Phillips.[404] Rejecting charges from the media that the religious trend was breeding (or could breed) extremism, or even risk fascism, Phillips liked the broad collection Christian denominations joining in together against what he regarded as a permissive culture.[405] While admitting there was "some excesses here and there,"

[403] Kevin P. Phillips, "U.S. Youths Shift to Conservatism," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., February 2, 1980).
[404] Kevin P. Phillips, "Religious Revival a Healthy Trend," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., September 20, 1980).
[405] Phillips, "Religious Revival a Healthy Trend."

Phillips felt that conservative overreach was better than the liberals who had replaced school prayer with sexual education, among the many aspects of recent societal shifts that Phillips found harmful.[406] Over the course of the decade, Phillips' focus on social issues would lessen as the economy came to dominate his fears.

In the wake of Reagan's 1980 victory, Buchanan called the election a champion of the Reagan Revolution, more than just a repudiation of Jimmy Carter, but a total defeat of liberalism.[407] Buchanan laid out the same political goals he had advocated for since the early 1970s and compared Reagan's win to Nixon's 1972 landslide. Finally, Buchanan felt a supply-side influenced, anti-communist president who seemingly embraced traditional Christian values could set the country on what Buchanan felt was the right track. Buchanan urged Reagan to include social conservatives in influential White House positions. Buchanan valued the contributions of those who defeated the Equal Rights Amendment, the Moral Majority, the anti-busing advocates, and anti-abortion protestors, among others.[408] Hoping that Reagan would create a lasting coalition just as Franklin D. Roosevelt had, Buchanan saw vital constituencies in the Northern working class, Catholics, Southern Protestants, and New Right, reflecting Phillips' predicted emerging Republican majority which appeared to have arrived. These voters, said Buchanan, needed to be consolidated to cement the coalition he had desired since the late 1960s.

Phillips did not share Buchanan's vision and hopes for Reagan's presidency. Days before the election, Phillips wrote an article for *Harper's*, in which he denounced those who placed faith in American exceptionalism, and reiterated his fears that America's political institutions were in decline, especially what he viewed as the outdated separation of powers between the

[406] Phillips, "Religious Revival a Healthy Trend."
[407] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Voters Gave Reagan A Mandate," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., November 22, 1980).
[408] Buchanan, "Voters Gave Reagan A Mandate."

executive and legislative branches of government which had paralyzed the country.[409] Further emphasizing voter disengagement from the two major political parties, which had been entrenched and ideologically blurred since Watergate, Phillips argued that traditional realignment could not occur, and that the 1980s needed a reformist movement to revitalize American politics.[410] Pointing to state elections where coalitions of conservatives from both the Republican and Democratic side joined forces for victory, Phillips worried that the parties failed to represent distinct coalitions or political ideology.[411] This trend in American politics was directly at odds with the political cycle, minority/majority party dynamic that he advocated for throughout his career, which reinforced the ability for populist masses to reorient the elite, and thus the direction of the nation. The risk of a paralyzed political system was potentially high, wrote Phillips, citing futurist Alvin Toffler, who suggested that it could lead to totalitarianism.[412] Pointing to several relatively successful former Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members in Democratic and Republican state primaries, Phillips grew concerned about a middle class frustrated and out of faith in the country.[413]

Beyond a broken system potentially stopping the chance of traditional realignment, Phillips also felt that Reagan's coalition was potentially risky.[414] While Phillips often invoked America's populist history as an instructive reminder of the forces which had pushed change and replacement of the elite class, it was not a nostalgic look into the past. This perspective is what set Phillips apart from the conservative movement that arrived in 1980.[415] When in *Emerging*

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[409] Kevin Phillips, "An American Parliament," *Harper's* (New York, N.Y., United States: Harper, November 1, 1980), 14.
[410] Phillips, "An American Parliament," 19, 20.
[411] Phillips, "An American Parliament," 19.
[412] Phillips, "An American Parliament," 21.
[413] Phillips, "An American Parliament," 21.
[414] Kevin Phillips, preface to *Post-Conservative America: People, Politics, and Ideology in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1982), xiv.
[415] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 96; Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 94.

Republican Majority, he advocated for Nixon's formation of a conservative majority, its appeal for Phillips was not recreation of a traditionalist coalition of America's populist history, but rather a new development in a populist lineage. While the social conservatism he supported was a reversal of the 1960s, the wider goal was the construction was a new political force that he thought worked in the political context of what he regarded as a liberal elite, and a frustrated middle class. The magic of the American political experiment for Phillips was the ability for "the people" to buck the liberal political establishment and its perceived allies. Thus, when President Reagan used nostalgia for the 1920s and 1950s, Phillips doubted the ability for restoration politics to reinvigorate a system and society he saw in decline; especially when that nostalgia invoked the economics that helped spark the Great Depression.[416] America needed a new political coalition not to go to the past but to move into the future.

To Phillips, Reagan's coalition was far more populist than traditionally conservative, and rather quite unconservative in its beliefs.[417] These constituencies, said Phillips, were "conjoined more by various nostalgias and backward-looking vistas than by shared philosophies for the future."[418] The result was not the sort of coalition that Phillips described in 1968 or 1972, but a volatile grouping of contradictory interests. The 1970s had seen the birth of the New Right, neoconservatism, the re-popularization of laissez-faire economics, along with the geographical and cultural trends starting in the late 1960s, which all culminated in Reagan's victory.[419] The social conservative reaction to New Deal liberalism and the New Left in the late 1960s was the

[416] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 145-46.
[417] Phillips, preface to *Post-Conservative America*, xviii; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*¸136-37. Wilentz writes that Reagan's conservatism "had nothing to do with veneration of tradition or a fixed hierarchy." However, Wilentz argues that what made Reaganism unique was its embrace of the "unlimited" potential for America's future, rather than being stuck in the past.
[418] Phillips, preface to *Post-Conservative America,* xiv. Phillips on page 47 mentions that when he first used the term "New Right" in 1974, he was referring to the populist-conservative groups surrounding Richard Viguerie.
[419] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 35; Schulman, *The Seventies*, 194. Phillips considered the conservative economics to come out of the 1970s which celebrated free-market principles and supply-side economics as radical.

mobilizing force essential to Phillips' *Emerging Republican Majority* back in 1968, but in his view, the focus and intensity of that coalition of working and middle-class Americans in the South, South West, and Northern cities had changed. Following his argument in *Mediacracy*, that the Watergate scandal had ruptured the corrective forces of Nixon's New Majority, Phillips argued that the continuation of liberal policies in the 1970s, along with the resurgence of "traditional conservative ideas, fiscal restraint, industrial incentive, strong defense-mindedness, [and] support for religion and traditional morality" delayed the corrective effects of said traditionalism and morphed it into an increasingly radical ideology.[420] "If the election of 1972 was an aborted realignment, the 1980 election was transparently not a realignment in itself," wrote Phillips.[421] Previous realignments argued Phillips, had occurred in elections of increased voter turnout and a large increase in the share of votes the winning party takes over its party predecessor.[422] As evidence that traditional realignment had not occurred, Phillips cited decreased voter turnout, the Democrat hold of the House, and the fact that Reagan only captured 2% more of the popular vote than Ford had back in 1976, as evidence that traditional realignment had not occurred.[423] For Phillips, the 1980 election presented something new in US history, and with what he saw as a weakening U.S. culture and political system, realignment would require a restructuring beyond a minority/majority party dynamic.[424]

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[420] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 16.
[421] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 52, 60.
[422] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 60-61.
[423] Phillip, *Post-Conservative America,* 60-61; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 186. Critchlow uses the same statistic, Reagan's 2% higher popular vote gain in 1980 on Ford in 1976 when discussing the limits of the "Reagan Revolution."
[424] John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 47-48. Ehrman cites public opinion polls taken after the 1980 election which indicated there was no massive shift to the political right, rather many voters thought themselves in the middle. Phillips in 1990 wrote that Reagan had been elected as an attempt at trying something new, similarly, Ehrman states, "Reagan, in truth, had been elected on a trial basis."

Buchanan did not engage in Phillips' reassessment of conservatism. For Buchanan, Reagan was the culmination of politics and values that had been building for 20 years. Buchanan's concern wasn't whether Reagan could save the country, but whether he would be restricted from doing so; Buchanan saw another fight on the horizon. For Buchanan, it was only conservatives whose ideology aligned closely with his own that could help the Reagan fix the country. Just as he had framed the politics of the 1970s in *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,* Buchanan described the election as an absolutist conflict. Buchanan's deep conviction, or faith, in what he understood to be American conservatism had entered with Reagan, but Buchanan had been burned before. Despite the Right finally gaining both conservative votes and conservative victories, Buchanan explained, "Now begins the civil war inside the Republican Party. Now begins the struggle to capture, to control a Reagan Administration."[425] This was a civil war to expunge the GOP of its moderate Ford and Rockefeller wing, to reinstate the strong anti-communism of his youth, and the social conservatism which he felt would purge the country of the excesses of the 1960s. Just he had warned Nixon, Buchanan emphasized the need for Reagan to purge the "upper reaches of government" and to be wary of the moderate Republican establishment.[426] Buchanan said conservatives needed to stand up and fight, not to "recoil from a political brawl."[427] Buchanan's no compromise standpoint however, would face the reality of politics, even with conservative Reagan in office.

Ronald Reagan was effective at employing a broad populism which appealed to voters who did not consider themselves "conservatives."[428] Historian Michael Kazin described Reagan's rhetorical style,

[425] Buchanan, "Voters Gave Reagan A Mandate."
[426] Buchanan, "Voters Gave Reagan A Mandate."
[427] Buchanan, "Voters Gave Reagan A Mandate."
[428] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 261.

> "Reagan was fond of quoting [Franklin D. Roosevelt] to signify that he, too, was engaged in transforming a hapless government that no longer served average citizens. In doing so, the GOP leader touched cultural chords in many white Democrats who had soured on their party's liberal standard-bearers but were uncomfortable with the traditional Right… He undermined the New Deal in its own vernacular. One could thus become a Reagan Democrat without ceasing to venerate FDR and John F. Kennedy."[429]

This ability to broaden the appeal of conservatism helped Reagan win in 1980, but it may have also contradicted Buchanan's rhetorical and political objectives. Despite being disappointed in some of Nixon's political decisions, the strength of Buchanan's convictions and thus hope for a conservative who was as uncompromising as himself, may have always put him at odds with the politics around him. If there was in fact a rightward drift in American politics, even with a conservative president, Buchanan's politics proved too far right, and uncompromising.[430] Reagan's vision, rhetoric and agenda contained much of the conservatism that Buchanan championed but perhaps more consequential for Reagan's greater appeal to the electorate was the conservative president's characteristics that diverted from Buchanan's hardline.[431] Whether it was the Reagan White House's true intentions to not pursue certain conservative goals in the name of popularity, or the possibility that such populism was inherently contradictory with its economic goals, Buchanan's absolutist ideology, which seemed to intensify as he entered the

[429] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 261.
[430] It is important to note that Buchanan may have known this himself. Later when running for president, he saw an opportunity to push the Republican Party rightwards, perhaps as much or more so than his actual chances of winning.
[431] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 262; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan,* 129. Wilentz writes, "Reaganism was its own distinctive blend of dogma, pragmatism, and, above all, mythology."

1990s, could not fit with the governing Republicans of the 1980s.[432] Reagan believed in conservatism, but was willing to balance his beliefs with the political realities of the time to achieve popular and legislative victories.[433] Reagan's willingness to compromise was the same issue Buchanan had experience with Nixon. And thus, despite 1980 marking the election of an ideological conservative, this striking sea change was not enough for Buchanan.

In January of 1981, weeks before Reagan's inauguration, Buchanan warned of bureaucratic neutering caused by a proposed "Super Cabinet" in the coming administration.[434] Buchanan feared the establishment "managerial class" would dissipate the power of the president, reaffirming a bureaucratic elite that would only moderate the conservatism of the administration.[435] Buchanan mocked "Dr. Gallup," for claiming that polls showed that Reagan's victory was just a public rejection of President Carter instead of a conservative victory.[436] To Buchanan, Reagan was a politician cut from the same cloth as Barry Goldwater, finally selected by the electorate.[437] But even before Reagan entered the White House, Buchanan saw the forces of moderation surrounding the president, "prevailing winds" from the establishment Northeast.[438]

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[432] Hemmer, *Partisans*, 4748. Perhaps this points to a possibility that Phillips' vision of the country, populist, conservative only in counterreaction to the 1960s, was more reasonable viewpoint, but was derailed by Reagan's own conservatism, which was profoundly unconservative in many of its manifestations. This line of thinking does simplify the ideology of each of these men but does present us with interesting questions about the viability of coalition politics, which are important for taking power but present real challenges once in power. Phillips, as we will see, was wary of Reagan's coalition since its inception, while it was championed as the key element which led to Reagan's massive victory. While Phillips may have underestimated Reagan's appeal to the electorate, he was more aware of electoral history, and the complexity of voting blocs, and voter motivation. Thus, it is not surprising to see how Phillips and Buchanan drifted apart when both shared a political/ideological enemy but understood the extent to which the conservatism of the people would reshape the country significantly differently.
[433] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 172; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 133.
[434] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Super Cabinet Destined for Collapse," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., January 10, 1981).
[435] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 139. Reagan had a mix of holdovers from his personal circle, and more establishment Republicans such as Alexander Haig as secretary of state.
[436] Buchanan, "Super Cabinet Destined for Collapse."
[437] Buchanan, "Super Cabinet Destined for Collapse."
[438] Buchanan, "Super Cabinet Destined for Collapse."

Phillips agreed that Reagan's conservatism could be softened by his flirtations with the Republican establishment. As Phillips thought the Nixon White House had done, he wrote that Reagan could misjudge the "insurgent force" that brought him to power.[439] If the president filled his cabinet with the "gray faces" of the establishment then his populist supporters would feel "betrayed."[440] Noting skepticism about Reagan's age, Phillips thought the addition of a establishment filled cabinet would only increase doubts about the ability for the Republican to change the country.[441]

While Buchanan celebrated the social and economic potential of Reagan's coalition, to Phillips, the combination was potentially volatile. The two contradictory forces of Reagan's coalition wrote Phillips, were the populist New Right and the proponents of "radical conservative economics."[442] The New Right, which Phillips clearly separated from neoconservatism and traditional conservatism, was "more populist than conservative, compelled to strike down the 1960s," and had its roots not in traditional intellectual conservatism, but the American "mainstream."[443] The New Right was a new mass politics invoking not America's conservative past, but its populist outbursts.[444] Phillips identified the New Right's anti-elitist, cultural fundamentalism as extensions of the lower-class populist Wallace movement, the anti-abortion movement as a revival of 20th century prohibitionists and past great religious awakenings. [445] While recognizing that the New Right shared concerns with other conservatives over taxes, the

[439] Kevin P. Phillips, "No Gray Faces for New Administration," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., November 22, 1980).
[440] Phillips, "No Gray Faces for New Administration."
[441] Phillips, "No Gray Faces for New Administration."
[442] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 50-51.
[443] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 43.
[444] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 43.
[445] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 49; Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 262.

military and federal social programs, it was much more concerned with social and moral questions rather than economic policy.[446]

While the New Right found solace in Reagan's proposed return to values he believed to be rooted in the 1950s, the other important group of Reagan's coalition was the radical conservative economic theorists which wanted to return to the 1920s, albeit with enormous military expenditures.[447] Gaining an ally in Reagan, they sought to revert Keynesianism with supply side theory, monetarism, gold convertibility and deregulation.[448] This force was elitest in that it pushed economics in favor of large corporations, business and the owning class, but populist in that it resisted the federal government, argued Phillips.[449] Phillips charged these economic conservatives with Calvin Coolidge supply-side theory revisionist history, a history which contradicted directly with Reagan's populism.[450] The return of 1920s economics would reinstate the old business economic elite, the circumstances which produced populist political realignment in the 1932 election of FDR. Phillips writes,

> "Among key conservative elites, the 1920s revisionism, hailing the era of flappers, bathtub gin, low taxes, glittering estates, unregulated stock issues, and run amok speculation leading to the depression, was implicit in Reagan's 1980 campaign, quietly espoused by determined GOP supply side innovators.[451]

[446] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 47.
[447] Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 212.
[448] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 50-51; Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 180-81.
[449] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 131.
[450] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 130.
[451] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 11.

Since Phillips conceptualized the New Right as an extension of American populist movements, not a traditional old right, he saw the New Right's economic foundations in the post-New Deal era; the populism of George Wallace was more influential than the old conservative intellectuals.[452] Phillips warned, if the economic policy of the radical economic conservatives failed to benefit the middle class base of the New Right, America risked an even larger populist upheaval in a political system he already saw as substantially weak.[453]

It was this contradiction, in the motivations and desires of the populist New Right, and revisionist radical economics, radicalized by what they perceived to be the long shadow of the Great Society extending into the 1970s which Phillips said would implode the coalition.[454] While looking back at different decades with a nostalgic lens, these two constituencies were bound in what Phillips called "Shadow Empire Politics."[455] Phillips writes that said strategy linked "constituencies that otherwise might be incompatible: cultural restorationists and nationalist themes bond the lower and middle-class populists, with the economic conservatism."[456] This bound Sun Belt voters, "anti-Washington outsider ship, religious and social issue sympathies, and supply side/gold standard economics."[457] It was only Reagan's personality said Phillips, that blurred and obscured the radical nature of the coalition.[458]

Instead of questioning ideological contradiction of Reagan's coalition, Buchanan was giving his conservative president negative reviews on his support of religious right, anti-communism, and economic policy,

[452] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 16, 47.
[453] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 155.
[454] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 131.
[455] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 16.
[456] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 16.
[457] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 51.
[458] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 51; Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 262.

> "Reviewing the decisions and actions, one by one, it is evident that the only connecting thread is the pragmatic desire to soothe ruffled feathers, to reassure raucous critics. The ideology of Ronald Reagan is being displaced by the politics of placation."[459]

When conservative Christian Americans vocalized their frustration with Reagan's lack of attention to reversing the Supreme Court's ban of prayer in public schools, only then said Buchanan, did the White House endorse a constitutional amendment in support.[460] When "Business roundtable" Republicans, the moderate sort that Buchanan disliked, voiced their fears of the rising federal deficit and expressed the need for a balanced budget, Reagan offered new taxes said Buchanan. Under pressure from a revitalized peace movement aimed at nuclear disarmament, the subject of much sympathetic media coverage, said Buchanan, Reagan proposed an arms reduction treaty with the Soviets. To Buchanan, each of these White House decisions were directly at odds with the platform Reagan had been elected on in 1980.[461] Much of this frustration Buchanan targeted at White House Staff around the president. Presenting himself on the side of the real rebellious passionate conservatives, Buchanan attacked Reagan aide Lee Atwater and White House chief of staff Jim Baker. Buchanan recounted the friction between them:

> "'This should take care of those extra-chromosome conservatives,' White House aide Lee Atwater chuckled. For the uninitiated, 'extra-chromosome conservatives' are those kooks who fought their hearts out to save Ronald Reagan in the New Hampshire primary two

[459] Patrick J. Buchanan, "The Reagan Administration and Politics of Placation," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., June 5, 1982).
[460] Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares,* 186.
[461] Buchanan, "The Reagan Administration and Politics of Placation."

years ago when Jim Baker and his friends were trying to shove over the lid of his political grave."[462]

Placing himself within the conservative movement, siding with the "kooks," Buchanan hinted at the spirit which he would take into his own political campaigns in the 1990s. But Buchanan had attacked those sorts of political operators since his days with Nixon, lamenting the replacement of conservatives in the Nixon White House with "pragmatists."[463] Their presence in the White House were instant victories for the liberals, insisted Buchanan.[464]

Those "kooks" were the increasingly radical social conservatives of the New Right that Phillips identified Reagan was trying to link with a champions of Reagan-style supply-side economics. In addition to what Phillips called "Shadow Political" linkage through nationalism, these two groups could be courted together through using their shared anti-bureaucratic populism. Reagan was especially effective in mobilizing the sentiments of the electorate against what he viewed as the overextended federal government.[465] The key, said Philips, of the "supply-side populist conservative synthesis" was creating a new socioeconomic boogeyman in the federal government and the greater bureaucracy; the "public sector economic elite."[466] Phillips didn't abandon his hatred for what he regarded as an inflationary liberal establishment and its bloated bureaucracy, but he thought it ironic and disturbing that the new incarnation of Reagan Republicanism, had the distinction of being supported by the business elite.[467] Thus, the synthesis of these conservatives was rooted in the past, but was separate from the anti-

[462] Buchanan, "The Reagan Administration and Politics of Placation."
[463] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 18.
[464] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 18.
[465] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Era*, 120; Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 263.
[466] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,*131; Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares,* 180; Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Era*, 119.
[467] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 131.

bureaucratic attacks of George Wallace.[468] Wallace's populist conservatism was authentic because it was truly grassroots, with little no corporate or business backing said Phillips.[469] Thus, Phillips saw the Reagan administration "Trying to mobilize the anti-bureaucratic, populist electorate using a reduced federal aid and reduced taxation economic agenda that [fit] nicely to the agenda of the national corporate and financial community;" a "curious mix of populism and elitism."[470]

By the 1982 midterms, Reagan's approval rating had fallen to 42% in large part due to the continued recession in which both unemployment and the population living in poverty rose considerably.[471] Following the midterms, in which Republicans lost 26 House seats, Buchanan again emphasized the need for attack.[472] Noting that the midterms were the worst political defeat of Reagan's career, he was optimistic that the economic recession had not awarded the Democrats a larger victory.[473] But, Buchanan warned, if Reagan wished to avoid becoming a single-term president – a Republican Jimmy Carter – he must root out the defensive mentality of the GOP, and become, "the Gripper again, the uncompromising champion of conservative values."[474]

Again, Buchanan attacked moderate Republicans, Democrats and the media when in the wake of the election some said Reagan must compromise or stepdown in 1984.[475] Buchanan continued to see the election as a conservative mandate and scoffed at the assertion that the

[468] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 131.
[469] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 131; Carter, *The Politics of Rage*, 300; Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 237, 239.
[470] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 131.
[471] Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares,* 182-83.
[472] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Reagan Should Come Out Fighting," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., November 13, 1982).
[473] Buchanan, "Reagan Should Come Out Fighting"; Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares,* 183.
[474] Buchanan, "Reagan Should Come Out Fighting."
[475] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Election Message Was End the Recession!," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., November 27, 1982); Schulman, *The Seventies*, 219.

results of 1982 meant that voters wanted a moderate Reagan. Republican disappointment in the midterms was caused by the continued recession said Buchanan, not his conservatism. Citing *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine, Buchanan mocked their suggestion that the electorate told the president to "go with the flow" or "change course."[476] As if writing directly to the president, Buchanan wrote, "better to go down as Ronald Reagan, guns blazing, than as one of the mushy moderates he has eaten for breakfast his entire career."[477] Buchanan, like Phillips, put the longevity and popularity of Reagan all on the economy. He concluded that if the economy was in good shape by 1984, ideally as a result of conservative economic policies he advocated, then Reagan would get a second term.[478]

When the economy did begin to recover, and was in good shape by the 1984 election, Reagan achieved an even greater landslide, a victory historian Philip Jenkins argued more so than the 1980 election, marked the end of the New Deal Coalition.[479] Phillips agreed that the recovery was essential to Reagan's survival, including keeping his coalition together.[480] Reagan was successful in courting beyond the traditional bounds of conservatism in part because of the appeal of his anti-government, anti-bureaucratic messaging, but that did not mean the electorate backed radical economic conservatism argued Phillips. Evidence of this was clear to Phillips, in examining the at the tax revolts of the late 1970s. Proposition 13, the successful California initiative that cut property taxes by 57% and capped them at 1% of market value, sparked a series of state tax initiatives across the country.[481] Phillips argued that the because the proposition was so visibly advocated by Howard Jarvis, and media to be a conservative cause, it gave the

[476] Buchanan, "Election Message Was End the Recession!"
[477] Buchanan, "Election Message Was End the Recession!"
[478] Buchanan, "Election Message Was End the Recession!"
[479] Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 186; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 174-75.
[480] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 228; Ehrman, *The Eighties*, 48.
[481] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 211.

impression that the electorate supported a more expansive economic conservatism than they actually did.[482] Phillips argued that working and lower class support for Proposition 13 was motivated by public resentment for high property tax, widespread anti-welfare, anti-judicial, anti-busing programs, and general anti-establishment fervor, not an endorsement of economic conservatism.[483] Phillips understood the nationwide tax initiatives as community backed, not supported or mobilized by the business community.[484] Jarvis's later effort, Proposition 9, an initiative held a couple years later to slash income taxes by 50%, failed, which Phillips saw as an indication the failure to understand the appeal of Proposition 13.[485] Phillips cited evidence which showed, support for Proposition 9 was a reversal, lower- and working-class Californians who had supported Prop 13, rejected the income tax cut.[486] To Phillips, this represented the underlying issue of the Reagan Revolution, the false assumption that the populist electorate supported a conservative economic radicalism of Reagan's economic advisors. The Reagan conservatives were trying to "transform a substantial populist response to liberal economic policy failure into a mandate that never existed: a return to the conservative economics of the 1920s and its clear bias toward high-income people and groups."[487]

The hallmark of Reagan's first term was his Economic Recovery Tax of 1981, which drastically reduced federal and marginal tax rates, largely benefiting the wealthiest Americans and worked to dismantle the tax regime that had governed post-New Deal America.[488] This was exactly the sort of supply-side tax cuts that Buchanan had been advocating for since the 1970s. Supply-siders within the Reagan White House argued that by cutting tax rates and slashing the

[482] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 126.
[483] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 127,
[484] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America.* 125-127.
[485] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 215.
[486] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 127.
[487] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 128.
[488] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 122; Schulman, *The Seventies*, 231.

federal government's budget, not only would the economy recover, but it would also produce a government budget surplus.[489] Instead, the Reagan administration was greeted with the opposite, in 1982 the economy was still in recession, and the deficit only grew.[490] With reduced federal government revenues, the Reagan administration also increased defense spending, while cutting certain government programs or shifting them to the states.[491] In 1982, Reagan acknowledged that the country was in recession, and in response to worsening economic conditions, Congress passed the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility of 1982 (TEFRA), first pursued by Republican Bob Dole, which sought to correct the growing federal deficit.[492] Predictably, Buchanan and other prominent members of the New Right interpreted this to be a reversion of the politics Reagan had be elected on.[493] Buchanan believed in cutting tax rates, reducing the federal budget, and increasing defense spending to catch up militarily with the Soviets.[494]

Several weeks after the midterms, Buchanan authored an article titled, "'Reagan Revolution' Is in Danger of Extinction," just after Reagan had "fatalistically" compromised with Democratic House leader Tip O'Neil on a new 5-cent gasoline tax.[495] In the context of TEFRA, the gas tax hike and the looming Social Security Reform Act of 1983, Buchanan thought politicians had, in his opinion, forgotten that the New Deal had failed. If deficits could save the economy said Buchanan, then the economy would not have been in recession. At the same time,

[489] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 141.
[490] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 146-147. Wilentz discusses David Stockman, Reagan's head of Office Management and Budget, who revealed to *The Washington Post*, after the passage of the 1981 tax bill, that he had produced inaccurate projections of economic recovery and admitted that supply side economics was a cover for trickle down economics.
[491] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 188.
[492] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 147; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 264-265.
[493] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendanc*y, 201.
[494] Buchanan, "Election Message Was End the Recession!" Buchanan does not address reducing the federal budget while at the same time increasing defense spending.
[495] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Reagan Revolution is in Danger of Extinction," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., December 11, 1982).

he mocked both Democrats and Republicans who Buchanan said were searching for new was to find revenue. Buchanan felt the "U.S. economy [was] suffering under the weight of government annually eating up almost 40 per cent of its [GNP]"[496] Arguing that defense spending need to consume more of the gross national product (GNP), Buchanan compared the government's budget to 1960, indicating to the supply-sider that defense spending had dropped 3% while federal domestic spending had doubled by 1981.[497] To Buchanan, everyone failed to see the real revolution going on in America, the incredible explosion of business which was only possible through Reagan's Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981.[498]

Once the Social Security Reform Act of 1983 passed, which increased payroll taxes and opened benefits to taxation, Buchanan argued wrote that any idea that the GOP had been the party of the working man had been "laid to rest."[499] During the 1982 midterm elections, some liberal Democrats used Reagan's and the GOP's opposition to Social Security as a campaigning tool.[500] While critical of the president for supposedly saving himself politically, again Buchanan focused most of his attack on the Republican Party moderates. Arguing that the Social Security tax hike canceled out what was left of the 1981 tax cut, Buchanan saw the GOP returning to its "traditional role" as the alternative party whose only role is to come in, "bail out" the Democrats, and lead the way for my excessive government programs.[501]

In the 1970s, Buchanan and Phillips attacked what they perceived to be the liberal establishment, liberal social critics, and the media for presenting a negativist, cynical vision of

[496] Buchanan, "Reagan Revolution is in Danger of Extinction."
[497] Buchanan, "Reagan Revolution is in Danger of Extinction."
[498] Buchanan, "Reagan Revolution is in Danger of Extinction."
[499] Patrick J. Buchanan, "Social Security Compromise: Sellout of Principle," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., February 5, 1983); Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 201.
[500] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 202. Critchlow writes that Democrats were divided on whether to associate themselves with programs such as Social Security.
[501] Buchanan, "Social Security Compromise: Sellout of Principle."

the country that opposed the values and vision of the country adopted by the conservative populist middle class. While Buchanan saw a declining culture by the end of the 1980s, Phillips recognized at the beginning of the decade, how nostalgia was being used by Reagan to invoke the better days before the sea changes of the 1960s and early 1970s; a strategy Phillips thought especially effective in an era of cynicism. Rather than continuing to harp on an amorphous liberal elite as the main exporter of cynicism, Phillips recognized a negativism in the country which went beyond the public's lost confidence after the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. The very social bonds of the country were "weakening and dissolving," argued Phillips.[502] Reflecting the historical analysis of the 1970s as a turn towards individualisms, called the "me decade," Phillips described the society divisions he saw as the "balkanization" of society, where "small liberties replaced larger ones."[503] Phillips wrote,

> "[In the] Imperial high water mark of the early 1960s, Americans saw ethnicity, regionalism and states rights yield before concepts of global optimism, the melting pot, equality, homogeneity, and centralization of power. Since the early 60s however the reemergence of localism has occurred in a very different psychological climate- amidst the end of optimism."[504]

Phillips argued the "balkanization" was yet another factor that limited the operational ability of the Federal Government. As a result of the previous 15 years, Phillips again said that the separation of powers had become "*too* separate;" the federal government, the media, congress,

[502] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 73.
[503] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America* 73; Schulman, *The Seventies*, 145; Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 60.
[504] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 75.

Washington as a whole became entrenched. Voters have become mobilized through affiliation with issues like gun control, feminism, taxes and others, rather than party.[505] Phillip concluded, the balkanization of America was a sign of national decline, "*Decomposition is not revitalized diversity*."[506] The glue that held the country together was eroding argued Phillips, while the government failed to comprehend the "simple facts of race, ethnicity, territory, greed and inequality," Americans were speaking different "languages."[507]

Phillips also brought a global perspective to his analysis of America in 1982. Continuing in the framework of the post-industrial revolution, Phillips argued that the global economy was undergoing a global twentieth-century price revolution and understanding such was essential to grasping the politics of the 1980s.[508] He blamed much of the globe's inflation on western liberal welfare policy, but significantly doubted that conservative economic policy was the solution.[509] "To blame bad economic decision making of the 1960s alone for our current woes creates an illusion," Phillips wrote, "namely, that the cure can be effected by good American economic decision making in the 1980s."[510] The results could produce great economic inequality, as he pointed to "withering" dreams of homeownership and stagnant wages since the beginning of the 1970s.[511] Such weaknesses are just one of a plethora which were obscured, said Phillips, by

[505] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 82-83. Schulman, *The Seventies*, 163, 196.
[506] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 86. Schulman, *The Seventies*, 79-80; Suleiman Osman, "The Decade of the Neighborhood," in *Rightward Bound: Making American Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 110. Osman uses various urban neighborhood movements during the decade that signified both a turn away from big government to localism, but socioeconomic division on race, religion, and class.
[507] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America, 85.*
[508] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 108-109; Phillips describes a global price revolution as a period of global-class inflation. Phillips marks parallels with past global price revolutions including the increasing complexity of the economy, dramatic growth of global trade, a large increase in the money supply, an expanded role of government and finally population growth. Phillips argues global price revolutions deemphasize the role and ability of individual nation states to take action to fight global inflation.
[509] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 124.
[510] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 121.
[511] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 107.

America's incredible amassing of power and wealth from 1865 to 1965.[512] The United States said Phillips, was the prime source of global upheaval, and was now becoming a victim of its own success, facing threats from without and within; "an ebbing global economic competitiveness, a declining civitas, a balkanizing society, a century old party system and archaic national decision making mechanisms."[513] These would be themes which Phillips would only continue to discuss with more passion as he entered the 1990s. Buchanan too, in his purist ideological style, would echo Phillips concern with elements of global economics and trade, but only did so after Reagan left Washington.

While Buchanan was angry with what he saw as the White House's betrayal of economic conservatism, Phillips widened his critiques beyond just that of the liberal establishment or moderates. As mentioned above with Phillips' perception of the electorate in an environment of cynicism, his own analysis of the 1980s became imbued with doubt. In folding his populist centered understanding of modern American political and economic history into a global perspective, Phillips offered something new in his career, arguments that went beyond simple conceptions of blaming the political enemy and suggestions that conservation was essential to fixing the country.

Near the end of *Post-Conservative America,* written from the vantage point of the early 1980s, Phillips pondered whether there might be some potential in the Sun Belt to revitalize America in the 1980s. Phillips offered that perhaps the middle-class populism of the region, if energized by its historical origins in the American Frontier, could provide the country with an

[512] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 235.
[513] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 235; Osman, "The Decade of the Neighborhood," 109; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 165-66; Frum, *How We Got Here,* 7. While certainly blurring the nuances of the decade, Phillips' description of the 1970s does reflect real changes and challenges that the country faced as well as popular memory. Unique is Phillips emphasis on what he considered to be the out-of-date political organization of the U.S.

"exuberance of economic and cultural adolescence itself."[514] Placing faith in a new internal American frontier, said Phillips, may allow the country to survive the political, cultural and economic weaknesses he identified.[515] And yet, the man who had coined the term, and advocated for its potential, warned it could lay the ground work for a more dangerous force, authoritarianism.[516] In the vitality of the Sun Belt, Phillips perceived a risky desire for order,

> "The morality of the majority would be upheld and enforced, though with politically convenient lapses; "The Star-Spangled Banner" would wave with greater frequency and over many more parades; increased surveillance would crack down on urban outbreaks and extreme political dissidents."[517]

The Realities of Reagan in the White House

In tracing Patrick Buchanan's and Kevin Phillips' political attitudes in the first four years of the Reagan administration, it is clear that both men had moved in separate directions now that there was a conservative in office. Yet, both men approached the decade with a consistency in their political ideology that reflected their origins in the Nixon years. By 1984, both men still wanted the populist conservative middle class to realign the politics of the country. But conservatism itself had evolved since Nixon's time, embracing an explicit right-wing ideology with the help of Ronald Reagan' optimistic rhetoric which invoked elements of Goldwater's libertarian anti-communism, supply-side economic philosophy, fused with an empowered social

[514] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 237.
[515] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 237.
[516] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 238.
[517] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 239.

issue New Right, reflecting the backlash politics of the late 1960s and 1970s.[518] If Nixon had flirted with some of these expressions of conservatism, the upheavals of the 1970s and Reagan's election helped shift, at least at political level, a move to the right. Phillips recognized that change, separating himself from the New Right and Reagan Republicanism, politics in the 1970s which Phillips had helped articulate. Buchanan did no such thing, placing the Reagan Revolution as the same conservative populist force within the same broad arc that Goldwater and Nixon had developed. In making such a connection, Buchanan was simplifying the history of America's populist conservatism, and also continuing the legacy of his disappointment in the ideological conviction of conservatives once in power. What was clear is that for these two populists, Reagan's presidency was not satisfying their visions for the country. Five years later, both would confidently say the country was in decline, but for different reasons. For Buchanan, Reagan's victory would not provide a conservative triumph while for Phillips, the president had abandoned the middle-class.

[518] Robert Britt Horwitz, *America's Right: Anti-Establishment Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party* (Cambridge, UK ; Polity, 2013), 7-9, 13-15; Zelizer and Schulman, "Introduction," in *Rightward Bound*, 3-5; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 4, 92.

Chapter 4. A Fissured Conservatism

Both Patrick Buchanan and Kevin Phillips placed the success of President Reagan on the rejuvenation of the US economy. By 1984, low unemployment, low inflation, and economic growth helped Ronald Reagan win an even larger electoral landslide against Democrat Walter Mondale than he won against Carter four years earlier.[519] Despite Buchanan's frustrations with the Reagan administration's placation politics, he celebrated the president's landslide victory.[520] Once again, Buchanan saw the election as a mandate that extended beyond President Reagan to the very principles of conservatism itself. Buchanan looked back at the defeat of Barry Goldwater in 1964 to see how far conservatism had come, and while he had his critiques of the White House, the country had emerged from the stagflation of the 1970s and the recession of the early 1980s.[521] For Buchanan, "the conservative hour was at hand."[522] While suggesting that Reagan was at risk of paying too much attention to the politics of the "losers" among his Democratic opposition because of his "affable personality," Buchanan reiterated the conservative causes that he wished the president would follow.[523] Reagan had to: kick all the communists out of Central America, introduce a flat tax rate, and support social conservatives with a conservative supreme court to overturn Roe v. Wade.[524] Several months later in early 1985, the Washington press would be shocked when Buchanan was chosen as President Reagan's new White House communications director with recommendation from New Right conservative Richard Viguerie.[525]

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[519] Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 273; Wilentz, *The Age the Reagan*, 170.
[520] Patrick J. Buchanan, "What Reagan Should Do With the Mandate," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., November 17, 1984).
[521] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 170.
[522] Buchanan, "What Reagan Should Do With the Mandate."
[523] Buchanan, "What Reagan Should Do With the Mandate."
[524] Buchanan, "What Reagan Should Do With the Mandate."
[525] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 99.

With economic boom shaping the culture of the 1980s, Kevin Phillips only furthered his critiques of the Republican White House, pointing to growing economic inequality between the rich, and middle-class Americans as evidence of America's continual decline.[526] By the early 1990s, his works would be used by Democrats as ammunition against President George Bush. For some, it was his conservative career which marked his attacks on the GOP as significant, more than what he had to say.[527] As Buchanan saw the coming post-Reagan years as an opportunity to push the country further right, Phillips distanced himself further from the party and politics he had helped shape.

Previously, the weight Buchanan and Phillips had placed on their social, economic, and ideological conservatism put them in the same coalition against the perceived liberal elite that had been in power for over 40 years. The supposed separation of modern liberalism from its working-class populist roots in the New Deal, forming into what they understood as an elitist liberalism produced a clear shared enemy; even when such an enemy was a vast simplification of reality as with Phillips' "knowledge elite." This joined these educated pundits together in resentment and resistance against the establishment liberals despite their differing emphases, Phillips' populist commentary, and Buchanan's conservative ideological fervor. After it appeared to Phillips that the "liberal elite" were weakened after the 1980 election, the forces which joined these two men fell apart as their political variance came to the forefront. Phillips and Buchanan perceived both economic and cultural threats to the American middle and working class: Phillips expressed sentiments that pursued a populist economics with decreasing concern for social

[526] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*¸ 202.
[527] Marcia Lynn Whicker, "Review of *Boiling Point: Democrats, Republicans, and the Decline of Middle Class Prosperity*: *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, by Kevin Phillips and Paul Kennedy", Public Productivity & Management Review 19, no. 3 (1996): 382; Nicholas Lemann, "That's the Way the Money Goes," The Washington Post (1974-), July 8, 1990.

issues, while Buchanan consistently fought against a culture he saw as morally bankrupt, and injected a moral nativist element into his economic conservatism.

This final chapter covers Reagan's second term up until the election of Bill Clinton in 1992. This period marks the final split of both Buchanan and Phillips from what was left of their connection to mainstream Republicanism. Buchanan and Phillips had both developed their own intense critiques of the Reagan administration which only intensified when it became clear that George H. W. Bush would be Reagan's successor in 1988. Phillips authored several books explaining what he thought was a middle-class populist outburst due to growing wealth inequality, an update of the populist upheaval he had written about in *The Emerging Republican Majority*. Buchanan wrote his autobiography *Right from the Beginning*, a draft of what would shape into his political platform for his 1992 Republican primary campaign.

Kevin Phillips and American Economic Decline

Only a couple years after 1982's *Post-Conservative America*, Phillips authored a book to combat what he perceived as the major economic threat to the United States: global free trade and deindustrialization. Seeing America in decline, Phillips continued to make suggestions that he felt would revitalize the country, as he had done previously in arguing for "quasi-parliamentary" reform.[528] Fearing what he understood to be a second global price revolution and America's weakness in its international trade, Phillips proposed an uncharacteristically moderate solution. While the economy had been improving since the beginning of 1982, growth was in large part due to consumption rather than increased saving and business investment.[529] As the financial services and defense industries boomed, manufacturing and agriculture which had been

[528] Phillips, "An American Parliament," 14.
[529] Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 268; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 203.

declining since the 1970s in part due to international competition, were damaged even further as Reagan's tax cuts had not raised investment in those industries as supply-siders had predicted.[530] Historian Judith Stein argued that the expensive U.S. dollar caused by high interest rates damaged American manufacturing and the hopes of industrial revitalization.[531] Foreign investment and a growing U.S. trade deficit contributed to the decline in productivity in these industries.[532]

In *Staying on Top: The Business Case for a National Industrial Strategy* (1984), Phillips argued for a partnership between the government and business to protect the American economy. This was not protectionism or free trade absolutism, wrote Phillips, but a middle-of the-road, business-led approach which favored stricter trade law enforcement, and action against foreign industrial policies.[533] In the 1980s, America's declining economic domination since the post-World War II years, and its large trade deficit with countries like Japan and Germany pushed Phillips to advocate for economic nationalism.[534] Arguing that in the politics of the 1980s, "business is in a rare - almost unique- position to serve as a rallying point for a coalition of interests and attitudes," Phillips felt the activist government partnership solution could work within the political attitudes of the era.[535] In what Phillips saw as an age of global

[530] Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 268; Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 130.
[531] Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 269.
[532] Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, xi, 205-206.
[533] Kevin P. Phillips, *Staying on Top: The Business Case for a National Industrial Strategy* (New York: Random House, 1984), 135.
[534] John Ehrman, *The Eighties*, 77-81; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 248-258. John Ehrman presents industrial policy in the 1980s as largely a failed liberal project which did not capture the appeal of voters in the 1980s, especially when it was explicating voted against by the public in Rhode Island. Ehrman places the origins of industrial policy in a *Business Week* article which was picked up by Robert Reich. Ehrman seems to endorse the findings of a Brookings Institute study from 1983 that found U.S. deindustrialization was a myth. Further, he argues, the broad social impacts of proposed industrial policy made it an easy target. Judith Stein, presents a very different picture of deindustrialization, noting Carter and his economic advisor's unwillingness to purse a robust industrial policy. For Stein, deindustrialization and decreased productivity are one element of here thesis of post-war America moving from "The Great Compression" to an "Age of Inequality."
[535] Phillips, *Staying on Top*, 138.

interdependence, he argued that, "Free-market conservatives often exaggerate the merits of unfettered economic competition," while liberal economic intervention wouldn't work politically in the Reagan years.[536] Just as he had felt the political parties and institutions themselves were out of date, Phillips thought their economic proposals were equally irrelevant.

The corporate-led, but government partnered national industrial strategy that Phillips proposed in his writings ran decidedly counter to his earlier attitudes about state economic intervention.[537] While he did not necessarily share the views of his contemporary supply-side economists who wanted to see greater government disengagement from the economy Phillips had consistently written about what he thought as the social programing inflationary excessive liberal government establishment in the 1970s, as well as its bloated paralysis in *Post-Conservative America.* Phillips did not feel that his suggestion was an abandonment of his populist politics, rather his original conception, the Sun Belt, would be the constituency best suited for this strategy. The Sun Belt with its inhabitants' nationalism, desire for the government to "do something," as well as its preexisting relationship with government industry meant that it could provide the base his strategy needed.[538] These factors, and the growing middle-class frustration that Phillips saw bubbling up could be used as a politically mobilizing force, a new economic nationalism to revitalize the American economy in growing global trade context where the country had greater competition.[539] Continuing his trajectory from *Post-Conservative America*, *Staying on Top* was Phillips as political commentator shifting himself further from the

[536] Phillips, *Staying on Top*, 111.
[537] Phillips is very clear that he envisioned limited government participation but that their cooperation was important.
[538] Phillips, *Staying on Top*, 123, 141-142. Phillips proposes a fifteen-point plan from the political perspective, including ideas such as the creation of a new department of trade, new trade-reciprocity legislation, and monitoring foreign trade policies.
[539] Phillips, *Staying on Top*, 134

partisanship of *Emerging*, offering a solution he felt could work in the political context he perceived.[540]

Phillips and the "New" Capitalist Elite

Protection of American industry and manufacturing, however, was not the approach that the Republican White House took.[541] Already in decline, U.S. Steel and auto manufacturing were facing a particularly dire reality in the early 1980s.[542] Organized labor strength was dealt a brutal blow when Reagan fired striking workers of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Association.[543] By 1986, Phillips felt the country was operated by an elite economic class, comparing the decade's economic boom to the 1920s, questioning whether the country was in a second "Gatsby era," a period of sustained yet precarious prosperity.[544] On the social front, Phillips warned, as he had in *Post-Conservative America*, that the social issues which mobilized the right had gone beyond the political mainstream. Particularly, Phillips saw issues such as school prayer, pro-life advocacy and creationism promoted by politically active evangelical Christian groups, as radical social issues that only tied the GOP to a politics that would alienate the majority of voters.[545]

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[540] Leonard Silk, "Books and Business; The Case for Economic Nationalism," *The New York Times*, October 21, 1984; Silk writes "Mr. Phillips exemplifies a new breed of analysts whose skills are dedicated to the interests of particular politicians. (Mr. Phillips was a key adviser to President Nixon.) Cool and meticulous, they serve politicians without necessarily sharing their ideologies. It is possible these analysts deserve credit for bringing politicians' programs into line with their own objectives. But many people may find it chilling to contemplate a world in which gifted political thinkers become, in effect, brains for hire."
[541] Stein; *Pivotal Decade*, 269-270. Stein also extensively covers President Carters tendency, and failure to do the same. Industrial decline became apparent in the early 1970s.
[542] Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 181-182.
[543] Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 182.
[544] Kevin Phillips, "Major Economic Boom--or Merely 1920s Revisited?," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, June 8, 1986.
[545] Kevin Phillips, "U.S. Right Is Beyond U.S. Center: Right: Beyond the Center," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, December 1, 1985.

However, it was Phillips' economic concerns of a "new capitalist elite" that would define the rest of his career and produce his 1990 book, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*.[546] If *The Emerging Republican Majority* had correctly predicted middle class voter anger at the liberal establishment of the 1960s, his new work argued that the same force would rupture Reagan's conservative coalition.[547] The genius of American politics, which Phillips consistently described as the historical record of the populist electorate pushing forward a new political cycle, removing the elite of the era, was coming again. While Phillips abandoned his belief that such an upheaval could create a political realignment in the likes of 1932, he saw middle class economic grumbling which had been growing since the early 1970s, only accelerate under Ronald Reagan.[548] In the 1980s, Phillips argued that the middle-class constituency that had backed Reagan had been left behind for the new elite, his predictions about Reagan's contradictory coalition seemed to be correct.[549]

To complement his populist cycle lens of American politics, Phillips identified the Reagan years as the third example of a conservative Republican capitalist heyday in American history. Following the Civil War Republican era (1860-1896), and the Industrial Republican era (1896-1932), the 1980s represented the final form of Republican power politics in which the party came to victory under a populist wave but formed into capitalist overdrive.[550] In Phillips' opinion, the concentration of wealth was the hallmark of "second stage" Republican dominated

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[546] Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 42. Phillips throughout his career uses "elite" quite loosely. In this book, the new elite, is capitalist, conservative, business, finance, Hamptons, and Republican.
[547] Lemann, "That's the Way the Money Goes"; Levy, "Review of The Politics of Rich and Poor."At the time of the books release in 1990, the country had not yet entered recession, and perhaps for this reason most of all, several reviewers of the book doubted Phillip's thesis that there would be any kind of populist outburst or that the economy was the number one issue on the minds of voters.
[548] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor,*16, 22-23.
[549] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan,* 275; Stein, *Pivotal Decade,* 262; While the specific impacts of Reagan's economic policies are often debated, the growth of the wealth gap between middle- and upper-class Americans is more clear.
[550] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor,* 35.

periods.[551] Applying his regular use of America's populist cycles to Republican leadership, Phillips thought that the Reagan years had diverged from the middle class focus of the Nixon Presidency, towards a "new money capitalism" which only became more establishment under President Bush.[552] Phillips argues,

> "The Republicans rode such a [populist] wave into office in 1969 as a middle-class, anti-elite correction, successfully squelching social permissiveness and disorder. But then, during the 1980s- and not for the first time in US history— Reagan's GOP became a high-powered vehicle not only for capitalist revitalization, but also, as we have seen, for the accumulation of the wealthy by a relatively narrow elite."[553]

The sort of "elite" which Phillips had previously identified as Great Society legacy Democrats, had been replaced with a new economic elite in the ideological shadow of the 1920s' Republican elite. Phillips' historical view of the GOP— "Beyond its emphasis on the politics of national unity, dynamic capitalism, market economics and the concentration of wealth are what the Republican Party is all about"— revealed, more so than his earlier works, his disconnect from the GOP as well as how conservatism had evolved during the 1970s. Phillips had always favored the populist angle of his political ideology, mocking supply-siders and proponents of

[551] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 35; Coontz, *The Way We Never Were,* 104-106. In her book on American families and nostalgia, Coontz linked the hardship faced my American families in the 1980s and early 1990s, to that of the experience of families in the Gilded Age (1890s). She specifically mentions, economic transition, and the inward turn of the family, away from reform towards individualism. Like Phillips' arguments in *Post-Conservative America* (1982) on the "balkanization" of American culture, Coontz notes family abandonment of community and "social disengagement.
[552] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 212.
[553] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 33.

laissez-faire economics for being out of touch with working class Americans back in the Nixon years.[554]

At various points throughout their careers, presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan channeled populist rhetoric to appeal to ordinary Americans, but connecting the two presidents through such an understanding obscures their significant policy differences.[555] Identifying this explains how Phillips articulated what he saw as a consistent populist ideology, which allowed him to shift his conception of elite from the Great Society liberals to Reagan's business Republicans. While Phillips had criticized Nixon for failing to properly comprehend the significance of his two electoral victories, which in part relied on a groundswell of widely held populist resentments against Democrats, Nixon fit Phillips' conception of proper populist conservatism. In his view, Nixon did not use nostalgia to bound radical economics with the populist middle class and he was anti-elite, even if he was not always successful in that pursuit. It was for Phillips a stark contrast to the politics of Reagan and especially George Bush. Phillips cited an article which contrasted Nixon's verbal appeals to voters, where he reached after the "common man," FDR spoke to the "forgotten man," while Reagan spoke to the "pyramid's apex."[556]

In favoring the rich, Reagan's economic policies, thought Phillips, were reproducing old bastions of establishment power, opposed to the conservative populist geographic region he thought so essential to GOP victory in the late 1960s. American elite politics, whether it was reform liberal or business conservative, were centered on the coasts, and most presently in the American Northeast.[557] The magic of the Sunbelt for the GOP in the late 1960s argued Phillips,

[554] Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy."
[555] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 246-261.
[556] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 35.
[557] Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*,73.

was that it stretched across the American South and Southwest, areas with populist voting history. Nixon and Reagan had both attracted disaffected North working-class voters. But the "new" Republicanism of the 1980s, argued Phillips, had economically abandoned that geographic area, and returned to the bicoastal elite economic framework, alienating supporters which had been essential to Reagan's victory.[558] Combined with his analysis of American industrial decline in his 1984 book *Staying on Top* and his distaste for Republican invocation of a 1950s nostalgia, Phillips saw another populist outburst on the horizon against the Republican establishment. As such, the bicoastal bias of the 1980s, with the decline of industry and the power of "wealth growth in dividends, rents, capital gains, interest gains, all relative to stagnation in wages and salaries as the main sources of wealth in America," pushed the country away from the middle-class populist focus which Phillips felt would invigorate the economy.[559]

One impact of such wealth, the massive growth of monied elite and entrepreneurialism was that money made was decreasingly being invested into production and more into "*paper entrepreneurialism*."[560] Phillips lamented debt instruments which had begun to outweigh investment in domestic production, greatly shifting the consolidation of American wealth.[561] Damage done to American farms, the oil industry, and the American heartland resulted in the Republicans losing the senate in 1986.[562] Phillips argues,

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[558] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 19; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 206. In this book, Wilentz makes a similar argument, showing how the economic growth of the 1980s hurt the Rustbelt compared to economies on the two coasts.
[559] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 8; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 203.
[560] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 70; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 145. Wilentz notes, even in the Whitehouse, people like Allan Greenspan doubted the ability of supply-side theory increase investment in business. This turned out to be the case as much growth in the 1980s was due to what Phillips called "paper entrepreneurialism".
[561] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 69.
[562] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 192; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 206; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 273. Stein argues, as Phillips does, that the results of deindustrialization damaged industrial cities and their suburbs, but adds the crack epidemic, poor schooling and childcare, and poor infrastructure, "produced an edgy electorate, which returned the senate to the Democrats in 1986."

> "A political revolt in the Farm Belt had helped cost the Republicans the senate in 1986—North and South Dakota, hurt by disinflation, elected only Democrats to the U.S. house and senate that year, an unprecedented outcome—and two years later the Republicans suffered their greatest 1984-88 presidential vote share declines in the farm, oil and mining states, though they managed to win most of them."[563]

Beyond these industries, the manufacturing towns which had thrust many Americans into the middle class after World War II were hurting in the 1980s.[564] Such trends, said Phillips, were building a feeling of economic frustration, weakening Reagan's electoral coalition. In his 1993 follow up book *Boiling Point*, Phillips continued this theme outlining how Reagan had been unable to dismantle welfare, but federal tax cuts and the resulting support program cuts, forced states to raise taxes to fund services, disproportionately impacting the tax burden for middle- and lower-class Americans.[565]

In addition to constructing a culture of nostalgia and patriotism, using national binding symbols such as the American flag, Phillips argued Reagan was fostering a culture of wealth obsession.[566] Core to this culture of "nurturing wealth," was the reemergence of a confidence in capitalism.[567] Phillips notes how such confidence, with a dose of irony, emerged as a sort of populist cowboy insurgent entrepreneurialism which encouraged upheaval and disruption.[568]

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[563] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, xviii, 201.
[564] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 15; Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*, 362.
[565] Kevin Phillips, *Boiling Point: Democrats, Republicans, and the Decline of Middle-Class Prosperity* (New York: Random House, 1993), 33; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 275-276. Wilentz echoes this point of Phillips' as well, arguing that state and locality raised taxes to counter cuts to federal assistance.
[566] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 34.
[567] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 66.
[568] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 67; Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 5.

Citing left-wing Harvard economist (and future U.S. Labor Secretary) Robert Reich, Phillips quoted the image and popular appeal of the business elite, "They are cowboy capitalists… There is no reason to question the fundamental legitimacy of big business in America, or to flirt with economic populism, because the populists have already taken over."[569] Phillips' distaste for the culture of wealth during the decade reflected his previous warnings of the country's "balkanization" that warned of an increasing individualistic society whose population pursued their own interests.[570] Historian Stephanie Coontz discussed similar trends in the 1990s, arguing how American valorization of individualism, falsely mapped onto America's past, was a damaging myth; in reality family prosperity was often the product of boom periods that saw more robust government intervention in the economy.[571] By contrast, in the economic contest of the 1980s, rather than creating a cohesive culture, economic pressures led American families to attempt to recreate an ideal that was becoming less feasible to millions. While Phillips would not have endorsed Coontz's positive perspective on government intervention, he shared the same concerns that the 1980s had created a further divided America, where for many working- and middle-class people the American dream started to fall out of reach. Powerful cultural nationalism and nostalgia was obscuring and deflecting an increasing economic pressure on middle- and working-class Americans.[572]

While Phillip's attacked the GOP it did not mean he was drifting to the Democratic side either. A key element of his Republican capitalist heyday cycle thesis was that Democrats played a conciliatory role in the politics which was damaging the majority.[573] Few Democrats

[569] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 71.
[570] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 73.
[571] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 99, 137-138, 145.
[572] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 403-404.
[573] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 47-48; Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 135-139. Gerstle does not use Phillips cyclical theory of GOP capitalist heydays, but minority party acquiescence is essential to his political order framework. Therefore, in his discussion of Democrats in the 1980s, Gerstle specifically

experiencing economic growth in their states were willing to employ populist politics to attack the rich. Phillips cited David Obey, one of the few Democrats in 1986 to use wealth inequality as a campaign issue to win.[574] The opposite was true of 1988 Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis, who Phillips argued resisted using the wealth gap issue against George Bush because his home state of Massachusetts was experiencing its own economic boom.[575] Phillips identified that at the end of the campaign the Dukakis did employ such tactics, but it was far too late.[576] Ironic, given Bush's campaign strategists awareness of their candidates weakness on the issue, who attempted to shape him on divisive social issues that would appeal to a right-wing populist sentiment.[577]

The culmination of the arguments in *Politics of Rich and Poor* illustrated how Phillips' cyclical populist lens of American political history allowed him to shift who were the elite in relation to the populist electorate. For Phillips, the Reagan administration, with their nostalgia for the economics of the 1920s, and the beneficiaries of Reagan's wealthy biased policies, had become the new elite in his populist framework.[578] With what Phillips felt was a sufficient repudiation of the social liberalism of the 1960s having occurred by the early 1980s, the economic domination of the rich was a natural return to the business elite of America's past. Back in 1979, Phillips attacked President Bush's 1980 presidential bid for his business elite

mentions the Democratic Leadership Council which clearly adopted the free-market principles to separate themselves with 1930s and 1960s liberalism. However, Gerstle offers a more nuanced view of Democrats in the 1980s then Phillips does, highlighting moments of significant resistance, including from House leader Tip O'Neil.

[574] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 46.

[575] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 5.

[576] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 30.

[577] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 23; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 270-271.

[578] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, xxii, 45. Phillips argued that the Reagan administration was "was openly committed to copying the economic style and incentives of the Calvin Coolidge years." Later in the book, Phillips mocks Calvin Coolidge themed birthday parties put on he said by GOP lobbyists in Washington.

politics.[579] That business Republicanism, also reflective in his moderate fears at the time regarding President Ford and Nelson Rockefeller was one part of what had become Reagan's legacy to Phillips; especially once it was clear Bush would win the Presidency in 1988. In reflection, despite frustration with Nixon's politics and the foolishness of Watergate, Nixon's "cloth coat middle Americanism" represented the politics which Phillips connected to the majority of the electorate. Just as liberalism had produced in his eyes, a narrow "knowledge sector elite" which arrogantly prescribed politics on an electorate which simply did not align with it, Reagan too helped produce a narrow elite but through massive wealth expansion. As such, Reagan captured a disproportionate percentage of the upper-class vote in 1984, while voter participation dropped.[580] This was more evidence to Phillips that 1980s' Republican's had abandoned the populist masses he had described moving to the GOP under Nixon. Instead of this elite prescribing social politics on the electorate, the Reagan administration fostered an environment where one group's gains were another's loss, argued Phillips, and the losers were the vast majority of Americans.[581]

Beyond his perception of the Republican Party and what had become of conservative politics, Phillips' widened his analysis beyond his typical image of the middle class. Prior to *The Politics of Rich and Poor,* Phillips had a white and narrow conception of the working and middle classes. In placing American populism in cycles which invoked the past, he connected the electorate of American history to those populist movements which were often white and racially exclusionary.[582] Most prominently in *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Phillips encouraged

[579] Kevin P. Phillips, "George Bush: Eastern Establishment Candidate," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C., United States: Human Events Inc., February 23, 1980).
[580] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 24
[581] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 6, 199, 209; Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 255, 261; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 262, 277-279.
[582] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 14, 36, 41.

Republican politics which emphasized not only what he saw as the excesses of Civil Rights, and its Democrat allies, but that letting the Democrats pursue African Americans would only increase white affiliation with the Republicans. In *The Politics of Rich and Poor,* however, Phillips specifically recognized the plight of African Americans and women in the 1980s.[583] Phillips wrote, "For women, young people, and minorities the effect of economic polarization during the 1980s was largely negative."[584] From Phillips perspective, the public's memories of liberalism's failed projects of equality were obscuring the public's reaction to growing and visible wealth inequality.[585] As he did with race, Phillips acknowledged that while women made gains during the decade, they were misleading, gaining only in proportion to worsening male salaries, and in their disproportionate presence in the service industry.[586] However, Phillips continued to attack the long shadow of Great Society liberalism, and the left's penchant for advocating too narrowly for the needs of minorities, while tending to overlook a decline in the quality of life for working- and middle-class Americans. While not comprehensive, it was an evolution in his political analysis. As Phillip concluded *The Politics of Rich and Poor,* he wrote, "As the rich grow richer, all that could be said was that more and more Americans were beginning to notice."[587]

[583] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 207. Phillips writes, "Racial minorities were also net losers. In 1987 the income of the typical black family—at $18,098—equaled just 56.1 percent of the typical white family's income, the lowest comparative percentage since the 1960s." Such sentences separated Phillips from the GOP of the decade and what made *The Politics of Rich and Poor* so popular in 1990 as a tool for the Democrats.
[584] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 208.
[585] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 208.
[586] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 201-203; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 276; Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 130.
[587] Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, 209.

Not Conservative Enough: Emboldened Buchanan

In the late 1980s, Patrick Buchanan was seeing a country that he believed was in decline; not the economic decline that Phillips saw, but rather, a cultural decline. Writing in his 1988 autobiography *Right from the Beginning*, Buchanan celebrated the economic successes of the Reagan years but felt that true ideological conservatives were losing the cultural battle against the forces of liberalism.[588] All around them, conservatives had failed to roll back the encroachment of permissive culture; Roe v. Wade still stood strong, and George Bush's seemingly easy capture of the Republican nomination in 1988 had Buchanan worried about the conservatism which he had been fighting for since his youth. *Right from the Beginning* starts in this context, with Buchanan recounting his discussions and ultimate decision not to run against Bush in 1988. Buchanan and other prominent conservatives around him saw an opportunity with, in their opinion, the weak middle of the road Eastern establishment George Bush.[589]

Buchanan left his position as Ronald Reagan's communications director in early 1987 after working for approximately 2 years. For the staunch conservative, Buchanan felt the White House had excelled in funding the MX missile program, sending military aid to the Nicaraguan Contras, support for the Strategic Defense Initiative, enacting tax code reform and the promotion of William Rehnquist to Chief Justice and Antonini Scalia to the Supreme Court.[590] However, for Buchanan, in a telling rehash at the end of his time in the Nixon White House, the president had made a mistake. Buchanan writes after celebrating the president's high approval rating in 1986,

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[588] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 15-16.
[589] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 9; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 288.
[590] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 11-12; Timothy Stanely's *The Crusader* outlines the grievances Buchanan had while working for the White House and how his work was often undercut or heavily edited to align with the president's image and desire for popular appeal. One note which highlighted Buchanan's extremism was his disappointment that the administration did not emphasize the moral punishment represented by the HIV/AIDS crisis. Buchanan's infamous homophobic comments wished to present the crisis as a moral retribution, just as he similarly saw the legalization of abortion. Right was never right enough for Buchanan under Ronald Reagan.

> "Like Mr. Nixon before him, Ronald Reagan had handed his enemies a sword. And, given the savagery of American politics in 1986, I knew the day the story broke they would drive that sword in, right up to the hilt. For Ronald Reagan, the fifth of November, 1986, was the day the music died."[591]

The Iran-Contra scandal, and Buchanan's subsequent defense of Reagan and even more strongly Oliver North, is a telling populist moment in Buchanan's political career. The reaction to Buchanan's non-apologetic defense of Oliver North for defending his country against Communists in America's backyard was the movement he and other fringe conservatives saw the potential of his leadership.[592] It also pointed to the divisions within conservatism that had emerged since 1980.[593] In one of the most quoted parts in *Right from the Beginning*, Buchanan writes, "The largest vacuum in American politics — the vacuum to the right of Ronald Reagan — seemed to be pulling me into the presidential race."[594] The completely different reactions to Iran-Contra from Buchanan and the Reagan White House is an illustrative picture of the divisions within conservatism, and how the attack politics Buchanan had advocated for since 1968 had not worked its way into modern American conservatism's biggest triumph to the extent he desired. Buchanan's reaction to the controversy was very much reflective of his reaction to the Watergate scandal, and even further in his past, his love for senator Joseph McCarthy.

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[591] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 12.
[592] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 4.
[593] Phillips, preface to *Post Conservative America*, xx. Phillips writes, "As late as 1978 and 1979, most observers dismissed the factionalism on the right as politically meaningless. But since 1980, the divisions on the right, like the fractions of early 1930s left-liberalism, have become - to use the tired word- considerably more "relevant." This had only become truer, and Buchanan saw an opportunity.
[594] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 4.

In the wake of the Iran-Contra revelations, Buchanan authored a piece in the *Washington Post* behind the back of his superior Don Regan.[595] In the piece titled, "No One Gave the Order to Abandon Reagan's Ship," Buchanan attacked moderate Republicans for not standing behind the president in a crisis; Reagan the Republican who had done the most for the country since Teddy Roosevelt, was being betrayed by members of his party.[596] Repeating his reaction to the Watergate investigation Buchanan wrote, "Do these Republicans truly think the investigative engines of a hostile Congress and the artillery of an Adversary Press are all being wheeled again into position- simply 'to get at the truth?'"[597] Comparing Oliver North to Americans who illegally helped African slaves escape to Canada, Buchanan called the military man an "American hero".[598] Such comments reflected Buchanan's typical political rhetoric, his attacks on the media, on moderates, on congress, and his patriotic defense of those accused by establishment forces. In one sense they show that Buchanan's vision, at least publicly, of the position of conservatism had not changed. He was harping against the same forces which had been attacking conservatism since the days of Barry Goldwater. After the Watergate scandal, Buchanan had written in his *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, that the White House had yielded to attacks from the left and media, that "Watergate was a crime of individuals not institutions."[599] Nixon and Agnew were conservative victims of a left-wing media and federal establishment, thought Buchanan.[600] But the political environment had changed drastically since the early 1970s. Ronald Reagan, a true conservative, formed in the political context which had

[595] Stanley, *The Crusader,* 121.
[596] Patrick J. Buchanan, "No One Gave the Order To Abandon Reagan's Ship," *The Washington Post (1974-)*, December 8, 1986.
[597] Buchanan, "No One Gave the Order To Abandon Reagan's Ship."
[598] Buchanan, "No One Gave the Order To Abandon Reagan's Ship."
[599] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories*, 165.
[600] Rick Perlstein, *Reaganland: America's Right Turn 1976-1980* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2021), 104.

propelled Buchanan, had become president, and while conservatives attacked his compromise politics, he was no Richard Nixon.

In another sense, Buchanan's framing of Oliver North being attacked by what he saw as a disingenuous liberal elite and media, Buchanan reached back to how he and his family understood Joseph McCarthy; writing "That half the nation to which McCarthy appealed as late as 1954 supported him, I believe, not because precisely what he said, but because of what they *understood* him to be saying."[601] Buchanan saw McCarthy and his appeal as a populist outburst against the government establishment of the 1950s which had bungled the post-war era and put America on the defensive.[602] Buchanan even linked the political struggle and defeat of McCarthy to that of Nixon's impeachment, with both men serving as antagonists of the American liberal establishment.[603] Only by viewing these men as legitimate and needed threats to the establishment, can the hatred now "spat" upon them be understood, wrote Buchanan.[604] Oliver North served the same narrative for Buchanan, of "warring concepts of morality, of legitimacy, of patriotism.[605] North was fighting for America, not tarnishing its laws, to do what he thought was right, thought Buchanan. What links many of Buchanan's political heroes is their bravery and willingness to buck what conventional wisdom says to do what is right. When wrapped in his Judeo-Christian values, and anti-communism Buchanan's simple conflict narrative explains the stakes in which he understood to be the conservative cause. In the late 1980s, Buchanan the politics of morality and anti-communism had not changed, "the chasm has never been closed;

[601] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 91.
[602] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 184-187. Kazin's discussion of McCarthy's populism and his appeal with "the people," describes exactly what Buchanan found appealing about the senator.
[603] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning,* 95.
[604] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 95.
[605] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 95.

and the fundamental issue has not been resolved. Joe's [McCarthy] lasting contribution was to have ripped the bandages off the underlying wound in America's body politic: Them or us."[606]

The White House did not go along with Buchanan's defense of North, with spokesman Larry Speakes, in late 1986, stating that Reagan did not believe that the president was above the law or would ever condone breaking the law.[607] A senior member in the White House said that the contradictory comments from Reagan and Buchanan were "appealing to different constituencies."[608] Lou Cannon writing for the *Washington Post* was confused that Buchanan was invoking Watergate, which he thought was saddling Reagan with breaking the law.[609] Cannon correctly thought that Buchanan equated the media and political assault on the Reagan administration with the response towards Nixon during 1974. Buchanan clearly illustrated this in his autobiography, invoking how he felt at the end of the Nixon years as he was leaving Reagan's White House, "We rolled the rock all the way up the hill, only to see it roll right back down on top of us."[610] Buchanan biographer Timothy Stanley writes that while Buchanan was impressed with Reagan's ability to rebound after apologizing for the Iran-Contra scandal, it was not the attack politics Buchanan would have employed.[611] For Buchanan, Nixon and now Reagan, despite his reservations about some of their politics, had been thwarted by the establishment.

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[606] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 99.
[607] Lou Cannon, "White House Dissents from Buchanan's Stance," *The Washington Post (1974-)*, December 10, 1986.
[608] Cannon, "White House Dissents from Buchanan's Stance."
[609] Lou Cannon, "Buchanan's Pretense of Defense," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1987.
[610] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 11; Stanley, *The Crusader,*126.
[611] Stanley, *The Crusader,* 122-126; Stanley writes that Buchanan was angry that Oliver North was not defended by the White House, leading to him being fired and facing jail time.

Commenting on the political impact of the Iran-Contra storm, Kevin Phillips concluded that the scandal had at least temporarily upset the 1988 Republican Primaries.[612] While Buchanan had not announced that he was going to run, rumblings were in the news.[613] Buchanan went on a speaking tour during the crisis, firing up crowds with his heavy anti-communist, and patriotic fervor.[614] Phillips interpreted the varying reactions to Oliver North as significant split within the Republican Party. While Bush was tied to the position of the White House, Phillips argued Buchanan represented the frustration politics that had made Goldwater in 1964, and Reagan in 1976, so appealing.[615] In both those previous primaries, conservatives perceived the GOP to be controlled by moderates. In that sense Buchanan's firebrand politics fit in line with the sort of insurgency that not only Buchanan had associated himself with his entire career, but the potential for real populist upset. Phillips qualified his analysis, writing that such tactics would only capture a small minority of the primary electorate; his candidacy still represented a significant divide within GOP ranks.[616]

Populist Radicalism

Buchanan too saw the GOP divided in 1988 describing conservativism as "a house with many mansions."[617] Both Reverend Pat Robertson and Republican Senate minority leader Bob

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[612] Kevin Phillips, "Reagan Republicans Now Divided into Three Parts," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, January 25, 1987.
[613] Cannon, "White House Dissents from Buchanan's Stance"; Steven V. Roberts and Special to the New York Times, "To Be or Not to Be a Protest Candidate," *The New York Times*, January 19, 1987.
[614] Roberts and Times, "To Be or Not to Be a Protest Candidate."; Phillips, "Reagan Republicans Now Divided into Three Parts."
[615] Phillips, "Reagan Republicans Now Divided into Three Parts."
[616] Phillips, "Reagan Republicans Now Divided into Three Parts."
[617] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 14; Robert Lekachman, "The Coming Collapse of the Reagan Coalition: POST-CONSERVATIVE AMERICA: People, Politics and Ideology in a Time of Crisis. By Kevin P. Phillips. Random House. 261," *The Washington Post (1974-)*, August 15, 1982; Lemann, "That's the Way the Money Goes." As early as 1982 and as late as 1990, reviewers of Phillips' 1980s books had accused him of historical determinism and doubted a coming populist majority. These critiques can be applied to his idea of a divided GOP in 1988.

Dole, from different corners of Reagan's GOP challenged Bush's run.[618] Buchanan decided not to run in 1988, fearing further splintering of the Republican electorate, but did outline his platform in the closing chapters of *Right from the Beginning*. Explaining what he thought had gone wrong with America, he wrote that the country was in a "crisis of the spirit," unfixable through the government and politics.[619] The crisis was not economic, but cultural, lamenting that the left only saw injustice in the past where true conservatives saw America's greatest years.[620] Following the narrative he had been espousing for close to two decades, Buchanan made the religious element bolder. Only reverting America to a truly godly country could restore the nation; "to kill society you must sever its roots, these Christian values to large extent have been," wrote Buchanan.[621]

The moral beliefs held by conservative Christians had united the country in the past, insisted Buchanan, but that morality was bankrupt in a culture where its citizens fought over who their enemies were.[622] At the start of the chapter titled "Democracy is not Enough," Buchanan quoted T.S. Elliot arguing that democracy without God and thus the ethic which comes from Christian religion is too easily warped by the likes of evil like Hitler and Stalin.[623] Buchanan had openly criticized President Reagan on his lack of attention to social conservatives and especially the religious right during the 1980s. Heading into the 1990s, Buchanan would continue to ramp up the religious elements of his conservatism. In *Right from the Beginning*, Buchanan emphasized the importance of his Catholic faith and upbringing, informing what he thought was wrong in the 1980s. Abortion, HIV/AIDS, the expansion of the welfare state, crime, family

[618] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 264.
[619] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 359.
[620] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 338, 340.
[621] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 340.
[622] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 337.
[623] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 336

abandonment were all signs of cultural decay said Buchanan.[624] If the Reagan years had been a triumph for conservatism, Buchanan had ramped up his negative image of the country even before Reagan was out of office.

Buchanan proposed several "populist amendments" to the US constitution in his 1988 book *Right from the Beginning*, changes he thought could bring the country back on track.[625] Most populist was Buchanan's wish to allow the American people "through popular initiative and referendum, [to] invalidate or make laws for the United States."[626] The amendments also reflected his social conservative stance, protecting the right for religious practice in school, making English the official language of the country, protecting unborn children from abortion, and releasing restraints on state use of capital punishment.[627] Buchanan also asserted that American presidents should be able to run for more than two terms.[628] After Watergate, Buchanan criticized the left who feared an "Imperial Presidency" arguing that a strong president is what conservatism needed.[629] He saw the president in the 1970s stripped of his ability to rule. Then calling Congress a "delinquent child" who restricted the powers of the government, Buchanan continued such attacks in *Right from the Beginning*, proposing a balanced budget from the president that Congress must follow.[630]

Aside from his cultural focus, Buchanan did not avoid discussing the economy in his abandoned political platform either. In an argument which highlighted the focus of his later political rhetoric, Buchanan attacked the foreign exploitation of the American economy, angry at

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[624] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 340-341. As has been discussed by others, Buchanan's discussion of gay citizens is particularly heinous.
[625] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 356.
[626] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 356.
[627] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 356.
[628] The final chapter of *Right from the Beginning* is title "Containment is not Enough," in which Buchanan argues to end the Cold War, Russia must be rid of the Community Party.
[629] Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories,*164-167.
[630] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 356.

the trade war with Japan in which he thought American capital gains tax was stifling the country's ability to compete.[631] This position was not necessarily unique among critiques of the 1980s Republican economic policy. Phillips shared similar sentiments about the damage he believed was being done through foreign trade deficits with Asia and Europe.[632] What made Buchanan radical was he combined his economic critiques with his views about what he considered to be traditional morality. In a bold statement which clearly represented the conservative ideological divide within the GOP, Buchanan wrote, "The Republican Party should stand for traditional values, even when that means standing against laissez-faire… The greatness of a country and the goodness of its people are not to be measured by its GNP."[633] While not directly tying Reagan to this critique, it marked Buchanan's departure from much of what had defined the Republican decade. If Phillips had shown favor of populism over his conservatism, Buchanan emphasized the cultural element over the economics of his ideology. However, linking the cultural and economic elements together proved a powerful tool.

Despite George H.W. Bush's election victory leaning heavily on the promise to continue in the legacy of Ronald Reagan, Bush had an uneasy relationship with the right, promoting a "kinder, gentler" America, which historian Donald Critchlow described as departure from the Reagan years .[634] Bush had challenged Reagan in 1980, mocking Reagan's supply-side advocacy, but falling into line while serving as vice president.[635] For some on the right, Bush's conservatism was inauthentic, and to the country, the president struggled to combat the perception that he cared for ordinary citizens.[636] Bush presented a mix bag of policies, oscillating

[631] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 347.
[632] Phillips, *Staying on Top*.
[633] Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning*, 349.
[634] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 227.
[635] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 265.
[636] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 288-289

from moderate to conservative; standing behind the Clean Air Act, a ban on the AK-47 assault rifles, and extending government support Americans with disabilities and HIV/AIDS, while backing controversial Supreme Court candidate Clarence Thomas. [637] While American victory against Iraqi forces in the first Gulf War helped Bush reach a 90% approval rating, the president was often stuck between the legacy Reagan and the risk of departure from said legacy.[638] In the public's eye, what damaged Bush the most was the decision to raise taxes in 1990s, breaking his campaign promise and for some, betraying economic conservatism.[639]

Buchanan's combination of economic and social conservatism, contrasted with what was often perceived as Bush's moderation, was taken directly into Buchanan's campaign for president in 1992. This time, Buchanan was not concerned with splitting the Republican base as the president had perverted his sacred conservative ideology. With a speech titled "A Crossroads in Our Country's History," Buchanan announced his presidential campaign with the populist conservative which articulated the division that had formed on the American right.[640] What little trust ideological conservatives had in Bush when he was first elected in 1988 was gone by 1991, with his "read my lips, no new taxes" betrayal, an economy going into recession, and for Buchanan and other now titled *paleoconservatives*, Bush's Global World Order encapsulated in the first Gulf War.[641] Buchanan began the campaign illustrating the "America First" organizing principle of his goals, a "new patriotism" which produced American benefit and advantage in any trade deal, and any global agreement.[642] The extremely controversial North American Free

[637] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 231; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 312.
[638] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 314. Wilentz presents a picture of the Bush administration in which when he followed the legacy of Reagan, Reagan got the credit. When Bush diverged from Reaganism, he was criticized for betraying the conservative icon.
[639] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 233.
[640] Buchanan, *A Crossroads in Our Country's History,* delivered at New Hampshire State Legislative Office, New Hampshire, December 10, 1991, https://buchanan.org/blog/a-crossroads-in-our-countrys-history-158940.
[641] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 135, 139; Hemmer, *Partisans*, 56, 75.
[642] Patrick J. Buchanan, "A Crossroads in Our Country's History."

Trade Agreement (NAFTA), originating during Reagan's presidency, became a particular boon for Bush with the right, with Buchanan latching onto the issue, emphasizing both his cultural and economic populism, invoking the isolationist nativism of 1930s conservatives.[643] Historian Gary Gerstle argued Buchanan was motivated both by the pleas of manufacturing workers who feared losing their jobs, as well as his hatred for Mexican immigrants he feared would enter the country in increased numbers.[644] Buchanan's denouncement of free trade made his separation with Reagan apparent, even if he or his supporters didn't make such a connection.[645] This meant protection from Asian and European economic exploitation but also the reassertion of Judeo-Christian values; "Western heritage is going to be handed down to future generations, not dumped onto some landfill called multiculturalism."[646] Just as he had written in his autobiography, America's many crises were spiritual. Of Bush, Buchanan opined: "He is a globalist and we are nationalists. He believes in some Pax Universalis; we believe in the Old Republic." The mere fact that Buchanan was running against an incumbent Republican president, the heir to Ronald Reagan, seemed to confirm Phillips' warnings back in 1982 were correct, the coalition of conservatives held together under Reagan was in fact volatile. Without Reagan, the economics of the business elite and the social conservatives could not be bound together in an environment of great economic inequality.[647] Buchanan's run seemed to show it was cracking at exactly the cultural and economic connection which had made Ronald Reagan's 1980 victory so spectacular. Buchanan was not yelling into an empty void either, winning 37.5% of the New Hampshire Republican primary, Bush was forced from defend himself on the right.[648]

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[643] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 314; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 234. It should be noted that NAFTA faced opposition from some on both ends of the political spectrum.
[644] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 153-154.
[645] Hemmer, *Partisans*, 74-75.
[646] Buchanan, "A Crossroads in Our Country's History."
[647] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 263.
[648] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 315.

Kevin Phillips and the Election of 1992: Buchanan and Populist Radicalism

Entering the 1992 election, President Bush faced a harsh recession, causing millions of Americans to lose their jobs, confirming the economy as the big issue of the election.[649] For Kevin Phillips, Patrick Buchanan's run for president was a telling radical element of the populist explosion in the 1992 presidential election, an explosion he was not surprised by. Over the course of close to 20 years, Phillips had moved from a fellow member of the New Right alongside Buchanan, to calling him a radical populist.[650] For Phillips, such an outburst against the "new" American Republican elite was to be expected after the "orgy" of 1980s American economic excess.[651] In *Post-Conservative America*, Phillips had warned that if the Reagan administration was unable to substantially uplift the economic position of the working and middle classes, the country would face a radicalized middle.[652] Phillips writes, "the radicalized middle could, as suggested, try to recreate a prosperous, pre-inflation, pre-Vietnam America."[653] Buchanan's 1992 political appeal invoked a reclamation of that same mythical yet fabricated pre-1960s American glory Phillips felt would appeal to economically frustrated voters.

Buchanan was just one member of a politically diverse, populist array of politicians in the environment preceding and during the 1992 elections. Phillips identified David Duke, Bernie Sanders, Jerry Brown, and of course Ross Perot.[654] Not to brush over their important differences, these men broadly tried to appeal to an economic populism which spoke to the perception that Bush, the president walking in the legacy of conservative populism articulated first by Nixon and

[649] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order,* 150-152.
[650] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 236.
[651] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 223.
[652] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America, 196.*
[653] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America,* 196.
[654] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 236.

then successfully by Reagan, was now the establishment. Phillips wrote indicative of his evolved politics, "Middle American radicalism was back, but in a new role. *Frustrated voters were now ready to question the tactics, loyalties and failures of establishment conservatism, and thus began fragmenting the right.*"[655]

For Phillips, Patrick Buchanan and David Duke were conservative populist radicals, appealing to the legacy of George Wallace and Richard Nixon's New Majority which had used culture and race to mobilize voters.[656] Yet, Buchanan and Duke updated the messaging, injecting an explicit economic populism and the globalist fears of the early 1990s in addition to white culture and race.[657] Such a combination, wrote Phillips, produced a radical evolution of the conservative populist upheaval which had been brewing since the late 1960s. David Duke shocked the country when in Louisiana, the former Nazi and member of the Ku Klux Klan, won the Republican governor primary.[658] Losing the general election, Duke fared well given his history, winning two fifths of the vote, but more significantly, capturing 60% of the white middle class vote.[659] This was exactly the radical evolution of populism that Phillips saw as a consequence of the Reagan-Bush years failing to solve the economic decline of the American lower and middle classes.[660] The potential for such an extremist like Duke to have success in the context of economic upheaval was something Phillips had indicated back in 1980 when he noted the success of several former Nazis in state primaries.[661] Phillips argued Reagan was a political

[655] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 242.
[656] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 233; Hemmer, *Partisans*, 81. Hemmer argues that Buchanan recognized a vacuum left by Reagan in which invoking the racial politics of George Wallace would have appeal.
[657] Hemmer, *Partisans*, 75-76.
[658] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 233; Hemmer, *Partisans*, 83.
[659] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 224.
[660] Hemmer, *Partisans*, 74-76; Hemmer argues that the end of the Cold War significantly impacted the direction of conservatism, pundits like Buchanan she argues, quickly abandoned Reaganism, revoking support for free trader interventionism, and immigration.
[661] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 224.

outsider conservative when he was elected in 1980, and as such the populist masses voted and waited to see if he could cure their ills.[662] If a "former" Nazi was having political success, those ills were still present, and in Phillips' view, were getting worse. Despite Reagan's political magnetism able to hold his cultural and economic conservative coalition together, Bush only made the divisions apparent.[663]

With Republicans having been in power for 12 years, liberal establishment politics which had proved so essential to the GOP's return to the White House had lost its place as the right's straw man, argued Phillips.[664] The Bush campaign, aware of the candidate's lacking populist conservative credentials, tried to invoke the racial fears which had helped him back in 1988.[665] Yet, as Phillips writes, the radicalism and diversity of the forces against Bush trapped him in the middle. When trying to appeal to social conservatives by objecting to the 1991 Civil Rights Act, suburban middle class voters didn't like his racial tactics.[666] Reaction to David Duke's success in the Louisiana Governor primary pushed President Bush to compromise, flipping to support the Civil Rights Act, which opened him to assault from Buchanan for compromising with Democrats on social politics.[667] It was at this moment in which Phillips writes that "conservative cohesion was crumbling."[668]

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[662] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 236.
[663] Hemmer*, Partisans*, 81; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 289, 308-390.
[664] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 243.
[665] Most famously the Willie Horton commercial which played on white fear of black criminals.
[666] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 242.
[667] Hemmer, *Partisans,* 83; Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 236. Hemmer argues that the real issue that finally pushed Buchann to run for president in 1992 was President Bush's compromise on the 1991 Civil Rights Act. Seeing David Duke's success in a 1989 Louisiana special election, Buchanan saw white resentment politics as a successful path to victory while establishment Republicans were busy distancing themselves from Duke. Further, Hemmer notes that Buchanan's association to Duke in the 1992 primary created issues for Pat that he could not completely escape. Including racism, antisemitism which went beyond the similarities to Duke but his own problematic politics. Phillips wrote in *Boiling Point* that it was liberal Democrat Harris Wofford platform of middle-class populism which delivered him an upset Senate victory in Pennsylvania which pushed Buchanan to run. Nonetheless, Phillips presented a compelling picture of the election where the writing on the wall of Bush's demise was clear in the bi-partisan populist successes of Duke and Wofford.
[668] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 242.

Phillips, as always, supported his analysis with historical parallels. If economic frustration created ideological confusion, then the 1930s helped explain the relative success of Patrick Buchanan and David Duke. Phillips compared Buchanan and Duke to Father Charles Coughlin, the fiery Catholic radio host of the 1930s who courted supporters from his church studio in Royal Oak, Michigan, with a combination of economic populism and Catholic morality.[669] While Father Coughlin supported failed 3rd party candidate William Lemke in the 1936 election, the radio host he spoke to lower and middle-class Americans' fears in the midst of the Great Depression. While having broader appeal in 1934 and 1935, the radio host's increasingly extremist politics limited his influence. Phillips identified the same trend in Duke and Buchanan who shared the antisemitism, nativism, and isolationism of Father Coughlin, along with his economic populism.[670]

While these extremist elements haunted Buchanan's campaign in 1992 as well as his subsequent campaigns, he and the other populist candidates shaped the election. Just as Phillips argued that the failure of populist candidate William Jennings Bryan in 1896 had informed the politics of the winning party, candidate Buchanan, and to a larger degree Ross Perot, served as the "corrective populist force" of the campaign, adjusting Democrat and Republican tactics in courting economically disenchanted middle class voters.[671] Having linked Buchanan to Father Coughlin, Phillips connected this "corrective force" politics to the 1936 presidential election as well. Phillips argued that Franklin D. Roosevelt adjusted his campaign rhetoric to appeal to the

[669] Kazin, *The Populist* Persuasion, 120, 133.
[670] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 237; Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 283-284. Kazin wrote about the same connections between Father Coughlin and Patrick Buchanan. In the 1990s, some connected Wallace and Buchanan as outrage candidates, but Kazin argued the parallels with Father Coughlin were more accurate. Kazin notes that Coughlin and Buchanan did not make a distinction between moral and economic sin. Kazin writes, "defense of a Christian America and of good American jobs was part of the same holy war." Kazin too noted the extremist similarities of both populists and the ultimate result being their failed campaign.
[671] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 320-322.

base of insurgent candidate Huey Long, and infused a hatred against the rich of Father Coughlin.[672] Just as in 1936, Huey Long and Ross Perot, the more palatable candidates, had a greater impact on shaping the politics of the election, but the extremists, Father Coughlin and Buchanan, had an impact as well. Substantially, Buchanan's success in the New Hampshire primary forced Bush to waste resources defending himself from the right.[673]

Rupture on the Right

The divergence of the Kevin Phillips' and Patrick Buchanan's populist conservatism from politics of the Republican mainstream in the 1980s and 1990s illustrates the volatility and destruction of the conservative coalition which delivered Ronald Reagan his massive electoral victories. Two of post-war America's influential conservative architects had drifted far from the party where they had shaped and tried to direct the focus of conservatism into a middle-class populism. Unfortunately for them, Reagan's conservative populist style replicated for Phillips the return to 1920s business class elitism, and for Buchanan, had opened America's doors to an economically dangerous globalism and failed to halt the decline of the country's culture. As a result, both men had become outsiders of a different stripes to the political trend they had both advocated for since the 1960s.[674] In some sense, the divisions specifically between Phillips and Buchanan would reflect the challenges of the conservative Republican Party in the 1990s which struggled with tensions between its Big Tent Republicanism and the increasingly radical populist conservative faction that wouldn't be resolved until after both men had passed their prime.

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[672] Phillips, *Boiling Point*, 230-23.
[673] Phillips, *Boiling Point,* 244; Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 315.
[674] This outsider placement for Buchanan is expressed in Timothy Stanley's *Crusader* (2012) who writes that Buchanan was indispensable from the Republican Party, evolving its populism but was also let down by the presidents he served.

After writing *The Politics of Rich and Poor* (1990), some Republican's called Phillips a traitor, arguing that he had handed Democrats a means to defeat Bush.[675] While Phillips had never been a Republican Party insider, *The Emerging Republican Majority* had legitimized his conservative credentials, even as he criticized the party he was a member of. Reviews of *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, and *Boiling Point* understandably associated Phillips as the conservative commentator of his most famous first book. As such, even when reviewers found his books, particularly *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, unoriginal, and lacking important historical context, it was the fact that a conservative had been so openly critical of the Republican 1980s which made it noteworthy.[676] Since the 1969 publication of *Emerging*, it was *The Politics of Rich and Poor* which had the largest impact of his works, and as such it publicly distanced him from the political analysis that made him famous, even if Phillips thought he hadn't' changed. Reviewers called it the most talked about political book of 1990 and acknowledged that Bill Clinton had been spotted with a copy.[677] A *Newsweek* article claimed that Democrats invited Phillips to discuss the political implications of the book, and Republican Newt Gingrich had asked to "discuss the wealth issue."[678] Phillips himself noted its impact in the preface to *Boiling Point* (1993), listing Ross Perot, Bill Clinton and Patrick Buchanan as readers prior to the 1992 election.[679] In a 1990 interview article Phillips explained that it wasn't he who changed, he had

[675] Phillips, preface to *Boiling Point*, xi.
[676] Lemann, "That's the Way the Money Goes"; Levy, review of *Review of The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath*; *The Wilson Quarterly,* review of *Boiling Point: Democrats, Republicans, and the Decline of Middle-Class Prosperity*, by Kevin Phillips, *The Wilson Quarterly (1976-)* 17, no. 2 (1993): 82–83; The Economist, "The Kevin Phillips Curve - Boiling Point by Kevin Phillips," *The Economist* 326, no. 7801 (1993): 92; Whicker, "Review of Boiling Point."
[677] George T. Haskett, "'Boiling Point: Democrats, Republicans, and the Decline of Middle-Class Prosperity', by Kevin Phillips (Book Review)," *Families in Society* 75, no. 1 (1994): 56; Levy, "Review of The Politics of Rich and Poor"; The Economist, "The Kevin Phillips Curve - Boiling Point by Kevin Phillips."
[678] Tom Mathews, "Picking Up the Pieces," *Newsweek*, July 23, 1990.
[679] Phillips, preface to *Boiling Point*, xi.

always supported the middle class, rather the American elite had shifted from left to right.[680] As the article ends, the journalist asks, ""Is [Phillips] still a Republican?"... "I'm still a registered Republican." What does that mean? "I'm not sure what that means," [Phillips] says."[681]

Buchanan's far-right positions, extremist and consistent with his career, put him at odds with the mainstream Republican Party.[682] His infamous 1992 Republican National Convention speech exemplified his fusion of cultural and economic populism, "There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself."[683] Buchanan's emphasis on religious social issues were exactly the type of radical social conservatism Phillips thought would alienate the GOP from the electorate. While the Bush team approved what they saw before the convention, hoping to satisfy the less than confident conservative wing of the GOP, the speech did not have the impact they wanted.[684] Initially, the speech seemed to be a big hit at the convention but the celebration was short lived.[685] Its bold partisan politics initially cut the gap between Clinton and Bush in the polls in the Republican's favor, but was used by the media and Democrats effectively to paint Buchanan and thus social conservatives as radical extremists that dictated the GOP. In the end, Buchanan's speech helped Bush gain some grassroots conservative support, but did more damage than good to the campaign.[686]

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[680] Dionne Jr, "The Unlikely Populist."
[681] Dionne Jr, "The Unlikely Populist."
[682] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 222-227. Stanley writes that Buchanan viewed the 1994 midterm Republican victories as a signal that cultural conservatives and economic populists were still a powerful constituency. Free-trade and Big Tent Republicanism were in many respects economically and culturally opposed to Buchanan's politics.
[683] Patrick Buchanan, "1992 Republican National Convention Speech," (Speech at Astrodome, Houston, 1992), https://buchanan.org/blog/1992-republican-national-convention-speech-148.
[684] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 320; Stanley, *The Crusader*, 207-208. Stanley writes that Buchanan, fearful of edits and leaks, kept the content of the speech private until the night of. When it was faxed to Bush the day of the convention, Bush supposedly gave it two thumbs up.
[685] Stanley, *The Crusader,* 210.
[686] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 237-238; Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 276; Stanley, *The Crusader*, 210.

During his 1996 presidential campaign, Buchanan continued his moral and economic blend of anti-globalism and nativism.[687] His anti-globalist stance put him at odds with the mainstream Republican Party, some called him a Marxist for his class based attacks on business and the government.[688] While Buchanan won the New Hampshire primary in 1996, moderate Republican Bob Dole, the front runner, had the backing of Christian evangelical leader Pat Robertson, helping defeat Buchanan in the primaries.[689] Buchanan, the lifelong Republican, much more an insider than Phillips, was denied the chance to speak at the Republican National Convention that year.[690] Instead, the prime time speaker slots were given to moderate and centrist Republicans.[691] In 2000 Buchanan would run again, but this time as the Reform Party candidate with little success compared to the relative impact he achieved in 1992.[692]

[687] Patrick Buchanan, "1996 Announcement Speech," (Speech at Manchester Institute of Arts and Sciences, 1996), https://buchanan.org/blog/1996-announcement-speech-171.
[688] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 283-284; Both Phillips and Buchanan at different times were called Marxists by other conservatives for their economic populism. William F. Buckley Jr. had called Phillips a Marxist in the 1970s.
[689] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy,* 251.
[690] Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion,* 284.
[691] Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy,* 252.
[692] Stanley, in chapters 25 and 26 in *The Crusader* outlines the disaster of Buchanan's run in 2000. Suggesting that he may have only run because of this sister Bay, who had been his manager since his first fun in 1992, Buchanan went through a series of challenges. Buchanan was attacked from within the Reform Party by Jessie Ventura, Donald Trump and John Samuel Hagelin. Pat was also faced with continually denying chargers of antisemitism and racism, especially after he published *A Republic, Not an Empire,* in which critics argued he had defended Hitler, and falsely claimed that FDR had taken America into an unneeded war. His choice of Ezola B. Foster, a black woman, as his running mate in the 2000 race did little to convince the public that Buchanan was not a racist.

Conclusion: The Relevancy of Phillips and Buchanan in our Political Present

The culmination of this biographical history spotlighting Kevin Phillips and Patrick Buchanan to delve into the nuances of America's post-World War II right-turn, enforces the importance of understanding populism as an essential and often unreachable political paradigm that complicated the American Right by adding new layers to conservatism, sometimes even highlighting its contradictions. While offering moments of cohesion, ultimately it was both men's emphasis on the populist element of their political make-up which not only drove them from the Republican Party, but from each other. In doing so, Phillips and Buchanan represented the fragmentation of the American right, which existed in the 1970s and 1980s, but ruptured Reagan's famed coalition of social and economic conservatives by the early 1990s.

Starting in the Nixon years, these two men were joined in a conservative populism that reflected responses on the right to the perceived dominance of the Great Society liberal establishment, which blurred the serious political divisions between Phillips and Buchanan, and tied them to the Republican Party. Phillips' *Emerging Republican Majority* helped define the southernization of America and its conservative rise of the late 1960s, and even if deterministic, reflected the broad direction of presidential politics in the latter half of the 20th century. By contrast, Buchanan served as a Goldwaterite advocate in the Nixon White House, who helped fashion the populist conservative rhetoric which only grew in prominence as parts of the country moved to the right. When Nixon's political opportunism and ideologically mixed policy agenda, which tended right, did not satisfy Phillips and Buchanan, Watergate pushed both men to reassess a changing nation in ideological confusion.

Representing the New Right in the 1970s, Phillips and Buchanan advocated for an anti-media populism which continued to place an opaque and vague liberal establishment as the

enemy of the American middle class. Buchanan understood the masses to be ideologically conservative, hampered by a weak Republican Party and dominating liberal media establishment. While Phillips similarly saw a weak Republican Party, he never associated so closely with the social issue politics which defined the New Right, exemplified in Buchanan's rhetoric. Unlike those conservatives, Phillips was not specifically trying to reclaim the Goldwater years or the politics of George Wallace, but rather the continuation of what he saw as America's populist cycles that could reinvigorate what he regarded as the elitist and cloistered party politics of the 1970s. An outdated two-party system, increasing ideological politics, and the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches, to Phillips, threatened the ability for the needed populist reset after four decades of liberal dominance.

While Phillips and Buchanan were initially cautiously optimistic that the newly elected Reagan administration might provoke a conservative populist rejuvenation of the country, both men, to different degrees, were frustrated with the Republican Party of the 1980s, which benefited from a confluence of factors allowing an ideological conservative to make electoral history. Instead, Phillips saw the dangerous potential of Reagan's coalition of economic and social conservatives, two separate camps that in the past had not always been closely aligned, arguing they both were further radicalized during the 1970s. The economy came to dominate Phillips' political commentary, never subscribing to the laissez-faire economics which Buchanan embraced. For Phillips, Reagan's economic beliefs invoked 1920s' Republicanism and were thus fundamentally at odds with Phillips' middle-class minded populism, which more closely reflected conditions in post-World War II America. For Buchanan, President Reagan was often not conservative enough, continuing to lament the decline of American society devoid of a robust cultural conservatism. Thus, the 1980s, from the perspective of these two populists, marked a

continued period of internal and external conservative conflict, that without the dominance of a liberal elite to bind Americans on the right, resulted in their split from the Republican politics they had helped articulate in the decades prior.

Buchanan reached the height of his popularity in challenging incumbent President George H. W. Bush in 1992, marking his dismay at what the Republican Party had become. As Buchanan widened his split from the mainstream GOP, Phillips ramped up his attacks on the wealth inequality he argued the Reagan-Bush years had wrought. Populism continued to be the basis for their politics, but Phillips emphasized the economic element in a global context in which he saw America's economic dominance threatened by increasing competition, and government policy that exacerbated the decline for the working and middle classes. Buchanan combined his populism with an increasing radical social conservatism which invoked the politics of the culture war he helped define and the isolationist nativism of the 1930s.

What separated the two men most significantly was that Phillips, in consistently applying a broader American electoral context, placed himself, and the populist outburst of the post-1960s, in the linage of America's populist past. In doing so, he regarded the pivot of the "elite" in American politics from the liberal Great Society establishment to the business high society of Reagan's free-market decade, a viewpoint he believed to be consistent with his core populist ideology. Such ability to move beyond only attacking a perceived liberal establishment to a broadened critique the modern American political order in its entirety, made Phillips analysis' more nuanced as he moved into the Reagan years, thus transcending the partisanship that defined his first book. Buchanan remained firm in his ideological conservatism, much more a member of the New Right than Phillips ever was, continuing to attack the social and economic Democratic politics that he fought into the 1990s, as well as the moderate Republicanism which he felt had

economically and culturally betrayed working-class white Americans. In offering a Manichean us versus them narrative for the ills of America's economically disadvantaged, Buchanan's politics could stretch to a wider audience than Phillips' more cerebral commentary on contemporary politics. The result of these divergent conservative populist political commentators in the mid-1990s was an American right which, with the destruction of the Reagan conservative coalition, represented neither the Nixon era silent majority conservatism which started their careers, or the social and economic emphasis of their populism.

In advocating for a politics that Phillips and Buchanan perceived to put the desires of the electorate first, their populism conflicted with conservative Republican leadership, which while utilizing populism (especially rhetorically), operated in a global and national context, resulting in a compromise of said populism in the arena of "real world" politics. As such, Phillips' and Buchanan's politics were consistently at odds, both in principle and degree, with the dominant expressions of conservatism in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In this regard, the transition of America from a political order dominated by liberalism to an era of conservatism, or rather neoliberalism, did not form a consensus broad enough to include these pundits who had articulated the socioeconomic trends that made such a transition happen. Phillips's populist first ideology, while expressed by presidential leadership, and coming to prominence in the 1992 election, failed to construct a new political order for the people first politics that he felt was the genius of the country's operation. Buchanan's hardline conservatism, which developed along with the right from Goldwater to Reagan, never truly reached an ideological purity in the White House.

As Kevin Phillips and Patrick Buchanan continued into the 1990s and 2000s, their political positions would become illustrative of some of the larger economic and cultural divides

within the Republican Party and the country. After 1993's *Boiling Point*, Phillips authored *Arrogant Capital* (1994) in which he continued to echo the populist arguments he had been building since the 1970s. For Phillips, it was clear that Washington was "too big, too rich, too pride-set," and entrenched as he had predicted back in *Mediacracy* (1974).[693] If 1992 was an explosion of the populist frustration bred by the economic politics of the Reagan-Bush years, Clinton had failed to usher in a revitalized political order.[694] Amidst his warnings of the emergence of an entrenched political elite inextricably bound with powerful financial and corporate interests, Phillips saw two political parties both responsible for the cultural and economic decline of the country.[695] For Phillips, the Republicans and Democrats had become "crippled by ideology and interest groups."[696] Returning to writing about contemporary politics in 2006, Phillips authored *American Theocracy*, a scathing attack on the politics of the Bushes, the Republican Party, and what had become of the GOP base which he saw as radically Christian.[697] Author John Judis argued that by *American Theocracy,* Phillips had lost whatever populist connection he had left with middle America.[698] If at times simplistic and deterministic, the bulk of Phillips' published books remain poignant, especially his later works, not because he a drifted from the Republican Party, but because of his ability to describe the political context around him which remains relevant in seeking to understand the enduring appeal of populist conservatism.

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[693] Kevin P. Phillips, preface to *Arrogant Capital: Washington, Wall Street and the Frustration of American Politics* (Little, Brown & Company, 1994), xv.
[694] Phillips, preface to *Arrogant Capital*, xv; Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Era*, 156. Gerstle argues that the Clinton administration followed in the neoliberal steps of Reagan to a surprising degree, adopting Republican positions on the economy.
[695] Phillips, *Arrogant Capital*, 60-63.
[696] Phillips, *Arrogant Capital*, 65.
[697] Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006), 100, 182.
[698] Judis, "Kevin Phillips, Ex-Populist."

For Buchanan, the pundit retained his firebrand commentary relevancy but never again would seek to run for president after three successive failed campaigns. As the American right developed a powerful media presence with a new generation of conservatives in the 1990s and 2000s, Buchanan affirmed his place as one of the old generation, whose incredible career from Nixon to Reagan gave him a legitimacy that other commentators lacked.[699] In 2010, the Tea Party movement expressed the anti-establishment, right-wing populism that was at the roots of Buchanan's appeal in the 1990s.[700] Similarly to Buchanan's right flank attack on George H.W. Bush, the Tea Party attacked the GOP from within, angry with the nomination of Mitt Romney as the Republican candidate for the 2012 presidential election.[701] That same year, concluding his biography of Buchanan, Timothy Stanley wrote, "Pat Buchanan failed to win the culture war," but "helped define it for millions of people on both sides of the conflict."[702] While perhaps appropriate over a decade ago, today Buchanan's impact on the current political climate is ever present in the age of President Donald Trump, who like Buchanan employed a conservative populism blurring extremism and presidential politics.[703] In that sense, Trumps cultural and economic appeal to millions of working- and middle- class Americans in 2016 and now 2024, has pushed elements of Buchanan's extremist politics, on issues such as immigration and boarder security, into mainstream political discourse. Facing such a reality harkens Phillips' warnings of a radical populist conservatism back in 1982.

[699] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 360-361.
[700] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 362; Hemmer, *Partisans*, 288-289.
[701] Hemmer, *Partisans*, 288.
[702] Stanley, *The Crusader*, 364.
[703] Hemmer, *Partisans*, 300.

> "Today's Sun Belt represents a confluence of Social Darwinism, entrepreneurialism, high technology, nationalism, nostalgia and fundamentalist religion, and any Sun Belt hegemony over our politics has a unique potential…to accommodate a drift toward apple-pie authoritarianism. One can easily enough imagine the Sun Belt as the launch pad indeed, it may be already—of a communications-based, high-technology, corporate-linked, frequently plebiscitary, intermittently populist conservatism."[704]

Ultimately, considering trends in American politics in the 2010s and 2020s, it is no surprise that the glowing embers of Patrick Buchanan's brand of social populism has enjoyed more staying power than Kevin Phillips's more scholarly critiques of the concentrations of wealth in contemporary American society. Thus far, Buchanan's tireless advocacy of a type of politics that thrives on grievance has dovetailed more closely with the goals and aims of the twenty-first century Republican Party than Phillips's more erudite lamentations of what he considered to be the negative impact of big money on modern American politics. In 2022, historian Nicole Hemmer authored an article on the Buchanan-Trump parallel in which she argued that Buchananism had led the way for Trumpism to radically alter the Republican Party, but neither grouping had never been "truly popular" in garnering electoral majorities.[705] In the wake of Donald Trump's smashing 2024 victory, perhaps such a position needs to be reassessed.

[704] Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, 239.
[705] Hemmer, "Opinion | The Man Who Won the Republican Party Before Trump Did."

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